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Embodiment of the Real

An interdisciplinary study of subjectivity, trauma and spiritual cultivation

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Centre for Ideas

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Abstract

In Lacanian psychoanalysis the Real stands for a register of the psyche that resists symbolisation. It may erupt through contingent traumatic events, unbearable bodily intensities, anxiety, or death. How is one able to process these painful events? Here, I refer to the tragic event of my father's brain stroke, which turned him half-paralysed, our family breakdown and subsequent passing of both of my parents.

This interdisciplinary practice-based research seeks to properly understand the above sorrowful events of eruption of the Real. My goal is to establish a plane of knowledge that allows viewing the psychophysical processes of encountering the Real positively, and to develop skilful means of integrating it into the subject's life.

Applying the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha as a method I seek to alleviate and integrate these psychophysical processes, primarily via practices of insight meditation and movement arts – taijiquan, parkour, martial arts, swimming and movement improvisation.

My thesis seeks to provide phenomenological accounts pertaining to subjectivity in the form of creative writings describing my personal experience in undertaking the above practices. In addition to that, videos of movement practices and performances are to be provided as creative works.

Declaration

I, Evgenii Timofeev, declare that:

i. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, except where indicated;

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and

iii. the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:

Evgenii Timofeev

10 January 2020

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I express gratitude to Venerable Jotinanda, who instructed me in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. I thank Luang por Kalyano for expounding the Dhamma and sharing the spirit of the Thai Forest Tradition.

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Introduction

What are the research questions?

The research questions this investigation seeks to explore are: What is the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis? How does the Real correlate with the Buddha Dhamma? How does the subject[1] psychophysically experience the Real?

Due to the Real being unutterable, Jacques Lacan never gave it a clear-cut definition. Rather, within his topology of the psyche he defined that which points to the Real. As such, the Real is 'extimate' to the Imaginary and the Symbolic, i.e. an inherent yet unassimilable constituent of the subjective experience (Wood 2012, 37). One of the ways its presence can be known, as rendered by Žižek, is through the traumatic eruption of a shattering and impossible event[2] (Žižek 2004, 69-70). Another way is through anxiety, amounting to a signal of an irreducible pattern, a secret of a sort, by which the Real presents itself within experience (Lacan 2014, 160).

In either way the Real bears a characteristic of thwarting contingency, which tears the fabric of subjective reality and points towards the subject's materiality and mortality, thereby disturbing identifications by which the subject is represented. This contingent faculty is oppressive and dissatisfactory; as of my primary interest, it prevents the subject from moving freely with his/her full energetic potency. In short, it is the kernel of experience generally known as human suffering.

The hypothesis that I explore through this disquisition is that the subject's encounter with the Real need not be a shattering and traumatic experience but, rather, an

[1] 'The subject', in reference to a human individual who has been assimilated into the Symbolic order, is a term to be used across this research to signify the general human condition. Interchangeable with 'the practitioner', as the subject engaged in the praxis of 'accessing the Real by means of the Symbolic', it will also be employed when referring to the subject undergoing various practices encompassed by this research. Terms 'self' and 'ego' are to be used interchangeably to signify that which refers to the register of the Imaginary in human subjectivity in particular and to the conditioned situation in general.

[2] Lacan alludes to defining the Real on the basis of the impossible, stating that 'we do not have any other means of apprehending it but to go stumbling on and on (over the impossible).' (Lacan 2014, 78)

enlightening and liberating one. This research seeks to understand how the praxis, which I call 'Embodiment' of the Real, can transform traumatic contingency into liberating insight. Further research questions arise from here:

How, by following the praxis, namely, the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha, can contingencies associated with the Real be alleviated, integrated and embodied, thus transforming the subject? How, then, can the subject not only reclaim the freedom of movement and mental-bodily ease, but develop supernormal psychophysical abilities, happiness, peacefulness and bliss?[3]

Why is this research undertaken?

This research stems from my life-long passion for movement arts, a joy of being, freedom of expression and love. On the other hand, its origins can be found within tragic familial events: my father's stroke and its aftermath, the family breakdown and the passing of my parents one after another.

When I was ten years old my father was brought home, paralysed on the left side of his body, after collapsing in the middle of the road from a stroke. It was from that moment that everything I knew, all my dreams and expectations, collapsed.

For twelve subsequent years, I observed this man, who had always been a role model for me, endure through his struggle, deterioration and eventual passing. Because of his dis-ability,[4] my father's character changed, arguments and fights between my parents became an everyday reality, and eventually our family broke down. Yet we kept coexisting, piecing together the irreconcilable, carried along by the flood of uncertainty. This flood

[3] Considering here the goal of spiritual practice as a transition from normal to supernormal as articulated by Venerable Ajahn Amaro in the talk at Stanford University, https://buddhiststudies.stanford.edu/events/ajahn-amaro-buddhism-and-mindfulness-west-where-are-they-headed-and-what-challenges-do-they.

[4] The dash here and further is intended as an emphasis of the impermanent condition, antithetically to labels and stereotypical associations of such labeling widespread in convention. A sense of sorrow, disaster and doom, which irreversible traumas inflict, as well as the scarring of inadequacy, abnormality and limitation are unfortunate conditioned responses to shattering events. However, no event is as bad as its representation coloured by attachments to ideals (i.e. 'the way it should have been').

erased everything 'normal', leaving what I now understand as the bare Real as the viable refuge. Eventually, my dad grew weak from the endless struggle and passed in his sleep. Four years later, my mother passed peacefully, also sleeping. These tragic events shaped the plane of exposure to the impossible as a continuous theme of my youth.

Growing up in an environment coloured by dis-ease, dis-ability, in-sanity and sense of loss, I developed skills that led me along pathways to ease, mobility, and healthy self-expression. I recognised that contingent traumatic events are fertile soil for growth – of insight, creativity and wisdom. Over time, I also discovered the tremendous potential of movement arts, as well as the practice of meditation, which has long been used as a tool for overcoming obstacles and blockages of unbearable existential conditions. I owe all this to my parents, whose example of bearing through the unbearable led to the development of 'Embodiment' of the Real.

What is the research context?

My research focuses on the praxis, which deals with the experience of human suffering. The context for it is my background, as I believe that lived-through events are the true substance for understanding and insight. To be precise, one can only truly know one's own experience as a human being. As I will demonstrate later, this experience is universally applicable to humanity, since faculties we are comprised of are structurally the same.[5] However, the way we use them makes a difference. A very specific way in which I used this body and mind and understanding that arose from it is what I offer as a contribution to already existing fields.

I grew up in a farmhouse in the far east of Russia in the small settlement of Gornyie Klyuchi (Rus: Горные Ключи – trans. 'Mountain Springs'). Apart from studying, my main

[5] 'Once you know the style of the dynamics of your own mind, then you can begin to see how that style works in dealing with others.' (Trungpa 2005, 7/189)
'Outer customs and language may appear different, but the human mind has natural characteristics which are the same for all people. Greed and hatred are the same in an Eastern or a Western mind. Suffering and the cessation of suffering are the same for all people.' (Chah 1982, https://www.buddhanet.net/bodhiny2.htm)

activities as a child and adolescent were athletics, calisthenics, swimming, farming and manual labour. As a teenage guy faced with challenges too big to fathom, I fantasised about learning martial arts and began to copy numerous tricks, techniques and training methods from the movies of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. This is how I learnt basic acrobatics, kicking, punching and stretching techniques. After I moved to Vladivostok for my university studies, I was finally able to learn martial arts: Shotokan Karate (trained under sensei Igor Doroshin as a member of the university team), Shaolin Wushu (studied in Haerbin Shaoulin Wushu School in northern China), Iwama Ryu Aikido (under the guidance of sensei Yuriy Chigirov), and the art of parkour. Very soon upon starting parkour, I fully dedicated myself to this art.

I found unmediated 'realness' in parkour. Where, in my martial arts practice, I experienced impatience, rage and frustration over the numerous principles and ways of configuring the body, in parkour the equation was pretty simple: to get from point A to point B using a straight line and bodily capabilities. Put even more simply: either make a jump or fall. There is no middle point in a jump, no way to pause a backflip and muse over bodily alignments and application of intention. It was parkour's simplicity of pure challenge that opened me to the flight and embodiment of creative imagination. There was also no place for competition and comparison; there was only me and the streets. And there was one foolproof way of assessing myself: either make a jump or fall. Through parkour I learnt to trust myself – my passion, my spirit and my body – to condition myself and go to the places I wanted to because I could. This practice is where all previously learnt skills converged, where rage, frustration and conflict melted and fuelled the propulsion of movement guided by aspiration, vision and realisation. This is where independent confidence arose. And it is this confidence, arising from sincere exertion into proper action, which I rely on as the method for this research.

Parkour was a way of finding unconditional respect for myself and others. The 'realness' as experienced through the practice enabled an acceptance of acquired and ever-changing subjectivity on the grounds of being-as-such. With compassion I could see what caused me to engage in this practice in the first place: fundamental confusion. Parkour was a visceral attempt to 'jump out' of the imbroglio of narcissistic identifications. I will outline

in chapter three how the Real body discoverable through parkour practice is a glimpse of non-imagined, non-symbolic being, which I refer to as being-as-such.

While the art of parkour sustained me for many years, the call to deepen the understanding of the internal skills that the practice had awakened in me, as is often the way for practitioners of external arts, returned through injury. In fact, there were multiple injuries: strains, sprains, dislocations, accumulated neuromuscular fatigue, stress-induced habitual tensions, spasms and frustration from diminishment of bodily capabilities and psychosomatic tension from withholding emotions of grief and joy. After years of aggressive flow, which admittedly parkour was as a job[6] and due to experiences it provided me as outlined, I found myself somewhat impinged and decrepit. This is how the healing journey started.

Upon embarking on this journey, I researched and practiced various arts and therapies. Among them are the Feldenkrais Method, Osho meditations and therapies, yoga, the Grunwald EyeBody Method, contact improvisation, the Ido Portal Method, process-oriented psychotherapy, trance dance improvisation, taijiquan, Total Immersion swimming, art therapy, creative writing, psychoanalysis, vipassanā meditation and more.

Distilling experientially this jungle of arts, methods and therapies, I came to understand a method that works effectively in the Real. That is, in all the arts practiced by me, I came to view them as systematically placed under the umbrella of the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha. Thus, the plane of knowledge to be revealed throughout the thesis is based on this method.

What is the research methodology?

This is practice-based research. Hence, the method is the praxis. As broadly defined by Lacan, the praxis is a concerted human action, whatever it may be, which places man in a position to treat the real by the symbolic (Lacan 2018, 6). As put by Žižek, for Lacan,

[6] As part of Link Parkour Shanghai I worked as a coach and performance artist.

psychoanalysis at its most fundamental is not a theory and technique of treating psychic disturbances, but a theory and practice that confronts individuals with the most radical dimension of human existence (Žižek 2007, 82/2252). For purposes of this research, I apply the praxis aligned with the above definitions. However, this research praxis goes beyond the main tool of psychoanalysis, namely speech, into such modalities as insight, direct knowing, sitting and standing cultivation, and movement arts. I found that The Noble Eightfold Path is the praxis, which embraces above definitions and modalities.

The Noble Eightfold Path or the Path, as it will be interchangeably used throughout the thesis, is a complete method for this research on embodiment. Each factor of the Path directly affects other factors, thus contributing to a holistic development of the practitioner. This makes it the most suitable method for interdisciplinary research in three ways:

- Working on a certain discipline separately from others will still affect other disciplines; for example, developing theoretical knowledge will contribute to advancements in movement arts and healing.
- Diverse disciplines are brought to reciprocally enriching relationships via the common purpose – liberation from suffering.
- Subtle intricacies and broad fields of knowledge are accessible; for example, theory of the subject is understood via Lacanian and Buddhist frameworks, while detailed engagements with practices of 'benevolent depersonalisation'[7] are covered by meditation and movement arts.

The Path's factors of proper understanding and thought are methods for theoretical research. The Path's goal as a method for thought relevant to this research is 'to confront the most radical dimension of human existence', namely suffering, and to go beyond it. I

[7] Terms 'benevolent depersonalisation' or 'subjective destitution' are coined by Raul Moncayo (Safron 2003, 338/446). They refer to ego-deconstruction in the process of analysis, applied to both analyst and analysand (Moncayo 2012a, 90). In Lacan and Žižek a procedure of *traversing the fantasy* (i.e. seeing through distortions and inconsistencies of our imaginary-symbolic reality and then refusing to cede or give way on the Real of our desire (Wood 2012, 33)) echoes Moncayo's development.

agree with Ajahn Sona[8] that such understanding, which is based on the predicament of human suffering, is proper understanding. I declare that by acknowledging this common human experience, proper understanding leads to a reduction of tension, conflict, and confusion; promotes clarity and harmonious interrelationships between different traditions[9]. Applying this method, I seek to bring a thoroughly developed means of working with human suffering of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Buddha Dhamma closer to each other.

Both traditions offer expedient means in dealing with human suffering. Applying the Path as a method, I found that both Dhamma and psychoanalysis, as practical approaches, lead to a resolution of suffering via the gradual recognition of emptiness of self-existence (no-self or no subject)[10] and the skilful release of stress, which was accumulated due to misrecognition of the latter. These findings are outlined in the first chapter as the Lacanian theory of the Borromean knot and the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination. In my research, the way these two traditions communicate, borrowing J. Garfield's phrase, is through dialogue with one another, in recognising enough commonality of purpose, concern and even method that conversation is possible, but still enough difference in outlook that conversation is both necessary and informative (Garfield 2015, 3). Peculiar differences, pinpointed in this research are:

- **Relationship with desire**. While psychoanalysis works with dialectics of desire (Fink 1999, 46-60), Buddha Dhamma poses desire as the root cause of suffering, which makes it a fetter to be abandoned. As we shall see, these apparent

[8] See Ajahn Sona's series of talks on the Noble Eightfold Path: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM2couEwfT0.
[9] Logic of this statement stems from *proper understanding* as a result of a vipassanā meditation practice. While unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and ownerlessness of phenomena are seen/experienced clearly, it is literally impossible to maintain any conflicting views – they impinge on sense-faculties strongly, causing a lot of mental and physical pain. As proper attitude, cultivation of softening qualities such as loving-kindness and equanimity, is applied, a different path to resolution of conflicting tension opens: a path of expansive release. A resultant mental space is broad and peaceful, it encompasses various conflicting views, as a panoramic view of a battlefield, seeing possibilities for skilful resolution via compassionate understanding and the broader common goal of liberation.
[10] The Buddhist notion of no-self does not conflict with a Lacanian paradigm given that this is precisely a point where both traditions coincide to a significant degree. Both could be said to converge on the Zen formula that 'true self is no-self' or the Lacanian informed formula that 'true subject is no ego.' Both formulas illustrate the realisation that the true subject requires the symbolic death or deconstruction of imaginary ego-identifications and representations. (Moncayo 2003,349/446)

differences are more reconcilable than it appears. In particular, through rendering of *objet a*, the object cause of desire, which in Lacan appears as 'nothing but confusion' (Žižek 2007, 1080/2252). And through Buddhist notion of wise desire (Pāli: chanda) as different from craving (Pāli: taṇhā).

- **Historical and cultural contexts**. Psychoanalysis originated in the European historical and cultural milieu succeeding the Industrial Revolution, where the religious worldview that had dominated Western culture was no longer functioning in a cohesive and fully viable fashion (Safran 2003, 3/446). Drawing from Greek heritage and the enlightenment era, psychoanalysis was confronting the remaining influence of a Catholic patriarchal culture. In post-war Europe, psychoanalytic praxis, through Lacan, continued engaging with a wide scope of knowledge such as 'hard sciences', structuralism, theory of language, literature, art, topology and continental philosophy. Buddha Dhamma, on the other hand, in its mythos is situated in a measureless cosmos, which originates from 'beginningless times' and exists in cycles of creation and destruction throughout infinite *kalpas* (Gethin 1998, 164-170). However, at present we're dealing with a very diverse historical and cultural milieu of Buddhism, which includes India starting from the 5th - 4th century BC[11], Thailand and Sri Lanka from 3rd century BC, China from 1st century CE, Korea and Japan from 5th-6th centuries CE, Tibet from 8th century CE, and 'the West' roughly from 19th-21st century. This substantial difference of contexts makes two traditions virtually incompatible; however, human individuals' internal functioning obeys a very specific set of structural laws, as we shall see later, looking in details at the structure of the human subject.

[11] Jeremy D. Safran in the Introduction *to Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: The Unfolding Dialogue* compares the socio-historical circumstances of development peculiar to psychoanalysis with Buddhism. In both cases it was a time of social transformation. In 5th century BC India, rural society and agricultural economy were gradually being replaced by urban centres and urban economies (Safran 2003, 10/446). India's static and conservative cast society didn't permeate social change and individual conscience; however, newly emerging culturally diverse merchant class was challenging this framework. In 19th century Europe industrialisation was at its peak, which led to a class struggle in society and a devaluation of religious worldviews.

- **Cosmological context**. The subject of psychoanalysis is a human individual experiencing a symptom or array of symptoms, located in the context of the western patriarchal bourgeoise family, inheriting a baggage of European historical, religious and epistemological development. Whereas Buddha Dhamma locates the subject, who experiences suffering, in a complex mandala of the cosmos, embracing timeless realms of desire, form and formlessness, without exercising a regard for specific historical influence. And yet, cultural contexts of countries, where development of Buddhism as we know it today took place, leaves specific touches and flavors. This includes the Hindu Brahmanical doctrine, characterised by the patriarchal familial structure, from which Siddhārtha Gautama breaks free in favor of being a *samana*, i.e. a homeless ascetic searching for liberation from endless repetition of life and death (Williams 2002, 12). An account of transmigrations led by desire are made in rendering the Buddhist model of Three worlds through the idea of equivalence of cosmology and psychology, namely determining a factor of conditioning via materiality of the signifier[12] and the resulting consequences of dwelling in the world.
- **Models of the human subject**. For Lacanian psychoanalytic theory the subject is the subject of unconscious, i.e. existing in reference to undergirding psychic fields or registers, namely Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. The subject is thus comprised of permutations of desire: to be an imaginary object of (m)other's desire, a symbolic function of father's law and insisting surplus of transgressive enjoyment, which resists signification (Wood 2012, 34). Within this model, repetition of the subject's symptom creates a binding link, which holds registers together (Moncayo 2012b, 61). The human subject as per Buddha Dhamma is constitutive of five psychophysical aggregates, whereas the subject's unconscious functioning is outlined by the doctrine of Dependent Origination. In the latter, the driving force is, indeed, desire, namely craving for life. It is here

[12] Lacanian materialism as a theme of modern scholarship (Eyers 2011) is of interest to this research only to the extent in which it concerns the structure of the subject.

that familiarity of two traditions is the most striking. Within ‘ a larger container’ of beginningless cosmos, where beings transmigrate in search of fulfillment and resolution of stress, the contemporary situation offers non-theistic discourses, daring and complex enough to elucidate fundamental universal predicaments of humanity, namely desire, lack and myth of benevolent transcendence, in a way both rewriting and enriching, but in essence rediscovering that, which I here refer to as ‘proper understanding’.

The praxis as a method is neither pertaining to comparative philosophy, nor to approaches in ‘paralleling’ discourses of eastern and western traditions as Garfield (2002) evoked and Gregory (2008) developed. The Path, which treats the real by the symbolic, namely relating Dhamma, psychoanalytic theory, Daoist internal arts and movement arts to experiences of suffering, unknowing and depersonalisation, is radically empirical and subjective approach. However, I argue it cannot be otherwise regarding the research topic, which is to understand properly and integrate subjective encounters with the Real. Here discourses and methods of various traditions interpenetrate, thereby approaching the problem of suffering from multiple angels, which takes it out of purely academic context and transformatively relates it to the lived experience. In such a way knowledge gained through analysis is directly applied to cause the internal change.

The Path’s factors of proper mindfulness, effort and concentration encompassed by practices of satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā and taijiquan are methods for practical research. These practices are the groundwork, which provides due diligence, focus, cultivation and insight. Further, through factors of proper, action, speech and livelihood, the Path actualises results of the research in the form of creative works and the development of the plane of non-conceptual knowledge, which I refer to as ‘Embodiment’ of the Real. It is encompassed by lifelong practices of movement arts and phenomenological accounts of experience in relation to effective resolution of the trauma of loss.

Proper action as per movement arts is the core method of this practice-based research. I believe that movement art is a form of non-conceptual knowledge, which directly contributes to cessation of suffering. Time and time again the practice of movement was bringing me to the ‘other shore’ of stress and trauma. I believe that such an

idiosyncratic or direct approach allows a more fulfilling conveying of the topic of 'unfathomable experience', which as many traditions of Buddhism agree, going beyond suffering is (Dumoulin 1998).[13] Analytical understanding alone is not enough to give due justice to complexity of human beings. There is a great deal of freedom and happiness that come from dwelling skilfully in the body. The movement arts also offer antidotes to a variety of unwholesome mental states. In the larger container of proper understanding and thought, these means are skillful additions to fields of traditional Buddhist practice and psychoanalysis.

In rendering such an application of the Path, I follow the way of the *field of action* (Pāli: kammaṭṭhāna)[14]. As described by Venerable Luang por Paññavaddho,[15] the field of action is the whole of what we do in the scope of meditation practice. It implies finding individual methods for overcoming problems that arise in the practice. It implies being innovative and often leads to a development of quite different meditation techniques or re-appropriation of traditional techniques (Sīlaratano 2014, 143). Movement arts can be understood as falling into this category.

The Noble Eightfold Path as a holistic method leading beyond attachment, aversion and delusion is illustrated through creative video works, featuring a praxis leading to

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[13] Professor Dumoulin extensively traces this topic in chapter 1 – 'The Mystical element in Early Buddhism and Hinayana', chapter 2 – 'Mysticism within Mahayana', and chapter 6 – 'The High Period of Chinese Zen' of his volume *The History of Zen Buddhism.* He shows how enlightenment in Zen Buddhism is the path towards the Absolute and how it leads via multiple pathways often beyond the analytical mind.

[14] In Thai Forest Tradition kammaṭṭhāna is defined as 'the basis of work', where 'work' refers to uprooting existence, defilement, craving and ignorance. Forty meditation subjects are kammaṭṭhānas from which a practitioner may choose those most suitable for their character. (Maha Boowa 2018, 3)
Visuddhimagga refers to a practitioner eager to develop the Path: 'He should sever any of the ten impediments that he may have. He should then approach the good friend, the giver of a meditation subject, and he should apprehend from among the forty meditation subjects one that suits his own temperament.' (Buddhaghosa 2010, 86) Whereas ten impediments are: dwelling, family, gain, class, building, travel, kin, affliction, books, supernormal powers; a good friend is one who attained destruction of fetters, developed jhāna, who knows Pitakas and commentaries, 'his instructions and his answers to questions are purified by his having approached such and such teachers, and so he will explain a meditation subject showing a broad track, like a big elephant going through a stretch of jungle, and he will select suttas and reasons from here and there, adding [explanations of] what is suitable and unsuitable' (Buddhaghosa 2010, 95); forty meditation subjects are ten kasinas (totalities), ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception (of repulsiveness in nutriment), one defining (of four elements); and six kinds of temperament are greedy, hating, deluded, faithful, intelligent, speculative. (Buddhaghosa 2010, 86-105)

[15] Luang por Paññavaddho is the senior-most western disciple of Luang por Maha Boowa, who was considered by his contemporaries to be an arahant.

abandonment of those three 'root poisons'. I consider skilful movement to be the embodiment of the Path. Versatility of movement arts is seen as a dynamic extension of meditation. For one, it introduces new planes of freedom, realised via insight, into the nervous system of an individual, enabling them to live this new, fulfilling experience. Conversely, movement practice is a source of the insight, while meditation, dwelling in stillness, is a way to embody it.

The Path as a method sets limits to this research, such as what is relevant to the immediate goal of alleviation of suffering in the human being. Philosophical, epistemological and historical implications of Buddhist and psychoanalytic practices are not the field of interest of this research. Rather, practices of reducing stress and healing the trauma of shattering encounters with materiality and mortality of existence are. The Path, as I will argue later, is universally applicable to human being as irrespective of their backgrounds. The Path's goal outlines the common spiritual aspiration of humanity, i.e. freedom from stress, pain, sorrow and confusion. As an effective method of approaching this goal, the Path leads to the Absolute, where multiplicities of the world converge.

Such is the method for this practice-based interdisciplinary investigation on embodiment, placed within the larger container of human existence and liberation from suffering, as per Buddha Dhamma and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Further development of the Path as a method can be found in chapter two, The Noble Eightfold Path.

What are the creative works?

Pushing Hands – is a short video featuring myself and my teacher Steven Kelly practicing various fixed pushing hands patterns and neutralising exercises of the Huang Xingxian taijiquan system. It was filmed in Melbourne, Australia.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/2g7GqLIxJkXYeBi

Additional link to download:
https://mega.nz/#!q15kjagJ!lJvq1Q5_SQaF0p7kPaOB0Yr16v8OzPD4qlYxrtenS1g

The Living – is a video featuring a practice of movement improvisation drawn from martial arts, taijiquan and locomotion. This practice is based on the spontaneous integration of various movement languages in order to integrate and embody symptomatic landscapes at hand. It was filmed in Melbourne, Australia. Music is Marcelo Berges – 'La Lucha Indigena'.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/65kGOllMuVoEDt7

Additional link to download:

https://mega.nz/#!HkYj3aYI!embzlkr0hjFG1-JQloYR7asZQ8p2r_b338cQYuyvMZ4

A Glimpse of Infinity – is a video featuring the practice of cultivating the body of the Real. It is a compilation of vigorous conditioning methods of parkour, martial arts, art of balance and insight meditation. It was filmed in Railay, Thailand. Music is Sphongle – 'Divine Moments of Truth'.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/NKH8B17CoDZLkMh

Additional link to download:

https://mega.nz/#!PwZTnI7B!iBOfkQMIHHoAg6Z183Y6y0MrNKnLo6AL9eJexqRV028

Embodiment of the Real – is a video summarising practices of interaction with oneself and the space, which fosters liberation from suffering via practices of insight meditation, taijiquan, parkour and swimming. Various segments of the video were filmed in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Melbourne, Australia.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/vdKXtW9WYkw1fB8

Additional link to download:

https://mega.nz/#!qsQHyIQI!f9o9QZfFubcopaS2nfNiIGpH9FMaGOvVY8K7H879bYc

Evanescence – is a video of a live movement improvisation, filmed at the Fitzroy Mills car park in Melbourne, Australia. The video is left unedited and raw, with dialogue following the improvisation.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/HWQ8b2RLGhfgaWJ

Additional link to download:

https://mega.nz/#!OxBxiYSL!8bXD8ses_l44NcQIaPC3WJnskbS60lDQoT0JgogPtG8

Samma Patipada – is a video of standing cultivation practices, loosening exercises, Taijiquan form and sitting cultivation practice. It was filmed in various locations in Victoria, including Lake Mountain, Redwood Forest in East Warburton and seaside in Cape Schanck.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/iigEf2uYLYZbnAC

Additional link to download:

https://mega.nz/#!LwBDiIhY!ifIT1m_A6nPcHUH60rzMeaC2Aq6IVGuYKHkUdFQXhvw

The Dream – is a video of a live dance performance piece dedicated to the passing and rebirth of my parents. It was choreographed based on reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It was performed at the Melaka Arts and Performance Festival 2016, Melaka, Malaysia. Music is David Shea – 'Ritual 32'.

Link to download:

https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/kIQkse9KUPtU2G8

Additional ink to download:

https://mega.nz/#!PgRVQKAY!v97eek8WNbWsaXs8M9dh36JW0flmJAtEr3wcSDM4cSQ

Extended accounts of creative works can be found in Appendix E – Creative Works.

What 'new knowledge' does the research seek to reveal?

The plane of knowledge to be revealed in my thesis aims to bring theories of the subject as per Lacanian psychoanalysis and the Buddha Dhamma into relationship. It expands further, introducing the practice of movement arts as a way of embodiment of contingent intensities pertaining to the Real. In such a way, it attempts to weave together conceptual and experiential dimensions of the human experience.

This plane of knowledge is widely reliant on the practical experience of movement arts. It also utilises methods of creative imagination and poetry to convey those experiences ungraspable via conceptual thinking alone.

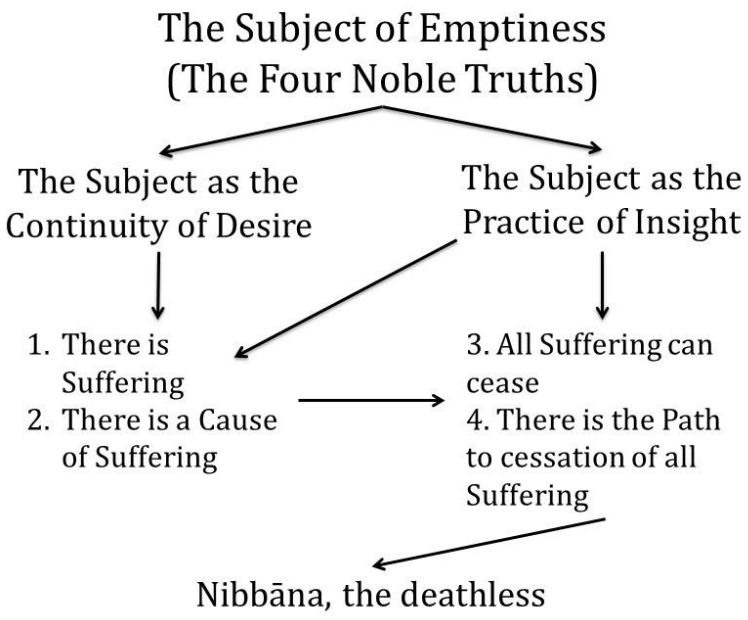
In this way, I seek to demonstrate how the practice of movement arts adds to traditional practices of psychoanalysis and meditation by skillful means of specific methods of embodiment. I show that skillful means of movement arts, if properly applied, greatly attribute to liberation from the unbearable traumatic residue of the conditioned 'becoming' process. That is, via the movement arts, the shattering experiences of encountering characteristics of existence (suffering, impermanence and no-self), which point to the subject's materiality and mortality, are integrated as fertile soil for insight and wisdom.

The interdisciplinary method of this research allows already existent fields of knowledge and practice to correlate with each other, thereby opening new possibilities for efficient resolution of suffering and stress.

Chapter 1 – The subject of Emptiness

The first chapter aims to establish in theory *proper understanding* of the human subjectivity as a skilful way to alleviate encounters with the Real. It is to be done via a correlative synthesis of the Lacanian model of the Borromean knot, the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination and the model of the five aggregates. The place and the function of the Real are to be located within each model.

This chapter does not aim to give a wide account on Lacanian psychoanalysis or the Buddha Dhamma. Its goal is to shape a general plane, where these traditions converge to a common purpose: the eradication of suffering. It seeks to answer the research questions: What is the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis? And how does the Real correlate with the Buddha Dhamma?



Scheme 1: The subject of Emptiness as a progression of insight from suffering to liberation[16]

[16] The Four Noble Truths as first expounded in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth,* translated from the Pali by Ñanamoli Thera. See,

Throughout this and all other chapters, phenomenological accounts from the researcher's own creative writing practice are employed to illustrate practices and experiences in a poetic way. I believe that such accounts will contribute to a more substantial conveying of the topic.[17] In this chapter, I intend to show how identification with self arises, relying on the central Buddhist teaching, the Four Noble Truths.

The subject as the continuity of desire

I define the initial stage of the subject's development and the corresponding model of subjectivity as 'the continuity of desire to be'. This subchapter shows how desire to be corresponds with the first two Noble Truths. Stepping ahead, identification with self is suffering and the cause of it is a desire to be. Since it is psychoanalysis that elucidates in detail intricacies of desire at work, I rely on Lacanian model of subjectivity to render this argument. To render implications of desirous becoming in cosmological context I rely on Buddhist models of Dependent Origination and Three Worlds.

The subject as the practice of insight corresponds to the third and fourth Noble Truths. Again, stepping ahead, the cause of self-identification ceases through proper understanding, which plants a seed for experiential realisation of cessation of suffering. Gradual application of the Path leads to this realisation. This is to be unfolded in chapters two and three further relying on the Lacanian model and the model of Five Aggregates.

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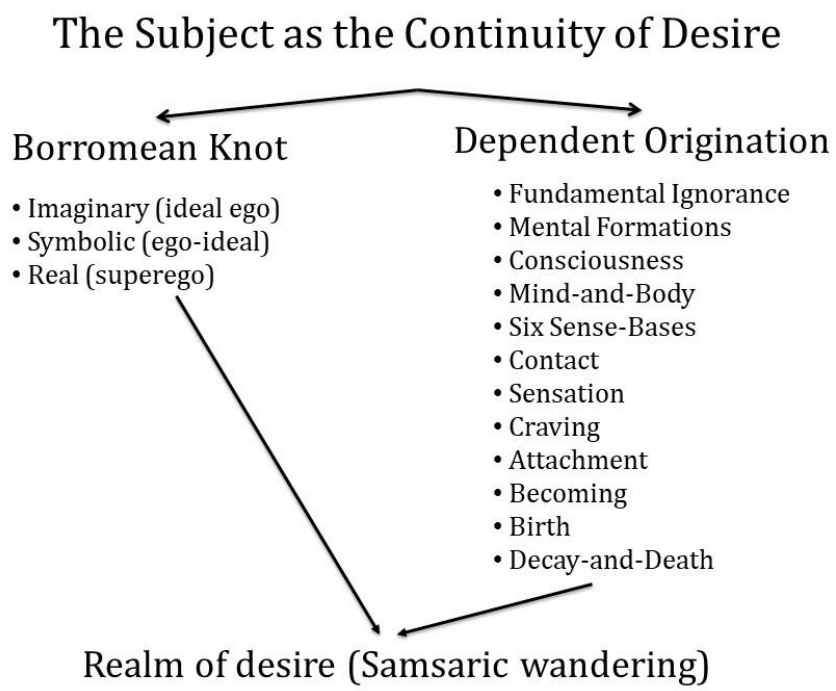
https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.nymo.html. Other schemes in the thesis are composed by drawing from the above web-resource on Buddha Dhamma.

[17] Garfield made a distinction between surface phenomenology and deep phenomenology, whereby that which we find in 'sophisticated introspection' (surface) is underlined and largely determined by the fundamental cognitive, affective and perceptual processes (deep). He classifies the Buddhist doctrine and practice as deep phenomenology (Garfield 2015, 181). This is, I believe, what poetic accounts of experience as provided can disclose. Moreover, since that which comprises the subject is empty of self-nature and lacks constancy, all that a researcher of human beings can access are fleeting phenomena, therefore phenomenological accounts are the (only) viable source of knowledge in this field.

This thesis will move further into the study of Buddhist practices showing how they and movement arts can contribute to alleviating contingencies of encounter with the Real, as per Lacanian psychoanalysis. In such a way it'll be shown how two views of the subjectivity are complimentary in constituting what I call 'the subject of Emptiness' – a process originating from the unenlightened condition nominated as 'self' and gradually leading to realisation of truth of the way things are, namely 'not-self', facilitated by the plethora of practices I refer to as 'Embodiment' of the Real.

Here I recommend referring to the Appendix A – Theoretical context for the account of discourses and sources addressed to shape the argument of this research.



Scheme 2: The subject as the continuity of desire[18]

[18] I refer to the continuity of desire as a condition of being immersed in the realm of desire (see 'Three worlds' subchapter). It is illustrated by models of three registers and Dependent Origination.

The Borromean knot

The Imaginary

According to Lacan's 'mirror stage' theory, a nascent subject identifies with her own reflection in the mirror. It allows an infant to establish an illusory grounding within the transience of bodily manifestations.

Eyers writes:

> 'Motor coordination at this stage of development is limited and the child is totally dependent on a primary caregiver for the most basic of life preserving activities. Further, the child experiences his or her undeveloped motor skills as the evidence of a fragmented, dissipated body, a body unmasterable in its demands and elusive as a unity…
>
> The mirror image, then, provides the first explication of unity for the child, sculpting a bridge between the chaotic experiences of movement and motor (in)coordination and the static surface of the image presented.' (Eyers 2012, 20)

Discontinuity of bodily presence pushes a human infant to acquire an initial form of fixity within the transience: an illusory totality of the mirror image. Lacan writes in relation to the mirror stage that:

> 'it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual Gestalt of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity, a salutary *imago*; it is invested with all the original distress resulting from the child's intra-organic and relational discordance.' (Lacan 1977, 21)

It is worth noting, stepping ahead, that this initial kinetic chaos is the ground for embodiment. Its phantom-like flows of intensities – a characteristic of impermanence – are the focus for the immersion of insight during vipassanā meditation, while motor unskilfulness is a focus for mastering via means of the movement arts.

Continuing with the Imaginary, a further illusory stabilisation happens via the formation of the ideal ego, the ego-ideal and the superego. According to Žižek:

> 'Lacan introduces a precise distinction between these three terms: the 'ideal ego' stands for the idealized self-image of the subject (the way I would like to be, I would like others to see me); the ego-ideal is the agency whose gaze I try to impress with my ego image, the big Other who watches over me and propels me to give my best, the ideal I try to follow and actualize; and the superego is this same agency in its revengeful, sadistic, punishing aspect.' (Žižek 2007, 1253)

Formation of these structures marks the subject's immersion into a web of conditioning predisposed by a locality, a heredity, an initial helplessness/unskilfulness and a co-dependency. Further, Žižek correlates these three ego formations with the three registers: ideal ego is imaginary, the 'small other', the idealised mirror-image; ego-ideal is symbolic, the point in the big Other, from which I observe (and judge) myself; superego is real, the cruel and insatiable agency, that bombards me with impossible demands and mocks at my attempts to meet them, in which eyes I'm the more guilty, the more I try to suppress my 'sinful' cravings (Žižek 2007, 1260). It is these correlatives that propel the subject towards the insatiable search for fulfillment in the Realm of Desire. Yet it's worth pointing out again that the blueprint of this conditioning is the identification with the image of the (m)other's desire. Moncayo writes:

> ‘According to Lacan’s theory of the mirror phase, when the child captures his/her reflected image in the mirror, he/she acquires an unsubstantial bodily ego-representation. Lacan links the ego to the imaginary because in his view the ego is tied up to the self-image, to how the self sees itself reflected in the mirror-like surface of the other. Lacan postulates that the evanescent immaterial reflection of a bodily ego in the mirror represents a concretisation of the mother’s object of desire: “Oh! So it is this who my mother desires or does not desire.” Thus, the specular image, the image in the mirror, occupies the same structural position as the fantasised *objet a*, that constitutes the cause of the mother’s desire. According to Lacan, the individual derives his/her own self-image and body image, his/her narcissism, from an early identification with the mother and her desire. The first total ego-image is framed according to the desire of the other. *The ego is a case where the subject constitutes a fantasy object for the mother.*[19] It is the identification with this imaginary object that lies behind the identification of an imagenic bodily ego-representation.’ (Moncayo 2012a, 91-92)

I conclude that in the way described above a seemingly endless plethora of psychokinetic intensities is reduced to the intensities that sustain the image desired by the (m)other. It is this image that is (mis)taken for right, perfect, and satisfactory. Eyers further elaborates implications of this identification, known in Lacanian corpus as the ‘primary narcissism’:

> ‘Even after the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the antagonism between Imaginary formations and Symbolic co-ordinates can be identified as a primary source of anxiety for the subject, and the subtle implication of the importance of the ‘symbolic matrix’ even at this early stage in child development provides an early glimpse of this. By the point at which *objet petit a*[20] has emerged out of the concept

[19] Italicised by the candidate.
[20] Italicised by the candidate.

of the ideal-ego, it is the radical instability of surplus desire that is posited by Lacan as the result of imagistic identification, rather far from any notion of the Imaginary as a suturing function.' (Eyers 2011)

An adjacent reason behind the formation of the Imaginary is fragmentation[21]. Given that a nascent subject is located in the pool of intensities of the Real, it is what Lacan calls 'imagos of the fragmented body' (Lacan 1977, 13) that are present in an infant's psyche. Lacan alludes to the observation of children aged between two and five playing, in whom these images arise spontaneously, which is 'corroborated by the experience of the doll torn to pieces' (Lacan 1977, 13). Images at stake are associated with 'castration, emasculation, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, and bursting open of the body' (Lacan 1977, 13). To protect oneself from this horrifying imagos, a nascent subject resolves jubilantly to an illusory wholeness of one's reflection and attaches oneself to it, as Eyers points out, at the expense of further anxiety-producing conflicts between this wholeness and the Symbolic law, represented by the ambivalent figure of the Other.

Having woken up, I hear raindrops, the metallic 'ding' of the fall on the vestibule roof outside the window of my room. It is evocative of immobility. I can't disturb the unity. It is the unity of falling rain, its soothing poise, and myself, that very self, encapsulated in the body, cuddled in the blanket, still, mesmerised by peace. It has always been idyllic: bodily comfort, protected by the denial of activity of transcending and overcoming, demanded by life, inspired by the father. It is the restfulness of embracing water, which mother ocean birthed living creatures into. Without drowning excess, this unity, devoid of shape, demand, desire, a simple stillness of undisturbed dwelling, is not possible to abandon.

I can hear rain like that, allowing my mind to be drowned by the feeling, so other-worldly, beyond pleasure, so calm, that its intimacy is not even comparable to mother's

[21] Lacan writes: 'The narcissistic representation explains the oneness of the human body; but why must this oneness be established? Precisely because man is painfully aware of the threat of fragmentation, fear of which installs itself in the first six months of biological prematuration.' (Roudinesco 1999, 112, quoting from 'Vues paleobiologiques et biopsychiques', *Revue française de psychoanalyse* 3 (1938))

embrace. Mother is a human, she is inconsistent, she changes. Rain just falls, just renounces, denies its existence in being absorbed by the earth. Lucidity of its drops on wide and coarse sunflower leaves alludes to the sublime. It is neither right nor pleasurable, wet water, flooding the heart with air, nourishing, necessary, better than any food, serene, only real in being felt into until full absorption of the one who feels occurs.

Such is that very self, swelling with sublime acceptance of impersonal beauty, merging in the imaginary real, which has only one signifier worthy of it – magical.

The Symbolic

The register of the Symbolic arises at the moment of introduction of a signifier. It is not arising subsequent to the Imaginary. Lacan states:

> 'In the symbolic order the totality is called a universe. The symbolic order from the first takes on its universal character. It isn't constituted bit by bit. As soon as the symbol arrives, there is a universe of symbols.' (Lacan 1988, 29)

Eyers argues that the development of the ego, situated principally in the domain of the Imaginary, requires isolated, proto-Symbolic elements, what he calls 'signifiers-in-isolation', to map the fragile emergence of an alienated subjectivity (Eyers 2011). This conceptual figure explains that the primacy of the image is sustained by minimal symbolic elements, registering at the egoic level what Lacan will later define as the 'materiality' of language in its earliest instance, a signifier abstracted from relations of meaning, reduced to an abstract form of placing or coordination (Eyers 2011).

The symbolic universe is comparable to Indra's net,[22] composed of signifiers, which precedes the subject and thus structures the subject's unconscious discourse. It is the knowledge enveloping a 'small mind' of imaginary ego, which the subject enters via speaking, conceptual and analytical thinking, and ascribing of meaning. Moncayo writes:

> 'The symbolic frees the subject from the imaginary but also leaves him/her with the subjection/alienation/division produced by language and the subjection to the law and the Name of the Father.' (Moncayo 2012a, 131-132)

Signifying structures thus further organise the chaotic materiality of bodily intensities and help to establish the subject within the realm of language and culture. Entering the Symbolic order allows resolving of the Oedipus complex (namely, the identification of a nascent subject with the (m)other's desire) via the institution of the paternal law and the key signifiers, which Lacan calls 'the Name of the Father'. Thus the logic of demand inherent to the primary narcissism of the Imaginary is nuanced with the metonymy of desire in the signifier (Eyers 2012, 42).

Upon arising into the Symbolic, the subject gains freedom within Indra's net of signifiers and signified, to use Saussure's terminology (Homer 2005, 38). Yet being within the order of the Symbolic is always constrained by the sign itself, since it is a desire of someone else (the Name of the Father), framed by syntax, grammar and punctuation peculiar to the way that crucial 'someone else' applies them.[23] Moncayo continues:

> 'The determination and alienation produced in language and by language as an Other to the self or ego, needs to be understood as a function of the imaginary

[22] Indra's net in Mahayana Buddhism is a metaphor for the interdependent nature of phenomena. Moncayo refers to this concept the following way: 'What gives structure is the Other-dependent nature, Indra's net (a metaphor developed in the Mahayana Avatamsaka sutra), or what Lacan calls the symbolic order, not the ego. The representational world is not a substructure of the ego. It is actually the other way around: the ego is a formation of the representational world or an imaginary apprehension of the symbolic order.' (Moncayo 2012a, 35)

[23] Here I refer to verbal idiosyncrasies observable in what Saussure calls '*Parole'* – i.e. language in use, specific speech acts or utterances. (Homer 2005, 37)

relationship which the ego has with language and the Symbolic. For the ego who wishes to be the master of his/her own house, language and the unconscious appear as a burdensome, egodystonic, symptom-producing determining structure. The ego wishes to stake a small claim on the Symbolic by saying "I speak, therefore I am", whereas from a broader perspective, the ego is only a drop, or a wave at most, in the large ocean of historical and symbolic experience (the Other).' (Moncayo 2012a, 132)

Within the symbolic Other the subject is no more than a metaphor and a name in relation to other metaphors and names. By virtue of identification the subject assimilates an aspect or a trait of another subject, thus constructing a rhizome of signifiers-in-relation,[24] which is self-sustaining. However, even this abundance of signifiers, subjectivities, and ways of being to identify with does not fulfil the subject. Soon enough there comes a discovery that the Symbolic father too, just as the Imaginary mother, is lacking. Moncayo points out that Lacan finds support for the concept of the Symbolic father in the Holy Writ. The Symbolic father of the Bible either does not respond with a name, is nameless, or responds with letters the meaning of which is unclear (Safran 2003, 380/446).

What fulfils the subject is precisely the point of impossibility, repetition and insistence that resists all interpretation (Eyers 2012, 45). That opaque and mysterious entanglement where a meshwork of signification forms a 'navel' – impenetrable to further analysis – is a domain of the Real.

[24]Eyers coins the following concepts to condense Lacan's multifarious terms relating to language into their most pertinent, opposing characteristics: the signifier-in-relation designates the signifier as it exists negatively, defined purely by relation to other signifiers and producing meaning as the result of its perpetual displacement along the axes of metaphor and metonymy, while the signifier-in-isolation designates the signifier as Real, isolated in its material element away from the networks of relation that render it conducive to meaning (Eyers 2012, 32). The concept of signifier-in-isolation, or the Real as it appears within the Symbolic, will be compared in chapter two with the Yogācāric concept of 'afflictive mentation', as a foundation of the unconscious grasping for the experience of life.

At the age of eight, having decided firmly to stop sicknesses of all sorts, I started waking up early to do morning exercises. Propelling insistence to stop being subjected to contingency and motivation from someone so strong and impeccable was crucial. He wasn't up to make me. I read, I reflected, I acted accordingly. Without regard to the cold, every morning I was articulating this body, doing pushups, squats and pull-ups without missing a day, without succumbing to sleepiness.

By the age of ten I was an electric wire wrapped in elastic flesh. Movement and daring were everything. I was to be brave; I was to accomplish; I was to be the best. I enjoyed it. I entered every challenge with dignified jubilation. I worshipped the sun. In the Ussuri river, pushed by some wings, I swam to its midpoint and floated, my hands cushioning my head, and stared into the blue abyss of a summer sky, smelling sweet air, feeling cool water, knowing so precisely, undoubtedly, that I'm invincible, that I've achieved this by my own efforts, that I made myself stand tall and fully embrace nature's elements. They were my friends, devoid of contingency, spurting with vitality, inviting to play and live victoriously, materialising dreams.

I heard his voice from the shore, warning me to not swim far, feeling his gaze, his presence, safeguarding me from sinking. I had him – I had the whole world. Forever.

It was the next winter that he fell.

The Real

First, the Real is that which is beyond the domains of the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The Real is continuously implicit and insistent, yet unassimilable by the subject. As such it is a domain of extraordinary bodily experiences. It is a domain of intensities, oscillations, energetic whirlpools and vicissitudes, which have not yet been symbolised, remain to be symbolised or resist symbolisation (Fink 1995, 25). It is a domain of pure energy, opaque, unclear, undivided, a radical fullness/emptiness. Bruce Fink writes:

> ‘The Real is, for example, an infant’s body “before” it comes under the sway of the symbolic order, before it is subjected to toilet training and instructed in the ways of the world… Taking Freud’s notion of polymorphous perversity to the extreme, we can view the infant’s body as but one unbroken erogenous zone, there being no privileged zones, no areas in which pleasure is circumscribed at the outset.’ (Fink 1995, 24)

The residual or unsymbolised Real of signifiers-in-isolation forms a ‘navel’, a centre of gravity around which the Symbolic circumscribes without ever reaching it. Since the Real is impossible, impenetrable to interpretation, only that which denotes it within the Symbolic and Imaginary can point to it. In a Lacanian framework, this falls under the function of the symptom. Lacan states:

> ‘For analysis not to be an infinite process, for it to find its own internal limit, the analyst's interpretation, which bears upon the signifier, must also reach the Real of the symptom, that is, the point where the symbolically non-meaningful latches onto the Real, where the first signifiers heard by the subject have left their imprint.’ (Lacan 1989, 14)

According to Lacan, to reach its endpoint, an analysis must modify the relationship of the subject to the Real, which is an irreducible whole in the Symbolic from which the subject's fantasy and desire derive. Here the significance of the Real as one of the fundamental registers of human psyche is evident. Here the significance of the symptom (fixation, trauma, impossibility, obsession, stagnation, etc.) is also evident.

To further denote the structure of the Borromean knot thus concluding on the summary of the Lacanian subject I will address concepts of the sinthome, the unary trait/trace and jouissance. As Moncayo writes:

'The sinthome highlights positive as well as Real dimensions of the symptom. The ego is a symptom in the sense that it is meant to cover a hole, in the same way that a delusion is meant to cover a hole in the signifying chain. Jung's concept of individuation, as a humanistic striving towards wholeness, can be understood as an imaginary attempt to close the hole within the whole. The only possible way to close the hole within the whole is to leave the hole open and empty. In other words, self-realization is the same as the realization that there is no enduring self, only a series of processes and transformations held together by a unary trace.'[25] (Moncayo 2012b, 61)

Elsewhere put by Eyers:

'It is as if, by developing his theory of the 'sinthome' in the 1970s, the symptom recast as Real, Lacan has taken what he had previously assumed to be a materiality localised in signification, and raised it to the function of a quasi-transcendental condition for Being as such. There, Lacan redefines the symptom as "the way in which each subject enjoys the unconscious, in so far as the unconscious determines him."[26] Just as sense relies on material non-sense, so psychoanalytic Being relies on

[25] The unary trait as a minimal Symbolic form of identification via which the nascent subject, immersed in the proto-significatory melee of primary narcissism, can find the way past the 'opacity' of the real signifier (Eyers 2011, 44) represents something, a moment at which he [the subject] is inserted into the structure of language (Eyers quotes from Lacan's Seminar 9, lesson of 17 January 1962). Moncayo renders the unary trait as that which points to the fact that identifications are mostly partial traits, such as ideas and (ego-)ideals that populate the Other of society as the sources of identification (Moncayo 2012b, 2). At the same time Moncayo points at Lacan's distinction (without distinction) between the unary trait and what he calls the unary trace, which is 'the absolute difference, a groundless ground for identity beyond the trappings of primary and secondary narcissism and the master's discourse' (Moncayo 2012b, 2). Eyers exemplifies the latter in Lacan's work tracing development of Lacan's concepts in regards of identity formation, namely from the 'letter' to the unary trait. Such a trait, Lacan argues, is found 'at the limit of the Cartesian experience' as a 'guarantor, of the most simple structural trait, of the unique trait, absolutely depersonalised … not merely of subjective content, but even of all variation which goes beyond this single trait, of this trait which is one by being the single trait' (Eyers 2011, 44, quoting Lacan's Seminar 9, lesson of 22 November 1961). Moncayo links the unary trace to an emptiness of consciousness (and the unconscious) that stimulates the psyche to be continually re-written.

[26] Here Eyers quotes Lacan's unpublished manuscript, 'Le Sinthome'.

> a singular point of non-Being, uniting in its insistence what might otherwise scatter and skid on the movements of the signifier.' (Eyers 2011)

For Moncayo a unary trace is a ground zero of the process of signification: it is the vanishing point of identifying with traits of others. As soon as the Symbolic structure and the unconscious produce an event of inscription they disappear (unless being held onto via attachment – imaginary grasping and craving for – which are at the core of the ego as the symptom). This disappearance is what stimulates the psyche to be continually re-written or to 'not stop being written' as well as to have the opposite characteristic of being under permanent erasure (Moncayo 2012b, 3). This entails an absence of any enduring self and the inherent freedom of the subject. As Eyers puts it, that which 'scatters and skids on the movements of the signifier' relies on empty non-sense. Material substantiality of the latter is nevertheless foundational and real for subjective functioning. It is this real and empty core, which supports the transient multiplicity of the subject.

> 'The unary trace explains how identity can be single and multiple as well as constant and unsubstantial at the same time. The first has important implications for cross-cultural identity in a postcolonial world, whereas the second explains how I can be the same and not the same person at any given time as a necessary condition for the healthy functioning of the subject.' (Moncayo 2012b, 3)

Thus, along with the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, the sinthome is a fourth, binding ring of the Borromean knot. In Buddhist terms, its binding quality denotes a potentiality of insight and liberation concealed within the symptom. The binding happens via the agency of what Moncayo calls 'benevolent jouissance'.

In the case of the Rat Man, Freud identified 'horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware' and then noted that 'patients derive certain satisfaction from their sufferings' (Fink 1995, 60). Jouissance is a 'kick' that the subject gets from bearing through

the suffering of their symptoms due to not being able to abandon symptoms altogether.[27] A jouissance crisis, (i.e. when a habitual mode of bearing is not working) signifies a dispassion – a wearing out of attachment – comparable to a stage of the insight practice, where 'mind turns away from suffering.'[28]

Jouissance for Lacan means that immediate discharge of pleasure becomes bridled by symbolic means, that is, internalised parental prohibitions, society's values, and so on (Fink 1999, 168), in short, by the Other's desire. However, it is within the Symbolic, namely at 'a ground zero of the process of signification' that the subject can release the painful-pleasurable attachment to suffering in the symptom, linked to an inconvenient or destructive form of jouissance. In contrast to that, the unary trace represents emptiness of the Symbolic order, which becomes an ennobling form of jouissance, the luminous human face of the void (Moncayo 2012b, 63).

> 'The unary trace resists binary linking that divides the One and destroys jouissance. The unary trace or the One manifests the plenitude of the Real in the form of a benevolent jouissance. When dual or binary linking is resisted and the lack is left open, then out of the empty navel of the Real emerges or evolves Name of the Father[29], as a nameless name, or a unary trace, that re-links the registers to one another. This name is nameless because there is no repressed signifier that could give the name its signification: it is because it is.' (Moncayo 2012b, 63)

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[27] Bruce Fink gives an account of a 'kick' someone may get from being cruel, inflicting punishment, embarrassing someone, living out a fantasy (regardless of its consequences for others), receiving a great deal of attention ('narcissistic' pleasure), lecturing, writing, painting, making music, dancing, singing, and so on (Fink 1999, 169). This notion differs from Moncayo's definition of 'benevolent jouissance', which is related to the unary trace, through which a plenitude of the Real manifests itself.

[28] The quote is taken from a conversation with Venerable Jotinanda, my teacher of Vipassanā, on 3 January 2018. For more on the account of dispassion and benevolent jouissance see in chapter two: Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā.

[29] Here Moncayo refers to Lacan's equation of the Father and the sinthome in Seminar XXIII. Lacan plays on homophony between *perversion* and *version vers le père,* a version towards the father (Lacan 2018b, 11), implying necessary 'propping up' of the Symbolic in the case of a perverted structure, which he attributes Joyce to. In this regard, the father of the Oedipus complex is a symptom, especially the father at stake in Joyce – namely that which fails.

This resistance, or the restraint to give way on one's jouissance, is, in Daoist terms, 'taiji',[30] a binding and interplay of binaries (yin and yang), as well as a state preceding their division – a state of emptiness and balance of the martial artist, which is to be addressed in chapter three on movement arts. However, before finding that balance, the subject is to rediscover the Real and gain a certain degree of stability in the vicissitudes it offers.

His strong body, a helpless drag, was carried into my room, placed on my bed, heaped there for a month on, devoured by the nightmarish strain. His speech mumbled, face twisted, he can't, he just can't, he is taken away by something inexplicably insurmountable – a challenge impossible to power through. He is to stay like that. It is irreversible. But I don't know it, I just read to him from the book, which he asked me to read from, while paramedics administer injections. They do something wrong: for years I'm going to lament over inadequacy of their treatment to save him only to realise that everything was right in the end. November snow, grey, unwelcoming, cold landscape, it is only that cold in the beginning of winter. He is incapable of using the toilet; he can't eat by himself.

The magnitude of what's happened is so heavy, that I hear ringing in my ears. It is impossible. It is not expected. It is just so wrong…

My strength is broken, in the following month I collapsed with pneumonia. I could do better, help my mother, who struggles thorough this strain alone. But I collapsed. There is faint hope that he may recover. There is a possibility. It's a long way to go. It will never happen. It is indescribable. It is real.

After a few months of hospitals and injections he regains some mobility. My mother and I take him to the sauna in our backyard. We wash him. She leaves to prepare dinner. I'm left to dress him. It is so hard. His limbs are viscous and heavy, his sweat is sticky. He is frustrated, helpless, yet still so powerful. It is as if he is caught in a body of clay, attempting to carve himself out again and again, but realising, too, having returned to this primordial state,

[30] Taiji or the 'supreme ultimate' is the core concept of Daoist cosmology. It is a state, which follows the *wuji,* or emptiness, and precedes the division of yin and yang.

that he will never be the same. That all that he was, 'beloved and pleasing', taken for granted, adhered to and developed, would be destroyed with one stroke of an invisible brush.

I can't cry anymore. Pain is so strong and piercing, that I become it. Cold torrents of fainting shiver travel along my skin. The world is populated by a vehement, uncontrollable and intense, invisible blizzard. It devours all hopes, dreams, anticipations; it leaves no choice but to act, to continue to apply oneself, to be, irrespective of anything. There is no delight in participation.

He tore himself out of the paws of this raging Thing. He started to walk, ride a bicycle, cut paper, holding the scissors in his claw-like left hand. He aspired, only to collapse again. And again, and again, till the end.

He is my father.

A question of the 'negative' Real

In the case of the absence of restraint, when 'benevolent jouissance' is destroyed, the lack of a law within the Real can breed the extreme consequences of violence, nihilistic rage, distortions and mutilations. In this case, the inherent insufficiency within the Symbolic pushes the subject into a spiral of what I call the 'negative' Real. This is a situation in which the suffering stemming from the lack of meaning within the Symbolic is acted upon with compulsive and hurtful lamentation.

Slavoj Žižek gave a fair historical illustration of this process in his essay 'Welcome to the Desert of the Real'. Following Badiou's claims that a key feature of the 20th century was the 'passion of the Real', Žižek identifies the ultimate and defining moment of the 20th century as 'the direct experience of the Real as opposed to the everyday social reality – the

Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceiving layers of reality.'[31] (Žižek 2002, 5-6)

This violent effort to distil the pure Real from the elusive phenomenal reality, however, results in its opposite – an obsession with pure appearance, as seen, for example, in the Stalinist show trials and the enforcement of Socialist development.

Žižek writes:

> 'The key to this reversal resides in the ultimate impossibility to draw a clear distinction between deceptive reality and some firm positive kernel of the Real: every positive bit of reality is a priori suspicious, since (as we know from Lacan) the Real Thing is ultimately another name for the Void. The pursuit of the Real thus equals total annihilation, a (self)destructive fury within which the only way to trace the distinction between the semblance and the Real is, precisely, to STAGE it in a fake spectacle. The fundamental illusion is here that, once the violent work of purification is done, the New Man will emerge ex nihilo, freed from the filth of the past corruption.' (Žižek 2002, 8)

As Žižek concludes, it is indeed a fundamental illusion, that purification via 'distilling' the Real can solve the agony of absence and breed a 'new man'. In the passage above Žižek refers to 'the Real Thing'. In Lacan 'Das Ding' is the thing in its 'dumb reality' (Lacan 1997, 55) as opposed to representation of a thing in the Symbolic order. Further, it is a prehistoric, lost and forbidden object of incestuous desire, the mother (Lacan 1997, 67). The subject circles around that thing, constrained by the pleasure principle, without ever attaining it, which makes 'Das Ding' the cause of the most fundamental human passion (Lacan 1997, 97). This is the subject as the continuity of desire at desire's 'most fundamental level' as a passion not-to-known, i.e. the fundamental ignorance.

[31] However, it is important to note that it wasn't only the 20th century that gave rise to examples of the passion of the Real. Events of violence, where emptiness of the Symbolic law is revealed, and the unbearable, concealed within the lack, causes outbursts of righteous purifying anger, are embedded in human history.

This passion, if taken wrongly, is a root cause of malevolent human obsession with rebirth, becoming, transformation, purification, realness and truth. It is indeed impossible to trust any positive kernel of the Real, because it is ultimately void (i.e. lacking anything to identify with).

> 'The result of all this is that, for Lacan, the Real is not impossible in the sense that it can never happen – a traumatic kernel which forever eludes our grasp. No, the problem with the Real is that it happens and that's the trauma. The point is not that the Real is impossible but rather that the impossible is Real. A trauma, or an act, is simply the point when the Real happens, and this is difficult to accept. Lacan is not a poet telling us how we always fail the Real – it's always the opposite with the late Lacan. The point is that you can encounter the Real, and that is what is so difficult to accept.' (Žižek 2004, 69-70)

Illustrative of the impossibility of the Real, this statement opens the door to its resolution. What is this impossibility stemming from? Precisely, the extent of ignorance: for there to be the impossible, there must be a reference point. This reference point is the ego, namely a subjective phenomenon characterised by the narcissistic identification (the Imaginary) and the conceptual alienation (the Symbolic), whose very existence is cause-bound and fragile. In order not to lose these attachments and identifications (i.e. to avoid radical vulnerability, innocence and harmlessness) the human subject, unaware of what may come, lacking skill in how to tackle the outcomes of identification benevolently, continuously dwells in the habituated deception of self-existence. This research argues that outrageous events of naked withstanding before the Real can not only be harmless, but fruitful and liberating.

Stepping ahead, proper understanding of lack within the Symbolic, as well as a skillful means of manifold knowledge of the arts of embodiment is how the Noble Eightfold Path tackles an encounter with the Real. Psychoanalytic praxis gradually familiarises the subject with the spaciousness of the Real through a procedure known as the traversing of

fantasy, whereby the subject's Symbolic lack is challenged via the analyst's intervention, causing reconfiguration of the subject's relationship with jouissance (Fink 1999, 59-60). The Path not only challenges the subject's desire radically, but introduces patterns of behavior, speech, thinking and attitude, which enable the subject to effectively inhabit that which the Symbolic lack conceals, namely the impossible. The following subchapter will look at the theoretical framework that allows for an acceptance of and benevolently embodies encounters with the Real.

Conditionality and Dependent Origination

Dependent Origination is another view regarding the subject as the continuity of desire. To illustrate the formation of subjectivity according to the process of Dependent Origination, I primarily rely on the text *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*, written by Venerable Prayudh Payutto and translated by Grant A. Olson. I draw as well from the written and spoken discourses of Thai Forest Tradition teachers from the lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. I also incorporate personal insights into Dependent Origination process gained during vipassanā practice.

In this thesis I am referring primarily to Theravada Buddhism, since it is within this tradition that I've received teachings on meditation practice from Malaysian Theravada monk Venerable Jotinanda. However, textual references to Mahayana, Zen and Vajrayana Buddhism are also employed.

I will outline the parallels between a conditioned becoming process in accordance with the Dependent Origination model and Lacanian theory of registers. Realisation of Dependent Origination was considered to be a moment of Siddhārtha Gautama's enlightenment. Deep and clear insight into processes of becoming revisited by Siddhārtha

again and again after the night of his enlightenment led to a complete elimination of the root cause of suffering and arising of wisdom.[32]

A circular chain of Dependent Origination, or as called elsewhere, the wheel of becoming,[33] consists of twelve elements. They arise as follows:

1. **Fundamental ignorance (Pāli: avijjā)**: not understanding suffering, its arising, its passing away and the path (the Four Noble Truths), not understanding the Dependent Origination; a state lacking wisdom of causal factors, being tied up with conventional assumptions, not understanding life and the world according to the truth.

2. **Mental formations or predispositions (Pāli: saṅkhāra)**: physical, mental and verbal tendencies; a thought process that proceeds according to inclination, habit and various properties of the mind that have been stored up (from previous existences).

3. **Consciousness (Pāli: viññāṇa)**: perceiving via eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind-consciousness in accordance to the objects/predispositions of the mind.

4. **Mind-and-body (Pāli: nāmarūpa)**: corporeality, sensation, perception, predispositions formed in accordance with mental formations that have composed it. This in turn is conditioned by kamma (previous action) and the realm of existence where the birth happened.

5. **Six sense-bases (Pāli: saḷāyatana)**: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind; an aspect of life which responds to needs and is prepared to act or confront the external world.

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[32] Bodhi Sutta: Awakening (3), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.1.03.than.html.

[33] The concept of comparing Dependent Origination to a wheel can be found in Visuddhimagga: 'Now, this wheel of the round of rebirths with its hub made of ignorance and of craving for becoming, with its spokes consisting of formations of merit and the rest, with its rim of ageing and death, which is joined to the chariot of the triple becoming by piercing it with the axle made of the origins of cankers (see Majjhima Nikáya 55), has been revolving throughout time that has no beginning.' (Buddhaghosa 2010, 188-189)

6. **Contact (Pāli: phassa)**: informing of the life-process via internal and external six sense-bases and consciousness, linking knowledge with external world, perceiving mind-objects and experiences;

7. **Sensation (Pāli: vedanā)**: feeling arising from the contact via sense-bases, which can be subdivided into pleasure and comfort (sukha- vedanā), pain, suffering, discomfort (dukkha- vedanā) or equanimity (upeka- vedanā).

8. **Craving (Pāli: taṇhā)**: craving for bodily form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and mental stimuli, divided by a desire to get, to have, to exist in a continuous state of pleasurable sensations and wanting to avoid, annihilate and destroy unpleasant sensations. This is where desire initially reveals itself. Apart from those satisfying the needs of senses, the whole mass of cravings can be subdivided to:

- Craving for self-existence: desire for a self that can last or exist in a self-determined manner and for conditions of life providing such existence.
- Craving for non-existence or self-annihilation: desire for self to pass away, disappear or separate from the conditions of life that are undesirable.

9. **Attachment (Pāli: upādāna)**: a stronger desire to sustain certain passions of five senses and the mind in the form of views, opinions, doctrines and various theories; clinging to rules and rituals, clinging to a self and mistakenly creating a self to cling to; manipulating the conditions in order to sustain the objects of attachment and inflating their value and importance; clinging to strategies, methods, habits to obtain the object/conditions of craving.

10. **Becoming (Pāli: bhava)**: sensual becoming, physical becoming, formless becoming; in other words, kammic becoming – the whole behavioral process that reveals itself in response to craving and determines the conditions of life (i.e. the five aggregates of existence, or that, which is mistakenly perceived as 'I', 'me' or 'mine').

11. **Birth (Pāli: jati)**: the appearance of all the aggregates (form, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness) or the birth/arising from those various

phenomena; a coming to realise the 'I' existing in a certain state. Once that self is defined, there is also an aspect of self that does not exist according to that definition. Thus the created self is feeling a lack of or a separation from self-definition.

12. **Decay-and-death (Pāli: jarāmaraṇa)**: growing old, the aging of the senses and the deterioration of the aggregates, the cessation of life functions, or the degeneration of various phenomena; being conscious of a lack of or a separation from the above life-state; feeling that you are threatened by the final disintegration of that life-state, experiencing a fear of self-loss, which arises from tying the self to a certain condition of life, which in turn brings about sorrow, lamentation, grief, and distress linked with feelings of despair, irritation, frustration, depression, sadness, disappointment, restlessness and various other miserable feelings (Payutto 1995, 101-102).

From here on this cycle repeats itself.

It is worth mentioning that there is no first cause in this cycle. Ignorance is conditioned by mental intoxicants (Pāli: āsava). These intoxicants consist of stagnant and fermenting states interested in maintaining various views and attachments to things, which respond to desires of the self and senses. These include, for example, believing that our bodies are our selves or that they belong to us. In this case as soon as the body changes, sorrow arises. Another example: taking enjoyment in this or that condition of life as the best, the most excellent and pleasurable (Payutto 1995, 105). In this case, meeting decay-and-death will be accompanied by the arising of disappointment and a sense of loss. Therefore, mental intoxicants are seeds that instantly grow into sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and distress.[34]

Lacan's theory of three registers can be seen as overlapping with the cycle of Dependent Origination at the question of desire. As such the Other's desire, that of family, society, language and culture transmits such 'seeds' as craving and attachment,

[34] See in chapter two 'Mindfulness of consciousness', and in chapter three, 'Martial arts', for a detailed account of 'seeds' in storehouse consciousness.

accompanied by their counterparts, envy and resentment,[35] encoding the subject in the cycle of becoming.

Imaginary identification with a (m)other's desire is a form of craving for unity. It can be seen as a craving for non-existence (Pāli: vibhava-taṇhā), whereby the self is merged with the (m)other's body and all disturbing mental formations are dissolved within this unity. Various kinds of idiosyncratic attachments may arise as an attempt to reenact this unity: rituals aimed at nourishing and enriching the depth of primordial connection to life, practices nurturing sensual comfort, fullness, bodily ease, satiety, safety and continuity. It is worth mentioning that it is this Brahmanical patriarchal structure of sacrificial ritual rites (Skt, karman)[36] that Siddhārtha Gautama dropped out of in order to find release.

Breaking the vicious cycle of alienated desire and learning to formulate desire in an autonomous way, in reference to hysteric's desire, is a project destined to discovery that there is no guarantee for one's desire in the Symbolic (Žižek 2007, 604-612). A closer look at the network of signifiers shows that there is no such thing as autonomous desire. With the outset of castration, i.e. alienation within language, the identification with views, beliefs, systems of beliefs, and particular spheres of knowledge further involves the neurotic's desire[37] in the attachment to various plateaus of the Symbolic.

Gateways to the Real within the chain of Dependent Origination are the processes associated with decay and death. In particular, they are those tendencies that shatter the

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[35] Lacan outlined nascent tendencies for possessiveness and aggression in the Écrit *Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis*, referring to Melanie Klein's work with children: 'Through her we know the function of the imaginary primordial enclosure formed by the *imago* of the mother's body; through her we have the cartography, drawn by the children's own hands, of the mother's internal empire, the historical atlas of the intestinal divisions in which the imagos of the father and brothers (real or virtual), in which the voracious aggression of the subject himself, dispute their deleterious dominance over her sacred regions. Hence, we can understand by what structural means the re-evocation of certain imaginary personae, the reproduction of certain situational inferiorities may disconcert in the most strictly predictable way the adult's voluntary functions: namely their fragmenting effect on the imago of the original identification.' (Lacan 1977, 23)

[36] Williams writes that sacrificial rites (karman) were required to be performed for the sake of ensuring continuity of existence after death: 'With the notion of rebirth comes redeath, and it seems to have been the idea of continually dying again and again throughout all eternity that gave Vedic thinkers their greatest horror. To be born again is not necessarily a problem. But to die again! For the system was claustrophobic, it seemed to provide no way of getting out. To perform another sacrifice *(karman)* simply perpetuated the problem.' (Williams 2002, 11)

[37] It is widely known that for Lacan a human individual, who has fully acceded into the Symbolic (Eyers 2012, 34), is a neurotic par excellence.

self via negative encounters with suffering (Pāli: dukkha): sorrow, distress, anxiety, feeling of lack, loss, absence, disappointment, mortality, impossibility of fulfillment etc. They are, as well, possibilities of 'benevolent jouissance' concealed within the insight in regards of these phenomena.

Looking closer at the chain of Dependent Origination, it becomes clear that the 'negative' Real takes root in attachment to the self, identified with particular conditions (Other's desire, belief and jouissance), which sustain it. Fear, anxiety, sense of loss and being lost arise as a conduit of ignorance, or mistaking the self for a permanent, independent entity – whereas its very existence is the agency of mutually dependent conditions.

Interplay of those conditions, which are undoubtedly signifiers and, as such, phenomena empty of inherent existence, breed worlds of subjective experience. Lacan writes: 'All the things of the world come to be staged in keeping with the laws of the signifier, laws that we could never fancy in any way to be consistent with the laws of the world at the outset.' (Lacan 2014, 33) He elaborates further, stating that heterogeneous data, passed down from the stage of history, constitutes, in its contradictory multiplicity, 'the world of cosmism in the real' (Lacan 2014, 34). I believe that the Mahayana world model, Trailokya, is an accurate enough representation of that in the Symbolic. Lacan's insistence on the materiality of the signifier encompasses that which is known elsewhere as the equivalence of cosmology and psychology, a mystical vacuity that breeds life events – the law of kamma at its elementary mode of operation.

Three worlds

The materiality of the signifier can be formulated as a reiteration of demand for living transmitted qua language from generation to generation. Rendering implications of Lacan's seminar on Psychoses, Eyers writes:

> 'Here, we come to recognize that, far from the Symbolic being radically foreclosed or revoked by the phenomena of psychosis, the rejection of the paternal signifier makes operative and primary those Real aspects of signification – which is to say, signifiers torn away from the negative constitution of meaningful communication and tied to the aggressive movements of primary identification – that, as we shall see, must be presupposed, if kept at bay, for any signification to be operative for the subject.' (Eyers 2012, 34)

Isn't Eyers' quote alluding to nothing else but an affirmation of phenomena discovered by Klein in children's *imagos*, namely, that for normal symbolic functioning (i.e. functioning in the world), 'aggressive movement of primary identification' is required? And as such, isn't it in line with the following representation of the wheel of becoming (Pāli: bhāvacakka)[38] – the centre of which is inhabited by three animals: pig, rooster and snake, the latter two coming out of the mouth of the first and attaching to its tale – which represent respectively delusion, greed and hatred arising codependently? Translating in Lacanian terms: from a vacuity of the unsymbolised Real, the nascent subject emerges grasping voraciously for identity in the specular image, further supporting this identity with appropriation of and alienation in language, thus breeding manifold worlds of subjective experience.[39]

This process of conditionality, according to Buddha Dhamma, is a foundation of Samsara, nuanced in the symbolism of Trailokya – the three worlds of cyclic existence.

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[38] The manner in which graphic representation of the wheel of becoming should be made is found in the *Divyāvadāna*, a Buddhist Sanskrit work of the Sarvāstivāda school.

[39] Trungpa refers to this process as the development of the ego, whereby from spaciousness, from 'natural being that just is', arises movement in the form of 'sparks of duality, intensity and sharpness, flashes of wisdom and knowledge' (Trungpa 2005, 95/189). Elsewhere he compares this movement to a dance, inspired by spaciousness, which expresses itself more than necessary, thus becoming self-conscious, conscious that 'I' am dancing in the space (Trungpa 2005, 85/189). This is the first 'spark of duality', which perpetrates itself until space is solidified and its selfless openness is ignored, followed by the feeling that one has always been so, which leads to attachment to separate form and aggressiveness in trying to secure its ground vis-à-vis space. I find this interpretation rather positive, expressing the Real, as a 'vacuum plenum', devoid of shattering and traumatic qualities, absences and excesses. Further elaborating formation of khandhas, Trungpa shows, comparing the development of the ego to the monkey locked in the empty house with five windows, how enclosure within subjectivity leads to 'hallucinating' the six worlds of the desire realm. For more on the formation of the ego see in chapter three: 'Mindfulness of consciousness'.

These three realms are characterised by cause and effect, duality and multiplicity and the lasting momentum of fundamental ignorance (Padmasabhava 2006, 446): the realms of desire, form, and formlessness.

Further elaborating on the realm of desire in conjunction with the theory of the subject, I conclude that it is appropriate to associate it with the three registers functioning at the ego level (ideal ego, ego-ideal, superego) and Dependent Origination as far as the arising of six sense-bases takes place. Realms of form and formlessness are entered as the momentum of conditioned becoming is reversed by the practice of sense-restraint, so no further links follow from the name and form. Nevertheless, Three worlds at their most refined (Pāli: jhana) are still within Samsara. For a graphic account on Trailokya see figures 10, 11 and 12 in Appendix C – *Three worlds diagram*. These realms are populated by beings either rotating in the cycle of Dependent Origination or in the reverse cycle in which ignorance is being uprooted via the practice of insight.

The realm of desire is depicted on Indian and Tibetan thangkas of Bhāvacakra, which illustrate three root poisons, the law of kamma, the six realms and adjacent twelve links of Dependent Origination held in the claws and tusks of Mara, representing the unconscious awareness and fear of the inevitability of death (Garfield 2015, 302). The symbolism of Three worlds is depicted in the architecture of Borobudur temple in Central Java.

Figure 1: Bhāvacakra, 2019, digital resource.

The first three layers of Borobudur temple are representative of the realm of desire (Skt. kāmadhātu). Here, each bas-relief depicts the law of kamma: a relationship between cause and effect in the six realms (Skt. loka) of conditioned existence. These are the realms of hell beings, of hungry ghosts, of animals, of humans, of asuras (demigods or angry gods) and of celestial beings or gods. Depending on the wholesomeness and unwholesomeness of actions of the body, speech and mind, beings transmigrate between the loka.

Trungpa's brilliant representation of the six realms places their origin in that poor, enclosed monkey's bewilderment[40]: in its claustrophobia the subject hallucinates worlds.[41] The subject's initial point of reference, spaciousness, becomes infused with a quality stemming from separateness: 'If he attempts to grasp the space in order to possess it as his own experience, his own discovery, his own understanding, this is desire.' (Trungpa 2005, 90/189) Dovetailing with it is Žižek's rendering of *objet a*[42] as 'the strange object that is nothing but the inscription of the subject itself in the field of objects, in the guise of a blotch that takes shape only when part of this field is anamorphically distorted by the subject's desire' (Žižek 2007, 1078/2252). As such, the very driving force of human becoming, the libido, is understood as 'nothing but confusion', which only takes shape when looked at from a standpoint slanted by bewilderment and fear.

Despite its phantasmatic origin, desire is the driving force of transmigration between the loka.[43] For example, fixating mentally on a certain profound cause of desire, say, a sublime state of vision achieved through tremendous artistic endeavor of refinement, leads to self-creation in/of the god realm. Struggle for success, involved in such a self-sustaining fixation, erases the frontier between hope and fear, pleasure and pain, and results in what Trungpa calls 'a breakthrough': the meditative state of dwelling on the ego (Trungpa 2005, 114/189). I'd like to add that in psychoanalytic terms this may refer to the

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[40] Comparing the human situation to that of a monkey locked in the house with six windows and no exit, Trungpa demonstrates how basic spaciousness becomes concealed by the six sense bases and their adjacent consciousnesses. (Trungpa 2005, 89/189)

[41] Elaborating on the slight form of anxiety called embarrassment as a case of the subject barred with his own specular image first (Imaginary) and castration within language second (Symbolic) Lacan says: 'When you don't know what to do with yourself anymore, you look for something behind which to shield yourself.' (Lacan 2014, 11).

[42] *Objet a,* or the cause of desire is that which sets desire in motion. For example, it may be a certain kind of look someone gives you, the timbre of someone's voice, the whiteness, feel, or smell of someone's skin, the colour of someone's eyes, etc. Whatever the characteristic cause may be, it is highly specific and nothing is easily put in its place. (Fink 1999, 47)

[43] The principle of *the equivalence of cosmology and psychology* is the key to understanding the Buddhist cosmological scheme (Gethin 1998, 170). In accordance with it, certain cosmological realms arise as the result of various psychological states of beings (Osto 2004, 80). Trungpa gives another account: 'The realms are predominantly emotional attitudes toward ourselves and our surroundings, emotional attitudes colored and reinforced by conceptual explanations and rationalisations. As human beings we may, during the course of a day, experience the emotions of all the realms, from the pride of the god realm to the hatred and paranoia of the hell realm.' (Trungpa 2005, 113) Such understanding allows to explain multifarious and transient psychophysical states of the subject as stemming from one common misrecognition, that of substantiality of the identity of the experiencer. As Trungpa shows, this is radically emphasised in the god realm, where the subject is engaged in the practice of 'self-development' aimed at reifying a certain self-consciousness.

ego-ideal, since it is this agency that the subject attempts to reify (i.e. make a copy for and out of oneself). In this struggle, the subject's desire is not one's own, but that of the cause, appropriated out of ignorance, hope and fear in a misguided attempt to rid oneself of the latter two.

Figure 2: Borobudur temple, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2016, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev.

Jouissance, as will be shown later, is stemming from this struggle: whatever the dissatisfaction, be it trauma or something else, shortly symptom, the struggle of self-development is set in motion, it is endured and enjoyed to the point, as Trungpa puts,

'…anything that is unpleasant or aggressive seems beautiful because we have achieved oneness with ego'[44]. In other words, ego lost track of its intelligence. This is the absolute, ultimate achievement of bewilderment – extremely powerful. It is a kind of spiritual atomic bomb, self-destructive in terms of compassion, in terms of communication, in terms of stepping out of the bondage of ego.' (Trungpa 2005, 115/189)

[44] The Buddha spoke of such distortion of intelligence as 'perversion' (Pali: vipallasa): 'Monks, there are these four perversions of perception, perversions of mind, perversions of view. Which four? "Constant" with regard to the inconstant is a perversion of perception, a perversion of mind, a perversion of view. "Pleasant" with regard to the stressful... "Self" with regard to not-self... "Attractive" with regard to the unattractive is a perversion of perception, a perversion of mind, a perversion of view.' - Vipallasa Sutta: Perversions, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.049.than.html.
Lacanian psychoanalysis classifies perversion as the subjective position characterised by disavowal of the paternal law (Symbolic). However, in Lacan, the pervert's disavowal is, in fact, an attempt to 'prop up' or reinstate the law, and make it exist via assuming the subjective position of the (m)other's cause of desire (Fink 1999, 126).
In contrast to the subjective position of neurosis, which is characterised by repression, psychosis, and by rejection (foreclosure) of the law (Fink 1999, 62-63), the perverted position is trapped within the (m)other's desire, unable to be separated from it completely due to weakness/incompleteness of the Symbolic law (complete rejection of the law is psychosis). Reformulating Vipallasa sutta in 'neurotic terms', inconstancy, stressfulness, ownerlessness and unattractiveness of phenomena are repressed, unconsciously avoided, which makes them accessible through associations, parapraxis and dreams. In 'psychotic terms', the above characteristics of reality take shape of horrifying 'imagos of fragmented body', rejected symbolisation. The Symbolic is 'foreclosed' in psychotics – that is, the portion of symbolisation doesn't take place due to symbolisation faculty not yet being developed when a traumatic encounter with the Real takes place. Hypothetically, exposure to sexual violence at an early age may be the event, the symbolisation of which is rejected. That which is rejected reappears in the Real as hallucinations, highly contingent psychophysical states, and frantic behaviour (Lacan 1993, 81-88). In terms of the perverted subjective structure, characteristics of reality as per Buddhism are similarly (to psychosis) impossible to symbolise, their very perspective as such is incomprehensible since there is no separation from the (m)other's desire – that is no paternal prohibition on jouissance is installed. Therefore, the pervert continuously runs towards that which is inconstant, unattractive, selfless and stressful, that, insight into which would lead to liberation, but stops halfway, propping up regulation on jouissance as soon as the (m)other's desire is met. This makes perversion a rather tormenting structure: at one moment it seems that awakening is just around the corner, at another it appears as a horrifying punishing delusion. 'Propping up' of the Symbolic requires continuous fruitless energetic effort, which collapses back onto the pervert's Imaginary position of the (m)other's cause of desire and as such the specular egoic unity manifest in an almost imbecilic disavowal of the characteristics of reality. This rendering of the pervert's predicament regarding Dhamma is based on personal experience. Resolution of this subjective position is exposure to, memorisation of and practicing in accord with the Buddha Dhamma in a continuous rigorous manner, combined with a conscious effort to 'separation' from the (m)other's desire and the Imaginary register: a continuous self-directed reminder: 'you are not what (s)he wants'. Since it is, as analysis shows (Fink 1999, 140), virtually impossible for the pervert to dialectise one's desire, I consider it is best to abandon any altogether attempt to do so and move towards the discovery and cultivation of the drive under the framework of the Path – that is, jouissance in its concrete bodily energetic form of what in Daoist arts is called 'jing' or 'essence'. More on this in chapter two, 'Taijiquan cultivation'.

However, and this refers to the Real, a samsaric situation continuously provides extraordinary events, shaking the subject out of self-created godliness, which makes maintenance of a sublime state of vision a highly demanding endeavour. Yet, giving it up results in a profoundly painful disillusionment, so in most cases the subject strives to create more layers of self, fabricate new selves and engage in new experiences. The cosmological epitaph of this development is, of course, Mara,[45] the lord of the realm of desire who, being a deva of sensuous heavens,[46] and as such the highest achievement in 'desire's career', orchestrates human craving in such a way that it legitimately appears as the only opportunity to sustain oneself on earth.

The realm of desire can be seen as illustrative of the role of desire[47] and drives in cycles of becoming. Qua materiality of language (i.e. the proto-symbolic matrix into which a child is born and which consists of naming, an other's image and opaque desire, which such naming may signify (Eyers 2012, 21)) the subject is founded in the 'world'. Here by the 'world' I mean that filtering of six-sense bases, which cause recognition of phenomena through other's desire. Through an analytic procedure of the traversing fantasy, whereby the subject assumes responsibility for an other's desire, which operates through them, bringing oneself into being where it (an other's desire) was, jouissance of the drives comes to pursue the real enjoyment (Fink 1999, 158). This advent of the subject as the drive, is a subjective stance in the Real. I argue that it is here, through Dhamma practice proper, namely renunciation of prevalent ties of imaginary and symbolic function, or 'going forth from home to homelessness' takes place. It is here, on this level of the proto-Symbolic, the

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[45] Buddhist Cosmology (8): Mara, a discussion by Ajahn Sona and Ajahn Punnadhammo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h7eWXRNC8A.

[46] Ajahn Punnadhammo in the series of essays 'Letter from Mara' (https://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/maracontent.html), outlines in manifold and witty ways, how egoic desire operates. In the essays Mara dictates letters to leaders of his squadrons, which are about sense desire, boredom, hunger and thirst, craving, sloth and accidy, cowardice, uncertainty, malice with obstinacy, gain, honour and renown, and, finally, ill-won notoriety. Comparison to the big Other, dictating the neurotic demand can't be avoided here, for indeed, the Other's jouissance is what ties the subject's desire to a particular stake of the cause, in the case of partaking with which the 'analysand's desire may well enter the quagmire of libidinal limbo, a netherworld, which is desireless and in which the analysand drifts aimlessly' (Fink 1999, 48). The difference between this desireless limbo and detachment in the sense of the Path is outlined in chapter two, 'Reverse chain of Dependent Origination'. Further, more on 'wise desire' in this chapter.

[47] As Lusthaus points out, kāma in kāmadhātu can be translated as Eros, referring to 'the entire domain of sensorial pleasure, particularly as that domain involves the pleasure principle as a motive for all action and interpretation.' (Lusthaus 2002, 83)

drive and jouissance (which, by definition, situates the practitioner closer to the psychotic structure rather than that of neurosis) that the Path is indeed fully applicable in its profound supernormal propensity.

Figure 3: Borobudur temple Buddha statue, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2016, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev.

In the process of a vipassanā meditation retreat I told my teacher, Venerable Jotinanda, about aches and unbearable intensities, which I've been experiencing in the body-mind. In response, he told me a parable about taming an elephant. First an elephant is tied to a pole of breathing by the chain of mindfulness to prevent it from running back into the forest of sensory experiences, craving, attachment and oscillation between pleasure and suffering. And only as it stops raging, aching and lamenting it is released, so an elephant tamer (Buddha Dhamma) could start his work.

I understood then how cravings for aliveness and the inability to witness painful feelings simply as they are – as painful feelings – with patient endurance causes suffering. I

understood how clinging to feeling good, comfortable and alive is bound up with a sense of self – created on the basis that it causes 'my pain' – caused an arising of rage and of the unbearable intensities of the 'negative' Real. Having understood, I thus experienced gratitude, compassion and a glimpse of letting go – a 'quenching' of dukkha.

'An elephant' is a metaphor for the untrained human mind – a mind identified with and governed by desire to follow sensual cravings and mental formations. In this desire, the subject creates conditions for avoiding pain and clinging to pleasure and faces their consequences in the kamadhatu as per the 'equivalence of cosmology and psychology' principle. Inevitable consequences are becoming, birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, and the 'negative' Real of annhilationism.

In parallel with the theory of three registers, desire and its causal phenomenology in the rotating cycle of Dependent Origination can be taken as a symptom. In such a way, a positive and Real dimension of this symptom (Moncayo 2012b, 61) is the possibility of insight. Translating Moncayo's definition of jouissance from 'a restraint from further interpretation' to 'the uprooting of the cause of becoming', I can continue with the following, thus merging the final destinations of both Lacanian psychoanalysis and the Buddha Dhamma in so far as what's at stake is common human experience of suffering.[48]

To encourage desire to flow regardless of causes and conditions, without a need to be or become dependent on other's desire, and without reliance on continuous enjoyment qua the drive, is the art of unbinding, the art of letting go or without action,[49] which is comparable to dialectising desire via the traversing of fantasy. However, I argue, to bring the subject beyond desire and drive, towards the subject of the Real, requires a set of

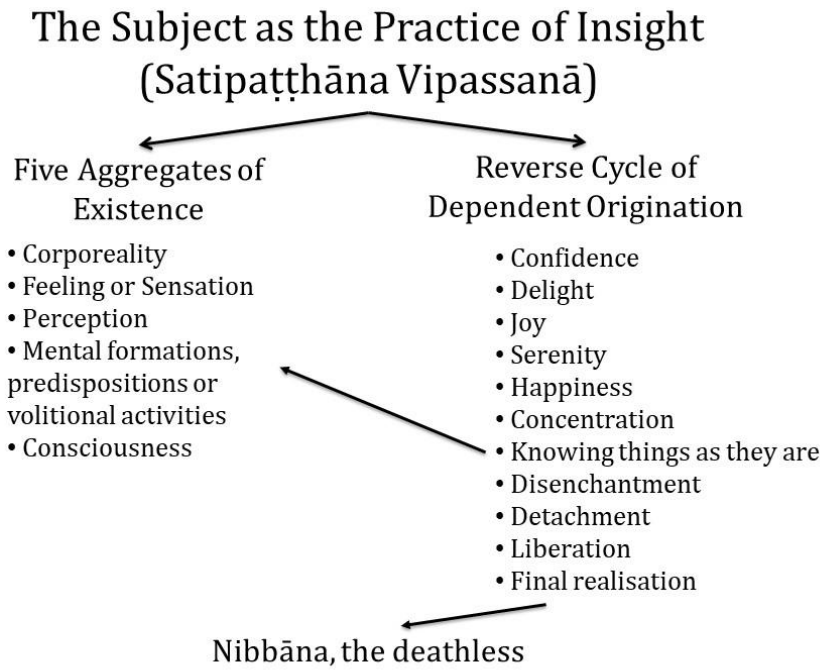
[48] Fink writes: 'The traversing of fantasy leads the subject beyond castration, beyond neurosis, into largely unexplored territory.' (Fink 1999, 147) Taken via an understanding of neurosis as the continuous demand of symbolic achievement for the (m)other, the 'beyond' may signify renunciation of being a fulfiller of the demand for life, posed by the material elements of language. In such a way, 'going forth' in search of liberation from suffering means abandoning the greedy and aggressive imperative of the proto-symbolic matrix to strive for life, as well as properly understanding imaginary subjectivity as basic bewilderment. Or, as put by Fink, 'the ego itself is essentially paranoid in nature, defining what is me and what is not me, and coming into being in a fundamental rivalry or competition with the other.' (Fink 1999, 180)

[49] See chapter two, 'Taijiquan cultivation' and chapter three, 'Shotokan karate'.

practices known as the Path. A view of the subject that arises with the practice of the Path is addressed in the following subchapter. It is explored and illustrated throughout the thesis and creative works supporting it.

The subject as the practice of insight

The following model of the subject describes the reverse cycle of Dependent Origination,[50] (i.e. uprooting the cause of suffering (self-identification) via the practice of insight). In fact, this model logically follows from the chain of Dependent Origination and contains similar constituents.



Scheme 3: The subject as the practice of insight[51]

[50] See chapter two, 'The reverse cycle of Dependent Origination'.
[51] Refers to the subject engaged in a continuous practice of mindfulness. That is, one who sees things for what they are without building an elaborate self out of it. As to be illustrated in the following chapters, this seeing reverses the cycle of Dependent Origination and brings the subject into the Real.

Here, I keep following Venerable Prayudh Payutto's *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*. I rely on His Holiness The Dalai Lama's introductory commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which elucidates the five aggregates as well as the practice of insight. I also include experiential reflections on the practice of insight. Such a way of looking allows me to introduce the subject of Emptiness, and embracing the practice of seclusion and renunciation with a dwelling in the postcolonial cosmopolitan world.

The five aggregates of existence

The five psychophysical aggregates (Pāli. khandha) are:

1. Corporeality
2. Feeling
3. Perception
4. Mental formations, predispositions or volitional activities
5. Consciousness.

(Payutto 1995, 53)

The explanation of the five aggregates aims to show that the things we refer to as 'being', 'person', 'self", 'me' or 'mine', and the worlds of subjective experience they breed through 'hallucination', when investigated via insight are really the above five components. There is nothing left of that which is understood as the self. Each one of those five aggregates is interdependent and cannot exist as the separate self. In other words, the principle of the five aggregates illustrates the characteristics of no-self (Pāli: anatta). This principle explains the following: life is a conjoining or coming together of different

components; the combination of these components is not the self; and there is nothing beyond these components that can be said to be the self (Payutto 1995, 56).

Absence of the subject as postulated by Lacan is the impossibility of locating the subject outside the Symbolic and the Imaginary.[52] The Buddhist model concludes that a sense of self is simply a construct of aggregates and an object for attachment. Let's see how these models of the subject correlate.

In contrast to the Borromean knot, the model of the five aggregates does not include the register of the Real, yet it points to it. The register of the Real is outlined by emptiness and suffering, which are 'implicit yet unassimilable' in the five aggregates.[53] That is, there is a lack of inherent existence within any of the aggregates, they arise dependently and pass away (Payutto 1995, 54). Due to the aggregates' impermanence and clinging to them (as permanent) there is suffering [54] (when illusion of permanency is shattered). Lacan's 'lack of being' as a correlative to the subject can therefore be compared to a lack of inherent satisfactory existence in the five aggregates, which is ultimately a lack of knowing the aggregates as they are. The Real, as a Thing in its 'dumb reality' (Lacan 1997, 55) is always eluding the speaking subject and reappearing elsewhere as a symptom (Lacan 1989, 14).

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[52] According to Lacan, the subject cannot be found outside the analysand's discourse: as soon as the subject speaks, his or her being is erased, whereby a signifier emerges. The subject is, therefore, correlative to a 'lack of being' (Lacan 1988, 192). Linked to that is Lacan's expression that the analysand's ignorance is a passion greater than love or hate: a passion not to know (Fink 1999, 15), which alludes to a preferability for maintaining symptoms, rather than their symbolisation and thus meeting with a lack at the core of one's being, which is represented precisely by that figure, holding the wheel of becoming (Pāli: bhāvacakka) in its jaws. Garfield, quoting Tsongkhapa, remarks that confusion (Pāli: avijjā) is not simply the absence of knowledge, but the direct opposite of knowledge – a psychologically efficacious and destructive denial of the truth. (Garfield 2015, 302)

[53] Anatta-lakkhana Sutta: The Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic, translated from the Pāli by Ñanamoli Thera is exemplary in illustrating 'innocent estrangement' from suffering within the five aggregates: 'Bhikkhus, form is not-self. Were form self, *then this form would not lead to affliction* [italicised by the candidate], and one could have it of form: 'Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus.' And since form is not-self, so it leads to affliction, and none can have it of form: 'Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus', https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.059.nymo.html.
Here emptiness is realised directly, as a 'lack of being' within the aggregates is met and endured. As for Lacan, who, as he claimed, had been making no distinction between psychology and physiology (Lacan 1993, 15), symptoms such as those of the psychotic are caused through endeavours in 'letting form be thus' via the faculty of a signifying proliferation, or more commonly speaking delusion, given that a lack, namely castration, is rejected from being realised. (Lacan 1993, 13)

[54] 'In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful', - Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, translated by Thanissaro Bhikku, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html.

Resolution of a symptom, namely suffering is done through various means. In Lacanian psychoanalysis it is the analyst's desire, which propels the analysand to associate, verbalise, understand and potentially outgrow their symptoms (Fink 1999, 14). As per the Path, the subject is face to face with oneself, in which case, given that the Path factors are being adhered to, symptoms of suffering will eventually arise. According to the First Noble Truth, suffering must be properly understood.[55] With careful examination suffering is found to be ubiquitous (Garfield 2015, 6). This discovery arouses a sense of urgency (Pāli: saṃvega) and energy (Pāli: viriya), which can be summarised as 'healthy panic' (Trungpa 1981, 996/2582): it stimulates 'wise desire'[56] (Jayasaro 2017) to develop factors of the Path further, thereby penetrating to emptiness and final realisation.

Emptiness has been the main driving force for me during my father's stroke. Through emptiness, I was able to find release from the grasp of self-referential meaning making. Emptiness was a destination for effort, a refuge, and the ultimate non-intellectual realisation. It was via facing the core of emptiness within me that I discovered a freedom to perform virtually any movement pattern and thus to be in peace within impermanence of the moving body.

At a very early age I realised that oppressiveness of existence comes predominantly through proliferating thoughts and images. Therefore, a process of insight for me was to bring a thought to its nonsensical resolution, i.e. to collapse it into void and see what would happen. The anticipation of horror from a drop into the 'negative' Real of dreadful meaninglessness has proven to be an illusion for me. I discovered that it is a construct of selfhood, arising, at the moment of approaching its very core, just before discovery of its emptiness. The same is applied to any of the psychophysical aggregates via the process of insight:

[55] Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html.
[56] Wise desire (Pāli: chanda) is eagerness to apply oneself to the practice of cultivation of wholesome qualities, such as mindfulness, clear comprehension, renunciation and friendliness.

1. Corporeality: at times fragile, timid and clumsy at other times raging like a waterfall, yet utterly ungraspable and unsustainable at any of those states when attachment is relinquished via non-wanting.

2. Feelings, a far greater range of manifestations here: from those conditioned by the natural environment to being conditioned by others as a conforming response; from reactions to art objects to those resonating with physical states and activity of other aggregates.

3. Perceptions, a lack of a solid picture of the world discovered every time in direct dependency from a perceptual paradigm: from those driven by survivalist dynamics of reproduction and family, to those arising as a renunciation of former paradigms, to those conditioned via art, identification, learning, science or religion, professional belonging, etc.

4. Mental formations, as infinite as grains of sands in the Ganges: conditioned by traumatic experience, by any of the five hindrances (ill-will, sensuality, lethargy, remorse, doubt) or conditioned by the enlightening experience (joy, equanimity, tranquility, concentration, thorough investigation of phenomena, energetic effort) [57] *or the composite intermingling of both, etc.*

5. Consciousness: seeing or non-seeing, in dependency upon all other aggregates and with a faculty of determining, choosing, navigating towards or away, with or without awareness, sane or insane in respect to phenomena as they are, participating or inert, changing as the environmental conditions change.

Following this chain of conditioning in which I could observe selfhood, I would enter a labyrinth, and, in trying to understand these intertwining forces bubbling inside, I inevitably would give up. But rather than being led to a space of dull, ignorant bewilderment, I would arrive in a light and clear non-conceptual, non-imagined space. All the aggregates and attachments to them were still there. Yet every time, I was getting closer to a greater

[57] Five hindrances are to be observed and abandoned, whereas seven factors of enlightenment are to be observed and cultivated in the practice of insight (Ajahn Sona, in the discourse on proper effort, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrpQ9pkMi3s).

dimension of nothingness. In a way, this voyage into 'what am I made of' was both shocking and fulfilling. Up to the point of realisation that 'I can change everything', construct an alternate identity, engage in an entirely different life-story, create a network, non-relying on any existent worldly relationship. Here is how strangeness manifests via emptiness. In discovering estrangement to myself I experienced a glimpse of no-self.

'Estrangement' and lack bordering with limitless potential revealed an 'entity'. I previously referred to this 'entity' as myself: the subject of a surprise, of awakening from a dream into another dream. But now, I call this excruciatingly complex entanglement of words, stories and images, whose very existence is constantly erased by an endless beginningless void, as 'The Subject of Emptiness'.

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I argue that views of the subject – the continuity of desire and the process of insight – coexist and fulfil one another as the subject of Emptiness. The desiring subject can be located within the realm of desire in the Buddhist cosmology. Libidinal economy provides us with detailed mechanisms of desire's functioning in human individuals. Psychoanalytic praxis restores the subject's desire in a continuous relationship with the Real by traversing the fundamental fantasy, thereby leaving this once 'disturbing and lacking' space at the core of the subject 'open and empty'.

However, the praxis of psychoanalysis doesn't operate within the remaining two realms of the Three worlds. Namely the non-speaking subject, whose desire is restored in quiescence towards the Real, ceases being the subject of psychoanalysis. The way of practice leading further into the Real is the Path laid down by the Buddha with its skillful means. The Path cuts through desire in its subtlest forms, such as identification with space, consciousness, nothingness and a minute perception of existence. I will explore more on these properties of the Path in the following chapters.

Conclusion: the Real

The Real is a register of human experience, which points to a voidness of phenomena via an agency of contingent events tearing the fabric of subjective reality, a ubiquitous sense of lack and dissatisfaction, and the impossibility of symbolisation and materiality of language, which resists metonymic displacement.[58] Events of encountering the Real are the way materiality, mortality, absurdity[59] and stressfulness of self-existence are presented to the subject, which triggers the process of self-inquiry actualised in the practice of insight.

The Real is represented by the chain of Dependent Origination with its negative residues, which are fundamental ignorance and suffering, as symptoms. It becomes known through the practice of insight – namely witnessing impermanence, suffering and a lack of inherent existence within the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which constitute the five psychophysical aggregates.[60] Thus, a possibility of self-realisation is a positive dimension of the ignorance and suffering as symptoms.

'Benevolent jouissance' bears a function similar to that of the Noble Eightfold Path, or the restraint from dichotomies of the realm of desire: pleasure/self-indulgence/attachment and pain/self-loathing/aversion. At the moment of the erasure of a unary trace, the 'empty face' (of the Real) is revealed and the restraint to symbolise/become causes 'benevolent jouissance' of the Noble Eightfold Path to arise. The

[58] '…the Real permits of no absence, no division and no mediation, the ontological 'being' of the signifier, paradoxically escapes the metonymic logic of the Symbolic.' (Eyers 2011, 41)

[59] Camus's enquiry into the problematic of suicide concludes that living (i.e. keeping the absurd alive) is tantamount to the 'constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity' (Camus 1955, 36). In this instance, the absurd is that very coming together of man and the world, which in Buddhist terms would be an event marked with fundamental confusion: what 'man' apprehends to be the 'world' is already a perceptual distortion stemming from identification with the specular image and collapse of basic spaciousness onto khandhas.

[60] Aggregate of form belongs to the Symbolic in so far as Fink writes: 'Through analysis we must come to accept that we are mortified by language, and thus, in a sense, the living dead (our bodies are overwritten, and we are inhabited by language that lives through us).' (Fink 1999, 154)

arising presence in suchness,[61] devoid of polarities, is where the practice of the Path both takes place and leads to, gradually purifying the subject's outlook of reality through proper understanding.

Psychophysically arising intensities, which accompany the process of erasure of the unary trace, connected to a signifier-in-isolation in so far as it is not linked to any other signifiers, are the focus of the embodiment process. The practice of insight is an initiator of both de-symbolisation and embodiment and vice versa. The flux of desire and the continuity of insight comprise a human being in the process of development towards the 'final realisation', which I refer to as the subject of Emptiness.

The subject of Emptiness is the unfolding of the Four Noble Truths or a movement from suffering (the subject as the continuity of desire) to liberation (the subject as the practice of insight). The subject of Emptiness balances a well-nourished, wholesomely cultivated self with the practice of insight into impermanence, inherent suffering due to impermanence, and leads to a (final) realisation of absence of self or no-self. The process of de-symbolisation leads to being–as-such (Pāli. tathata) or a merging in the deathless (Pāli. Nibbana). The cultivation of being-as-such is supplied and directed via the Path, which incorporates meditation, taijiquan and movement arts.

The Real stands for a dimension of experience, which is unfathomable[62] yet also crucial in the formation and harmonious functioning of the subject. The role of the Real as

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[61] Suchness (Pāli. tathata) here refers to seeing things as they are, devoid of labeling and interpretation, devoid of perceiving through lenses of acquired subjectivity, devoid of self-view (Thanissaro 2013, 23). Such a seeing is a result of a vipassanā meditation practice; it is to be discussed in chapter two, and in the following chapters it is referred to as the 'Real gaze'. Here I am extrapolating from Lacan's definition of the gaze, which '…is firmly associated with the Real as the imperceptible but presupposed gaze of the Other intimately related to the movements of the drive' (Eyers 2012, 92). In the practice of insight looking at the five aggregates leads beyond the Imaginary (body as a whole) to the Symbolic (body overwritten with language) and penetrates to the Real (body as fragmented), which pertains to the drives, i.e. repetitive energetic intensities to be found in the body's parts. Hereby seeing as such may refer to seeing beyond the intensities, which interact with signifiers through the erogenous zones (Eyers 2012, 93), producing, if related to (m)other's desire, illusion of wholeness. Seeing beyond those intensities is seeing emptiness: i.e. energetic intensities are empty of self-existence. More on this to be found in chapter three, Shotokan karate.

[62] Here, conjoining this term with the impossible, I allude to Greenshields' critique of psychoanalytic theory: 'The real does not just "constitute the limits of our experience" but makes this psychoanalytic experience an *experience of the limit*. It is only by means of this experience – an experience that necessarily takes place beyond the bounds of *theoria*, beyond what is already known – that the "realisation of anything *new*, a *Wirken*, an *action*" can occur.' (Greenshields 2017, 22)

initiator of the subjectivity, its perpetrator and continuous frame of reference for the subject's spiritual development has been confirmed by a Lacanian psychoanalytic praxis, which is correlative with core premises of the Buddhist doctrine. Given that the human subject is but a function of desire and language, it leaves no other direction but to inquire further: how to penetrate to and dwell in the hollows of no-self, which is the subject's true being, so to speak? How to continue doing so with full awareness of the danger that an encounter with the impossible may bring and be able to transform such an encounter into liberating experience? Further chapters of the thesis elucidate these questions further.

Chapter 2 – Rediscovering the Real

To conjugate unknown processes, some combination of belief, respect, ruthlessness, courage, and cuddling is necessary.[63]

Arnold Mindell[64]

'Before' the Imaginary and the Symbolic identifications take place, the subject is an infinite potential of energetic intensities limited virtually by nothing (i.e. it is unborn, non-existent, non-becoming suchness). Within the Imaginary, this potentiality is a 'body of water' with such qualities as fluidity, viscosity, gooeyness, pressure of depth, evaporation and crystallisation. Within the Symbolic, varied systems of thought are applied to encompass its living continuity: psychoanalysis, philosophy, dhamma, the sciences, to name a few.

Within the Real there is no image or explanation. A simple framework of principles and practices (i.e. the Path) leads to a direct experience within the Real. This chapter focuses on the methods of rediscovering this simple potentiality, and outlines two crucial factors of the Path – proper mindfulness and effort, which are the work towards experiential rediscovery – and presents phenomenological accounts of applying them.

The reverse cycle of Dependent Origination

The ever-changing Subject of Emptiness, as outlined in the first chapter, unfolds via the practice of insight into *proper understanding* of the sub-processes composing it. The

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[63] Mindell, Arnold. *Quantum Mind: The Edge Between Physics and Psychology*, p. 198.

[64] Arnold Mindell is an American Jungian process-oriented therapist, author of the books *Dreambody: The Body's Role in Revealing the Self, The Process Mind*, and more. He widely implemented an interdisciplinary approach, working across physics, shamanism, bodywork, psychoanalysis and Australian aboriginal traditions, facilitating individuals, organisations and conflict zones as part of the 'world-work' modality. He established a process-work institute in Portland, Oregon, where he currently teaches.

Dependent Origination cycle describes these processes in detail. Below is its correlation with the Four Noble Truths[65], starting with the first two:

1. There is suffering (mental formations – consciousness – name and form – six sense bases – contact – feeling – becoming – birth – decay and death).
2. There is a cause of suffering (fundamental ignorance – craving – attachment).

Suffering arises due to ignorance and attachment to the unfolding process of becoming based on it (i.e. misrecognition of this selfless process for 'me' and 'mine'). As that is realised, the reverse cycle takes place, beginning with confidence:

> Confidence (Pāli: saddhā) – Delight (Pāli: pāmojja) – Joy (Pāli: pīti) – Serenity (Pāli: passaddhi) – Happiness (Pāli: sukha) – Concentration (Pāli: samādhi) – Knowing things as they are (Pāli: yathābhūtañāṇadassana) – Disenchantment (Pāli: nibbidā) – Detachment (Pāli: virāga) – Liberation (Pāli : vimutti) – Final Realisation (Pāli: khayañāna) (Payutto 1995, 182).

The reverse cycle is a process of uprooting ignorance. It corresponds to the third and the fourth of the Four Noble Truths:

3. All suffering can be stopped (disenchantment – detachment – liberation – final realisation).
4. There is the path to cessation of suffering (confidence – delight – joy – serenity – happiness – concentration – knowing things as they are).

After his enlightenment the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path in the Sarnath deer park near modern-day Varanasi.

[65] This correlation is logically inferred from the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, where Buddha speaks of the five aggregates as suffering, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html.

Figure 4: The temple at the place of the Buddha's first sermon, Sarnath, Varanasi, India, 2016, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev.

The Noble Eightfold Path

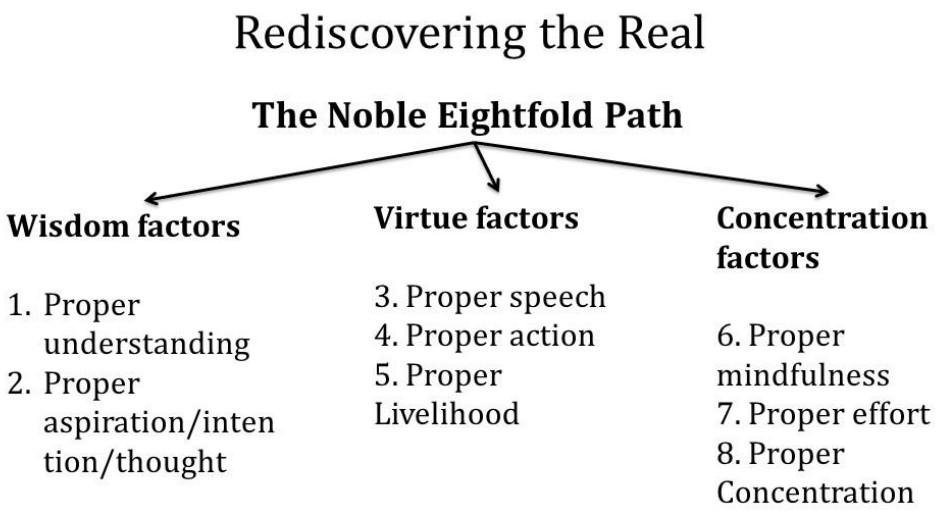
The Noble Eightfold Path is a complete training method, designed to uproot causes of suffering and reach final realisation. As a compassionate, gradual and mindful approach to rediscovering and embodying the Real, it helps to clear out the horror and pain of facing the lack within the Symbolic. As shown above, in correlation with the Four Noble truths, practice of the Path leads to disenchantment, detachment and liberation.

Figure 5: Sculpture of Buddha's first sermon, Sarnath, Varanasi, India, 2016, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev

Disenchantment with and detachment from the five aggregates of existence, desires, thought processes and fantasies helps to gently withdraw from the oppression of the Symbolic alienation and the Imaginary demand without collapsing into the compulsive drive for annihilation peculiar to the 'negative' Real. Hence the practice of the Path answers the research question: how can the subject alleviate, integrate and embody contingencies, associated with the Real, thus attaining contentment within oneself?[66] The Path is a practice of embodiment, since it is 'in this fathom-long body, with its perception and intellect, that I declare that there is the cosmos, the origination of the cosmos, the cessation of the cosmos and the path of practice leading to the cessation of the cosmos'.[67]

[66] This question is dealt with in practical details in subsequent chapters.

[67] From Rohitassa Sutta: To Rohitassa, trans. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.045.than.html; 'the cosmos' is elsewhere translated as 'the world' referring to the six sense bases, which in turn breed the realm of desire.



Scheme 4: Rediscovering the Real via the Noble Eightfold Path

Wisdom factors are comprised of proper understanding/view and proper thought/aspiration/attitude.[68]

Proper understanding/view is firstly understanding of the Four Noble Truths (Payutto 1995, 196). It is the view, which results in a 'healthy panic', that there is danger. A sense of urgency to bring oneself out of harm's way follows it. Development on the Path approximates it to the view of a thing as it is, before self-identification and signification takes place. It becomes the view through fabrications of a self. It is the understanding of the five aggregates for what they are – lacking inherent reality. It is the direct knowing of reality or vipassanā fully developed and practiced all the time.[69] Given that definition, it is a view that is difficult to penetrate. Other factors of the Path contribute to the development of this understanding via the complete system of skillful attitudes, behavioral patterns,

[68] Following Grant Olson's translation of Venerabe Payutto's Buddhadhamma, I use the adjective 'proper' rather than 'right' in referring to factors of the Path.
[69] This statement is inferred from a vipassanā practice as well as from the teachings of Ajahn Chah, in particular 'Right View – The Place of Coolness', https://www.ajahnchah.org/book/Right_View_Place.php.

lifestyle guidelines, mental and physical cultivation practices. The development of proper view is a lifelong practical study.[70]

Proper thought/attitude is a subsequent framework of thinking, which follows the development of proper understanding. As put by Ajahn Sona, key elements of proper attitude, namely renunciation (non-greed) and harmlessness (non-anger) are results of non-delusion (i.e. proper understanding).[71] Hence, it is thinking unbiased by delusions of permanence, independence, inherent attractiveness of phenomena as well as thinking uninflated by conceptual fabrications. It is the attitude of release: letting unskillful mental-physical phenomena go. It is the active attitude of gentleness, kindness and patience, inextricably tied with cultivation of the Path.[72] A crucial element – contributing to the development of proper view and thought – is having a community of spiritual friends (Pāli: kalyana-mitta) (i.e. being friends with other noble beings who practice the Path and can give the right guidance).[73]

Virtue factors are proper action, speech and livelihood.

Proper action is an actualisation of the term 'embodiment'. Here, embodiment is not just a walking or sitting meditation and mindfulness of activity. It is a much larger plethora of skillful means. Practices of taijiquan, martial arts, parkour, swimming and movement improvisation are not only contributing to bringing attention to the body but helping to develop proper understanding via direct experience of phenomena.[74] Movement practices are a unique method for this research. As stated in the introduction chapter, it is through movement that I was able to engage with the world and develop myself, hence the way I perceive phenomena is irreversibly inflected by a kinetic dimension of experience. I see this as a 'healthy feature': an obsession with the movement arts spared me from a weak

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[70] 'This gradual process and evolution of proper understanding along the Path shows us that at different stages of practice proper understanding has different level of quality… Because proper understanding is one aspect of wisdom (paññā), perhaps the more appropriate term for the latter type of proper understanding is 'wisdom', meaning wisdom that has progressed through different phases of the Path and made it to the end point.' (Payutto 1995, 198-199)

[71] See Ajahn Sona's series of talks on the Noble Eightfold Path: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNNH_hebC50

[72] More on this in the subchapter on Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā.

[73] The homage to teachers and friends who helped me on the Path can be found in Appendix C – *Homage to teachers and noble friends*.

[74] I show how these practices are applied in this chapter and chapter 3.

immune system and fragile body; it allowed me to develop strict discipline, a nimble mind, alacrity, perspicacity and a solid sense of sobriety. I believe that applying these wholesome non-conceptual qualities is relevant to analytical research.

Proper speech is not only truthful, gentle and kind, promotingreconciliation and peace, but is able to stimulate insight through sincere and precise exposition of arising phenomena.[75] In the accounts of personal experience written in italics, I rely on expressive qualities of language to describe intricacies of embodiment practices. In rendering these accounts, I write in a more 'impressionistic' way. This is directly related to the practices of embodiment, which I've been immersing myself in throughout my life. It bears a certain synesthetic quality, as psychophysical states and feeling tones find their interpretation through imagery, metaphor and rhythm. This 'embodied writing', so to speak, comes from a self-discovery within the density of experience. Be it the experience of certain movement art, a meditative absorption or arising of insight knowledge, the totality of phenomena is never transferable through the mere creation of concepts. Hence, the totality is transmitted as a wholesome package of 'bodily poetry' sieved through proper understanding at the level it was developed at the moment of writing.

'Bodily poetry' encompassed by a synesthetic expression of the array of feeling tones a movement practitioner goes through is in no way exhausted by these accounts. It is a form of sharing experience as directly as 'secondary rendering of phenomena' (i.e. signification) can allow. I understand that experience thus shared becomes something else on the reader's end. However, I hope that it may be of benefit to the reader's process of self-discovery and embodiment.

Proper livelihood as applied for the purposes of this research is everyday life practices of loving-kindness (Pāli: metta), compassion (Pāli: karuna), sympathetic joy (Pāli: mudita),[76] generosity (Pāli: dana), forgiveness (Pāli: khama) and equanimity (Pāli:

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[75] Four classic attributes of proper speech are: refrain from lying; refrain from harsh speech; refrain from divisive speech; and refrain from frivolous speech. From *Magga-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path*, translated from the Pāli by Thanissaro Bhikkhu: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.008.than.html

[76] Jay Garfield, in his summary of the general traits that characterise all of Buddhism, emphasises these three qualities as an 'ethical orientation to the world' (Garfield 2015, 11). Here, as the world metonymically stands for the multifarious plethora of 'hallucinated' subjective experience, these qualities are self-directed at a symptomatic landscape at hand.

upekkha). As I discovered experientially, these practices directly alleviate unbearable intensities, which encounters with the Real may stir up. They are practiced together with the observance of the five precepts: refrain from harming living beings; refrain from taking what is not given; refrain from sexual misconduct; refrain from false speech; and refrain from intoxicants causing heedlessness.

Further lifestyle guidelines can be found in Buddha's discourse to Sigala.[77] In this discourse, Buddha gives advice to the layperson Sigala. Including the first four of the five precepts, he states to refrain from 'committing evil actions in four ways' (i.e. driven by desire, anger, fear or ignorance). Whereas the fifth precept is included as part of 'six channels for dissipating wealth' along with refraining from 'sauntering in streets at unseemly hours; frequenting theatrical shows; indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness; association with evil companions; and the habit of idleness'.[78] Each of the latter ways is accompanied by 'six evil consequences'.

Sigalovada Sutta concludes with the distinction between foes in the guise of friends and warm-hearted friends and a list of duties before parents, children, spouse, pupils, teachers, associates, clansmen and employees. Termed in commentarial references as 'householder's Vinaya' (Jayasaro 2017, 212), this list of guidelines is intended to promote wealth accumulation, safety, efficient energetic functioning and peaceful coexistence. As such, it directly supports cultivation of concentration and wisdom factors.

Concentration factors are proper mindfulness, effort and concentration.

Proper mindfulness is a foundational practice of rediscovering and embodiment of the Real; it is addressed in a subchapter Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā.

Proper effort will be addressed in the subchapter 'Taijiquan cultivation, where principles of standing cultivation are outlined.

[77] Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala, trans. From Pāli by Narada Thera, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html.
[78] Ibid., 77.

Proper concentration concludes this chapter with the notion of Samādhi. I will show that abiding in the Real in a positive sense is the practice of the attainment of concentration, or, the eight absorptions (Pāli: jhāna).

The goal of the Path is the embodiment of *proper understanding* and *thought* (i.e. the embodiment of liberating wisdom): a complete absence of greed, hatred and delusion in a human individual. This research maintains that skilful means of movement arts are accessory tools in this development.

Figure 6: Dhamma chakka pavattana sutta – Buddha's first sermon, Sarnath, Varanasi, India, 2016, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev.

Satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā: the practice of insight

Satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā or the 'establishment of mindfulness for clear seeing'[79] is a practice of maintaining mindfulness on the four groups of phenomena – body, feelings, consciousness and dhammas - and putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world.[80] The latter part of the sentence is what makes it *proper mindfulness*.[81] Hence, mere observation of phenomena doesn't lead to a weakening of the fundamental misrecognition.

As shown in the previous chapter, the cause of unbearable stress is an identification with a Symbolic-Imaginary subjectivity, which is grounded in a peculiar perception of the mental-physical continuum regarded as 'oneself'. Therefore, these four groups of phenomena are to be addressed in order to see clearly what a dis-identified subject is like.

Amidst these four groups is the unsymbolised – the Real of not-yet-known (Fink 1995, 24). Hence, shining the light of mindfulness on them leads to rediscovering the Real with or without subsequent symbolisation. The Real of the unknowable, ultimately the unsymbolisable, is a suppositional domain of the Other jouissance, which as Lacan states is close to religious ecstasy and mysticism (Lacan 1998, 74). I assume here that this experience outside the function of signification is a domain of the practice of the eight absorptions.

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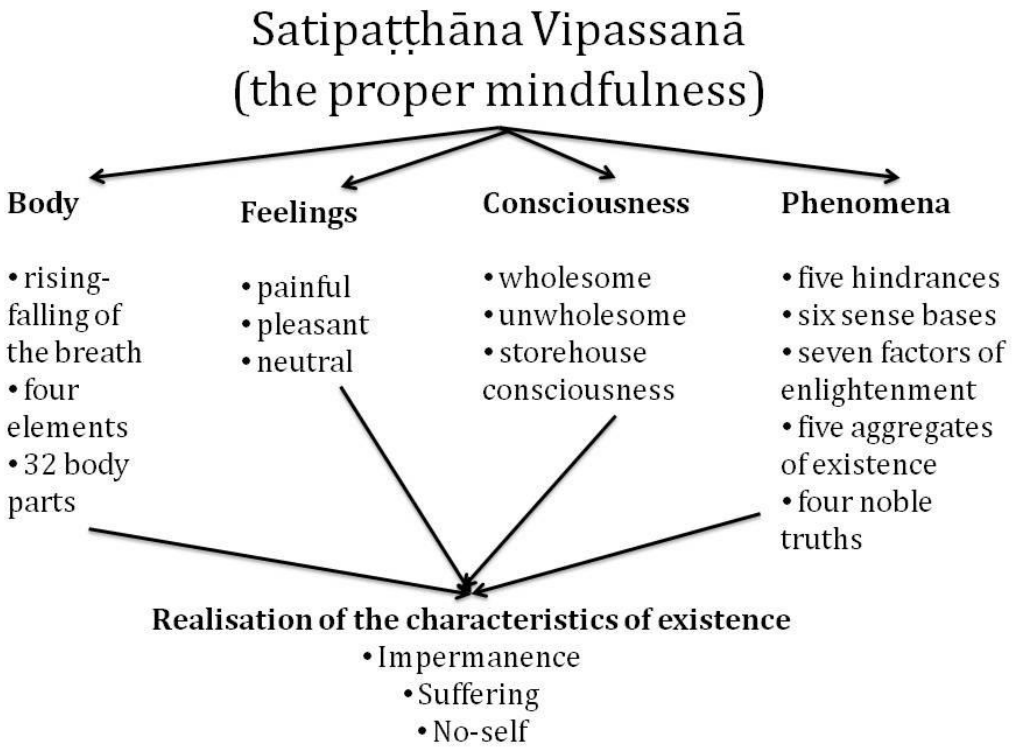
[79] This compounded translation is made following Bhikku Anālayo's argument that the Pāli term *upaṭṭhāna* (presence or establishment) can be found throughout the nikayas, whereas the term *paṭṭhāna* (foundation) appears later in Abhidhamma and commentaries. (Anālayo 2006, 29)

[80] Maha-satipatthana Sutta: The Great Frames of Reference, translated from the Pāli by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.22.0.than.html.
Ñanamoli Thera's translation adopted by Anālayo Bhikku states 'free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.' (Anālayo 2006, 3)

[81] See Ajahn Sona's series of talks on The Noble Eightfold Path: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOcoynQCmZ0.



Scheme 5: Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā, or proper mindfulness

The characteristic qualities of mindfulness (Pāli: sati) are presence (Pāli: upaṭṭhāna) and breadth (of mind), that is, the ability to maintain in one's mind the various elements and facets of a particular situation (Anālayo 2006, 47-48)). Given the scope of phenomena under Satipaṭṭhānas, there is always room for improvement of one's mindfulness. In parallel with an analytic situation, mindfulness can be found on both parts of the analysand (attention required to verbalise current thoughts, dream images and unconscious desires) and the analyst (punctuation of the analysand's discourse, recollection of material presented by the analysand throughout the course of their analysis, and interpretations of the latter). The way to understand mindfulness through analysis is the analyst's desire:

'Lacan's expression 'the analyst's desire' refers not to the analyst's countertransferential feelings but rather to a kind of 'purified desire' that is specific

> to the analyst – to the analyst not as human being with feelings but as a function, a role, a part to be played and one that can be played by many extremely different individuals… It is an enigmatic desire that does not tell the patient what the analyst wants him or her to say or do. Neurotics are only too eager to figure out what other people want from them so they can fulfill or thwart those other people's desires.' (Fink 1999, 14-15)

The analyst's desire dovetails with another Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta guideline: 'His mindfulness that "There is a body" is maintained to the extent of knowledge and remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world.'[82] A practitioner of insight is to establish a broad recollection of phenomena, cultivating 'wise (purified) desire' for the practice, devoid of identifying with any of the arising and passing aggregates. With absence of the analyst desiring wisely on the subject's part, considerable patient endurance (Pāli, khanti) is evidently required to undertake the practice of insight properly. Yet presence of the teacher contributes towards a similar role.

I've learnt satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā in the Burmese tradition as taught by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw. Mahāsi's teachings are simple, oriented towards simple people, like farmers, who know their place with land and plants. With a solid physical base on earth, development of insight is not a tormenting task. Given basic instructions, such people simply follow them, just as if following a plough with a bull dragging it. They are not trying to modify the plough or the bull or find the way around the stone of the unbearable. The practice of taijiquan, and other Chinese and Japanese martial arts share a similar attitude: one ploughs through the resistance of the ego, without trying to talk one's way out of it or dance around it in beautiful moves.

Here, I follow the books of the Malaysian Theravada monk, Venerable Sujiva, recommended to me by my teacher, Venerable Jotinanda – in particular, Sujiva's *The Tree of Wisdom, The River of No Return: the Practice and Development on Insight Meditation* and *Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice: A Pragmatic Approach to Vipassanā*. Venerable

[82] Ibid., 80.

Sujiva travelled extensively throughout the world, teaching insight meditation and conducting retreats. His approach suits modern people, whose main hindrances are excessive discursive thinking and a lack of interaction with nature. I'm not insisting here that people undergoing psychoanalysis may as well substitute it with farming and meditation retreats: the rigor of a psychoanalytic approach effectively serves the goal of renunciation of a stagnant subjective position. However, as I mentioned earlier, the Path encourages a deeper engagement than that of a 'talking cure'.

Mindfulness of the body: the Real as bodily intensities

I'll take you to a massive mountain

with a cave of wonders

free from suffering & stress:

mindfulness immersed in the body

Venerable Luang por Mun

The Ballad of Liberation from the Khandas[83]

The discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness starts with nothing else but breathing. This is also a starting point of the technique designed by Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw: noting the rising and falling of the abdomen as per the element of air entering and leaving the body. This immersion of attention into the body causes dormant intensities

[83] The Ballad of Liberation from the Khandas is translated from the Thai by Thanissaro Bhikku, https://www.dhammatalks.org/books/HeartReleased/Section0006.html.

to ignite. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta follows then with the phenomenon of origination and passing away with regard to the body.[84]

Realisation of the characteristics of existence occurs when a practitioner is exhausted, observing the arising and ceasing of intensities/phenomena to the point of it being akin to a film on fast forward. According to Sujiva, seeing this flow of change is seeing impermanence. He states that seeing this change moment to moment is like an experience of intense mental pain, concluding that the change is unsatisfactory:

> 'As one sees change in the mind and body, the clinging to the self is slowly put away, and the non-selfness of the natural occurrence of the mind and body process becomes clearer. You will see more and more that the body sensations are actually not you; that the mind that watches, is just the mind that watches; as well as that feeling and the whole mass of pain does not belong to "me." "I" am not the pain and the mind that watches the pain so clearly is not "me" either, it is just the mind that is watching. This kind of experience can arise only when you can see the changes and the suffering that arises from the changes. Then the signs of impermanence become clearer, the signs of no-self become more obvious. Only when the signs of no-self become obvious, will the no-self become obvious. This no-self is equivalent to the five aggregates, which is a different word describing reality, in the same manner as impermanence and suffering.' (Sujiva 2000, 198)

The above quote is referred to the Real as that which is signaled with anxiety (Lacan 2014, 160) in two ways:

- always changing
- unsatisfactory.

A skilful method of attending to the intensities by clearly understanding their ownerlessness can be viewed thus: they are not me or mine, mindfulness of the body rids

[84] Ibid., 80.

the subject from incessant anxiety caused by grasping for desirable mental-physical states in an attempt to ignore the Real. That which is ignored, namely 'basic ground' (Trunga 2005, 96/189), spaciousness devoid of solidity, returns as a flow of phenomena, perceived as unsatisfactory by the senses, conditioned to dwell in the realm of forms.

Experiencing a return of the intensities of the Real in the body can be like having no feeling, no life and no soul left deep within. It is like being an empty shell or being infested with swarming, disturbing pain. The experience of characteristics of existence can appear shocking for the subject who is untrained in 'not clinging to anything in the world'.

Bodily intensities may appear in the Real as a bewildering, maddening abyss, threatening to thwart and subvert the subject's existence.[85] Episodes of paranoia and derangement may follow[86] as five psychophysical aggregates lose their habitual Imaginary-Symbolic properties, introducing the way of existence undetermined by the conditioning (i.e. the Real). Hence, the practice of insight is alleviated with the practice of cultivation of loving-kindness and serenity.

What do I know about the body? It's always been so different. I suffered from sickness. I rejoiced in the greatest delights of physicality and sex. I experienced fragility and solidity. The body has always been precious to me. There was never any ignoring the body. There was detachment from the body, like in those times when the intensity of sickness overwhelms. I simply would hold the light of mindfulness then. I entrusted. I was shocked, scared, terrified of the body. I was completely solid and controlling in relation to the body. I was clear about the body. I couldn't understand a thing in a great bodily intricacy.

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[85] 'What is the psychotic phenomenon? It is the emergence in reality of an enormous meaning that has the appearance of being nothing at all – in so far as it cannot be tied to anything, since it has never entered into the system of symbolization – but under certain conditions it can threaten the entire edifice.' (Lacan 1993, 85)

[86] This and the previous paragraph are based on an empirical observation of the insight process, whereby unmediated contact with that which is ignored from the ego, namely impermanence and inevitability of death, are reintroduced as 'a sudden emergence of a total strangeness' (Lacan 1993, 86). Dissonance of this experience with the ego of the five khandas is 'thwarting and subverting' in so far as there is no 'letting go' of identification, hence paranoia (internalised threat of loss of self, predicated on delusion of self) and derangement (incapacitation of discriminative awareness) follow.

I understood that the body is impermanent. Sickness helped me to penetrate it as it actually is: not the bodily sensory image (Imaginary), not the description of the body according to physical exam and medical discourse (Symbolic), not even the intensities themselves (Real). In sickness I entered entirety. Non-identification. Pure knowing. The body appeared … unborn.

There was indulgence in the body, like in those times when the continuous frenzy of movement leaves no room for suffering: on a run through city streets, during long sessions of workouts in a gym, in a swimming pool. In a dance hall, where continuous listening to the body and articulating the continuum of intensities towards the most balanced, pristine, effortless alignment in relation to heaven and earth breeds impeccable moves. In sex, in the twining of loving bodies in ecstatic violence, in a breath so heavy and hot, that it returns one to the state of an unbroken, non-fragmented bulb of energy, like an infant splashing in the womb of the mother. And in the midst of this indulgence the clogging of intensities wrapped into a vortex and collapsed into the endless pristine white light, which was the pure radiant consciousness – ignorance itself.

Afterward, through mindfulness, I could clearly see: these are words, these are images, and these are inexplicables. Thereafter I could without fallacy conclude: words are empty, and so are the meanings and theories, and so are the images, like a flickering light, splashing with a glimpse of fantasy, they dissolve, and so are the intensities, rising through the continuum from the heels to the crown, they disappear into the space around, having their cause exhausted.

I recognised: this is serenity.

Such a continuity of waves functions until exhaustion. As the fire goes out, it is just out. The dance of Samsara lasts while there is the enthrallment of ignorance. So too the body: it moves until it loses the speed of desiring: to have something it wants, to get rid of something it doesn't want, to integrate something it cannot, to let go of something it can, to experience something it hasn't, to stop experiencing something it has, to be liked, to be left alone…

And this is what I know: the balance, ease, serenity and strength, the energy and clarity are all hinged upon the diligent application of continuous effort from the heart.

Mindfulness of feelings

Sujiva compares mindfulness of feelings to immersion in the ocean. There is still an element of solidity while observing bodily intensities, but this element disappears entirely when one observes feelings. Painful feelings are unique in producing insight, since they point most directly to the characteristics of existence (Sujiva 2009, 100). Observing constant blazing pain, one has no chance but to surrender to the truth: the body is like that.

Pleasant feelings are harder to dis-identify from, since the clinging to them appears natural (i.e. they're taken for the natural state of being). In other cases, they can be 'taken for spiritual attainments or "higher states" and thus cause psychological issues' (Sujiva 2009, 102). For this reason, Sujiva emphasises detachment in regard to any arising feelings, which echoes with the stance of the analyst's desire. He writes that feelings are to be properly understood as part of the mind stream. They are going to be there unless the subject attains full cessation of self-identification.

In my experience, fluctuations of feelings arise entangled with memories, images and habitual attitudes. They point to the Real as opposed to the Imaginary,[87] which underlines feelings by drawing images like those described in the following account:

I recall myself sitting on the cushion in a warehouse turned into a meditation hall at the outskirts of Melaka. Feelings rise, overlapped with images. There is a tension, coming to the back of my throat, bubbling suffocation, tension, tension, stiffening the neck, tension – a skull in a vice, tension – shoulders rise: a stance of a fighter, a perpetual shrug, a defense, a growl being born within, transforming in the roar. I see the warrior in a shell of armour. Rage

[87] As the (m)other's punishing, rejecting, suffocating and ruthless aspect: not a blissful unity but prosecution, the Real is opposed to the Imaginary. In such a way it can be associated with the (m)other's demand, prior to the naming of her desire, which smothers a nascent subject (Fink 1999, 146). The 'demand for living' mentioned in the previous chapter in conjunction with materiality of language can be seen as relating to the (m)other as primary object of attachment. In this light the whole of the Path is fading away, cessation of this attachment via non-clinging with subsequent release and final realisation.

of resistance, spiky, spooky, angry, hurt porcupine shell enveloping the tender little scar on the bottom of the heart. Lines from 'Berserk' anime appear in my mind: a man takes a sword in his hand to protect a little wound on his heart. How true, I think. What is that little wound? The mind doesn't even stop, proceeding ceaselessly. As I sink to the bottom, core, the middle of the chest, there is a piercing pain, hidden so deep under the layers of the onion, which is me. This pain, it doesn't ache anymore, it just smoulders. This pain is then looked upon, and it opens into a void, and there is a sea, a splashing sea of sorrow, a black sea. A recollection comes: I am on the slope of the Ayu Dug Mountain in Crimea. The Black Sea, a thick titanium tar, is breaking waves below. A chunk of a crescent moon is casting a weak light over this swaying fluid. Wind blows through the crowns of small stocky trees. I am in a sleeping bag, staring into the stars. My parents are dead. My dear father, whom I loved so much, is dead, my mother, whom I cherished, is dead. The stars: why is it so? I do not know. The suffering, I suppose, the inevitability of decay and death, the inexplicable, the Real… the Black Sea down there, with its black waves of fear, cold and dread, a sea of sorrow, splashing, back at the bottom of my heart, splashing in waves of remorse: what has been unsaid, unfelt, unheard, misunderstood, interrupted, suppressed. So much. The pool of water which never ends, ever splashing. But it then turns into ceaseless rain. And as it falls, I feel soothed, the smouldering coals of pain are cooled. I want it to keep raining over me, this Rain, which is also рай *(spelled like rye, the Russian word for 'paradise'). And so I call myself Rainin: the one from paradise, the one of the rain. And then I feel the rain. The way it falls. Its gentle noise. Its whisper, its reassuring words of loving kindness, like those of the old Russian babka, whispering on water, to heal the one who's sick. And so it whispers. I wake up in my little room, in the mansion in Mountain Springs, Far East Russia, and the raindrops are heard bouncing and breaking against the metal roof of a vestibule under my window. I feel them falling through me, throughout the whole body, so gentle, so non-invasive, so kind and understanding. I say: I hear you, rain, I feel you, I know you. I know the tears of the Earth. I say: be blessed life, showered by you, for it grows lush and alive. And then another memory comes of endless rain for a whole week after my grandfather's death. I feel myself standing in the cemetery, amongst the green wild grass, the weeping people, the falling rain. The coffin is being lowered. The first ever tears, awkward tears, not offended tears but tears of loving memory over the one I barely knew, coming as a clot of pain up my throat, distorting my face, I am about to burst out crying*

(oh if only I could allow myself to), but I restrain the spasms, and my face turns into a grieving grimace. The crying resonates, I can't hold it, something cries inside me. The farewell has been long. That feeling is filling me up with a gentle inspiration, and I feel raindrops all over my face. Nature is crying for him, for me, for all the manly kin of ours. Yet my father isn't there. Just like I won't be there when his body is lowered into the Earth, right there, next to his father's. Just like I imagine I will be lowered one day, somewhere on this Earth: the underground world unites us all.

This flickering of images takes less than thirty seconds. Thoughts, parallels and images vanish momentarily. And the only remainder is the smouldering feeling of a burning coal within. How many litres of tears rained down my cheeks after their passing? I think. I feel the spasms rising, and the armour releasing, because there is nothing more to guard against, to battle for or to rage about. Then I return to the room, and the fan is spinning the air above my head. And I want to sink back, back down into earth. I want to be absorbed by it like falling rain. I want to return towards them; they pull me back, they call for me. They miss me. I miss them. I haven't told them about so many things. The feeling pinches again in my neck. That feeling, which I have no word to associate with. And there I am back again, on the slope of the Ayu Dug Mountain, on the shore of the Black Sea. The crossing of these waters is a death task, and the feeling of shrinking fear grasps my shoulders. I realise then: I do not want to die. Yet the thought of it irritates the pride-conceit formation of a daredevil inside. Jump into the mouth of the abyss, it says, jump into the void. Jump off this slope, into the Black Sea. And see if you can let the waters take you to wherever it is you need to be. If you're meant to die, so be it, so be it, so be it. And then I see the water's surface becoming more distant. I realise that I'm sinking. I'm drowning. The suffocation comes, marked by the fear. The spasm rolls upward and seizes my throat, and I want to take those hands off my neck and I want to wake up, and I scream: stop choking me, mother, don't you see you're holding on too tight! Why are you guilting, controlling, smothering me? You are not Mother Nature! Nature is not like you. Nature cares but doesn't cling. Nature embraces, but has no selfish agenda. Nature is soothing, you are disturbing. Nature is allowing, you are nagging. Nature has unconditional forgiveness; you have a contract to live by. It is not me who is cowardly, it is you. It is not the world which is frightening; it is you who are scared. It is not the life which is difficult, it is you,

buried under the endless offendedness, trouble and weakness, who makes it difficult. Let go of me! Let me float, not sink and drown. Let go of me! Let yourself be tall and upright on your own! Let go of me! Let me be weak, inconstant, sensitive, dreamy, like the rain. Let go of me! I want to know the life without your vices of shame, fear and remorse. Let go of me! You're perfectly capable to live on your own! Let go of me! I'm not the meaning of your life! Let go of me! Hear me for goodness sake! Hear me! Hear! See! Listen! The Black Sea is gently mumbling, speaking, flirting with the mountain. The wind embraces both, stroking themwith never-grasping hands. The stars watch over this serene, still world. See this: there is no danger in the world. See me as I crossed continents and oceans on the wings of dreams. See me, I'm stretched here, under the sky, unafraid, free, strong, healthy, capable, even within life's swarming perplexities I gladly meet the difficulty and dance with it, run with it, jump with it, work with it, make love with it, dream with it. And the solution is breaking through the open sky! See this marvel through my eyes, mother. See, feel it, as it is, feel it, don't escape it, feel it don't try to cure it, feel it, don't condemn it, feel it, don't explain it out. There is nothing threatening me. There was nothing threatening you. There is nothing threatening people. There are no diseases, there is no poverty, there is no death and no misery, no grief and no despair. Nature is standing still. See this, mother, and may your offendedness be soothed by forgiveness! May your pain be dispelled by the light in my eyes! May your anger be freed in a sacred, violent dance of a goddess, for you're marvelous and strong in yourself, for I am indeed endlessly grateful to you!

A blasting return into the room again: the fan is spinning all the same. The pot-bellied Chinese man is coughing next to me, he cannot help it, and I can feel his sense of awkwardness for breaking the silence of the room. Here I feel: my back is more upright and neck spasms are less pronounced, almost gone. I feel the burning in my buttocks. I feel the warmth in the stomach. My shoulders are still bearing the corselet, but its metal is no longer fused with my flesh. It feels like I have resurfaced. My head is above the waters, on the new earth, with the new sun, in the new world with different laws, guiding the life process by ways of compassion.

How was I supposed to contemplate this flux? The mountain river after the storm – these are feelings. My feelings? Or the feelings of the story I named Rainin with its hallucinated, unfolding events? Or just feelings? It wasn't important at all, for in the end the

peaking dramas of this life will be lost, vanished, erased by the great eraser of time. Yet as 'I am' just now, I am looking through a different set of eyes. The great burden of imaginary identity built to shield a child of the Real from the bewilderment of Samsara has dropped. So much confusion it created! Yet all the rivers meet the ocean at the delta. Here another feeling comes: I am yet to meet the ocean. All that has happened can be compared to a turbulent flow of those mountain springs after a summer typhoon. And as the flowing down the hills is done with, the gentle stream of the Ussuri river through the planes, forests and swamps of Khanka lowland has brought me to the Sea of Japan, and from there to the East China Sea and so forth: Celebes Sea, Andaman Sea, Gulf of Thailand, Java Sea, Arabian Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, of feelings experienced by no-one.

Entangled in the stories made up by imaginary identities, I've seen the most peculiar of dreams. I've seen the worlds of water, the aloneness of a stream-enterer. The magnificence of night travels. The serenity of city streets deep at night. The love, so generous and overflowing, that the small i was drowned, suffocated, scared and confused, mistakenly thinking that he was attacked by evil forces. Yet it was just the breath. Inbreath. Outbreath. And so forth, with a gentle spindling of the fan.

In the snapshot of the insight process above, my mind interprets feelings, associates memories with them, and keeps on creating new stories (i.e. a symbolisation of the Real occurs). Restraint from symbolisation (Moncayo 2012b, 61), that is experiencing feelings, rather than interpreting them and falling into the story, is where the chain of Dependent Origination is broken.[88] Feelings do not linger, unlike the inscribed words of the story. It is easy to see impermanence while experiencing arising and disappearing of feelings. Seeing impermanence, detachment follows.

Detachment and dispassion mentioned in the reverse chain of Dependent Origination are not at all negative states.[89] Preceded by delight, joy and rapture of simple

[88] Ajahn Amaro refers to feeling as the 'weakest link' of the chain, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-wIGlgmgpY.

[89] Žižek states that melancholy occurs in the subject who possesses the object, but has lost all desire for it, because the cause that made him desire this object has retreated and lost its efficiency. He concludes further that far from accentuating to the extreme the situation of frustrated desire, melancholy occurs when we finally get the desired

being as it is, they are states of complete unburdening – putting down the load of thinking, imagining, clinging and becoming. This is a positive aspect of the transforming contingencies of encountering the Real through mindfulness.

Mindfulness of consciousness

All states of being are determined by the heart

It is the heart that leads the way.

The Buddha. Dhammapada[90]

What are all states of being?

Firstly, there are mental formations (Pāli: sankhara). A teacher gave the simile of the water and a state of water. If water is consciousness, then the restless or calm state is the mental formation, characterised by anxious or serene feelings (Pāli: vedana) and perceived (Pāli: sanna) as restlessness or tranquility. The consciousness and mental formations co-

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object, but are disappointed with it (Žižek 2007, 1055/2252). Similarly, dispassion can be compared to a dawning of experience of seeing things as they are (i.e. stripped from the projections we assign to them via the Other's desire). Contrary to the negative effects of collapse of the symbolic function and a possible psychotic break, such experience, faced with gentleness, compassion and surrender, leads to benevolent transcendence. A remarkable illustration of such possibility is Lars von Trier's film 'Melancholia'.

[90] Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu and rendered by Ajahn Munindo. Although the Pāli text uses the term *mano*, which refers to consciousness (vinnana) forerunning the other three mental aggregates (https://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=001), the 'heart' in this quote refers to both *mano* and *citta*. Thanissaro's translation of Ajahn Mun's 'A Heart Released' (https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/mun/released.html) applies the 'heart' to *mano*. Ajahn Mun's disciple Ajahn Maha Boowa applies the term *citta* in a specific way in the Dhamma talks transcribed in *Arahattamaga, Arahattaphala – The Path to Arahatship*. In the latter's glossary *citta* is defined as 'the mind's essential knowing nature, the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence. When associated with the physical body, it is referred to as "mind" or "heart".' (Maha Boowa 2005, 107) It is also this quality which is 'unobscured by passing defilements' (Amaro 2009, 212, quoting from Anguttara Nikaya 1.61 & .62). Further in this subchapter I offer a distinction between knowing quality and consciousness at its foundation (Pāli: bhavanga citta) based on the Yogācāric development of this concept.

exist inseparably in one moment, but looking at them over a period, there are distinct differences (Sujiva 2009, 115).

Secondly, there are various kinds of consciousness, which Sujiva classifies as unwholesome and wholesome consciousness. He insists on attending to them with mindfulness as a consciousness, rather than as a mental formation. It is because when one of the unwholesome roots pervades the mind, the whole mind is afflicted.

I find this division of consciousness to be expanding upon the law of conditionality in the following way. Mental states, coloured with emotion, produce consciousness, which is projected outside and causes dwelling in a particular realm (psychic structure) of Trailokya. According to this model, unwholesome consciousnesses would cause dwelling in the woeful worlds of the realm of desire.

Unwholesome consciousnesses:

- lustful consciousness
- angry consciousness
- delusional consciousness.

States of deluded consciousness may be confused with the Real in their qualities of obscurity and unknowing, yet they aren't the Thing. If psychosis is to be taken for the paramount of delusion (the subject speaks solely through the ego, thereby rejecting any possibility of even a 'secondary rendering of phenomena' (i.e. signification-in-relation), or, as Eyers puts it: 'Those signifiers that, in their isolation, actively signify the nothing, do so insistently within psychotic subjectivity, whereby the lack of a paternal signifier (essentially a 'third term' that dissolves the dyadic logic of the Imaginary) exposes signification to isolation and the failure of relation' (Eyers 2012, 35), then the Thing (of the Real) is when observed consciousness/mental formation vanishes with sustained application of mindfulness.[91]

Needless to say, the above 'vanishing' refers to wholesome consciousnesses, which is founded in non-attachment (detachment), non-aversion (acceptance), and non-delusion

[91] See current chapter 'Conclusion: proper concentration'.

(understanding). Together with these consciousnesses are other beautiful mental factors such as lightness, softness, malleability, etc. As unwholesome consciousnesses are abandoned the wholesome consciousnesses stand out like a beautiful pure lotus flower, and the mind, malleable and serene, can vanish into absorption.

Via the medium of parkour I experienced all these kinds of consciousness.

Whenever I felt pressed towards the wall by an arising swarm of defilement – I would run and exert energy to develop the wholesome skills of mobility, concentration, endurance and joy. When there is a sexual urge, and the frustration from inability to satisfy it. When there is anger from injustices and mistreatments, regardless how righteous. When there is a dull, stupid sense of not knowing anything. When there is an agitated wanting to do whatever in order to distract oneself or run away. When there is a drowsy, lazy state of being, where you can feel that there is something arising, ugly and sly. When it all comes to the path, I welcomed it with practice.

And then I just ran. I ran through the rain, through the hills of Vladivostok, through the construction yards, streets, drives and avenues – manoeuvering through the swarms of people. I was dropping off roofs, climbing over walls, on one breath, on one drive, on one momentum – to overcome, to pass beyond, to exhaust, to develop the inner capacity for peacefulness, loving kindness, acceptance.

By the time I was on the bus back home, hot steam was rising from my body in the cold humid air. I was expanding in all directions 'insight out' and my heart was breathing out loud: I am free. No law, no state, no intensity, no feeling, no body, no consciousness can fetter me. Neither one will I attach to. Why is it so? Because I've seen the city from the edge of the abandoned buildings, where one could climb only having the skills of a traceur. Having risen above the mundane with an expanded mind I've seen the radiance of the sun blazing in the eyes. I sensed the wind piercing the skin on the face and felt how antifragile,[92] indestructible,

[92] Antifragile is a concept introduced by Nassim Nicholas Taleb in his book *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder*. It refers to neither a robust nor resilient state of a system, but a dynamic state of adaptive change. This concept fits well to describe the physicality of a movement artist, which is in a continuous state of enriching

non-desiring it is. Because I experienced a pure being – a stillness arising from diving into the wormhole of the unwholesome and emerging on the other side – uncontaminated, untouched, self-reliant and peaceful.

I understood: it is not the matter of an adrenalin rush or a sense of supremacy over pedestrian ways, neither is it a conceit from possessing highly developed bodily skills. Quite the contrary – it takes humbleness, almost invisibility, self-erasure, and humility to get out on the streets and undertake a practice which doesn't result in social rewards, appraisal and attainment, healing or future prosperity.

It takes a simple step forward, into the noise of the mind, to discover its other side – the silence of the Real. It is mystical, uncontrollable, unmanageable. It is the breath, the streets, the pinched heart, weeping at the beauty of the world being uncovered to the eyes as it is, non-swayed by the conventional. It is the world with no boundaries, no labels of names and laws and concepts, the world of pure is-ness and the sheer magic overflowing in all directions. The city streets are with no horizon for a traceur. They are the place to be, the place of being.

How does this correlate with Vipassanā? The initial stage of liberation is the dispassion toward the unwholesome. So it is in parkour: a dispassion about the swarming world of competition, attainment, knowledge, development, needs and desires. Then there is the detachment from what one used to think one needs. The detachment from what one used to think a body can or cannot do. The detachment from the need to follow the conventional is the most devastating. Yet this detachment is followed by liberation. And that is a sweet fruition of the Path: one is entirely free to do whatever one does. It sets in motion the dismantling of self-identification and traverses its phantasmatic contents via the means of the patterns of movement arts.

A traceur's motivation changes. It is no longer about what I need, want, must, or should. It is about what's next, what's the sequence to follow, what's the pattern to execute. One knows that via the agency of the pattern the whole plethora of phenomena unfolds. One knows that a certain pattern can unlock the door of liberation previously concealed by

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interaction with phenomena. As a 'training tool', such a concept demonstrates how the subject grows from exposure to impermanence and the dissatisfactions that arises from contact.

delusion, fear, angry resentment or sensory misconception. One knows that working a particular angle of motion is equivalent to the vitality, the clarity, the concentration and the energy that subsequently arise. One does not wait for the energy or perfect feeling to come to practice. One knows that those transient-by-nature states arise via the practicing itself, and then vanish, leaving again only a trace of detachment and a grateful smile on the lips. One knows the peaks and bottoms of the path and thus acquires fruition of it – wisdom.

What is the heart, which determines all states of being?
Sujiva writes:

'What is the life continuum?[93] There is one way to explain it although the best way is to experience and observe it.
The mind, as we know it, is ever trying to do something. Running – now here, now there, hatching plans, carrying out schemes. It is what you may call an active state. In certain instances, like in the type of deep sleep where there are no dreams, it withdraws into a basic passive state. Yet within it are found the potentials that are carried over from the distant past lives. It is also from this that the mind objects arise; including objects we never dreamed existed. It is also this life continuum, which occurs to maintain the mind as a process from the beginning of one's life until interrupted by death, and gives rise to the thought processes. Therefore, it is also that which gives us a sense of an individual's existence. And so, the life continuum is different with different persons and beings.
It is not easy to know this consciousness because it is soft and subtle. When it arises, thought processes also stop. But for people dwelling often in meditative states it eventually becomes apparent how from this luminous, clear consciousness arise countless images and thought processes that go on trying to create worlds. It would be good if one is able to really get to know this consciousness. This is the life continuum, the basic consciousness of an individual which flows (or rather changes

[93] The 'life continuum' is a term that also occurs in Visuddhimagga in Ñánamoli's translation. When referring to ālaya-vijñāna I apply the 'storehouse consciousness' as it occurs in Lankavatara Sutra, translated by Suzuki.

moment-to-moment) when there are no thought processes, hence, it is called process freed.' (Sujiva 2009, 117)

This passage does not present that which may be called a classical account of bhavanga (Williams 2002, 123). From the standpoint of the praxis, namely treating the Real by means of the Symbolic, Sujiva's account of bhavanga symbolises the occurrence of the symptom. From another perspective, that of Yogācāra, this consciousness indeed *is* the symptom.

First of all, both accounts of Theravādin bhavanga-citta and Yogācāric ālaya-vijñāna are explanatory devices (Griffith 1986, 38, 95-96) aimed at illustrating aphenomenology of that which is broadly defined as viññāṇa in the chain of Dependent Origination (Waldron 2003, 12). Waldron's thorough research on the development of the model of mind, centered around ālaya-vijñāna, illustrates the intricate relationships between saṅkhāra and viññāṇa. Through the metaphor of a river and riverbed it is shown how consciousness is interdependent with mental formations: the flow of appropriating (Skt. ālaya) consciousness affects material sense-faculties, producing waves of feelings, perceptions and mental formations. This consciousness enters an embryo in a womb and clings to somatic processes as basal sentience (Waldron 2003, 93), which discerns its own existence from that of fundamental spaciousness (Trungpa 2005, 85). This discernment '*is the imperceptible or unrecognisable perception of the stable external world*'[94] (Waldron 2003, 97). As such, consciousness is the seed of basic delusion, that of constancy and separateness. Here, prior to any signification and identification, there is already a nucleus of the ego: the symptom, which 'covers a hole within the whole' (Moncayo 2012b, 61).

As 'groundless ground', which makes any signification possible, basic spaciousness, connected with primordial intelligence (Pali: vidyā), which is lost to consciousness, structured (later) like a language,[95] is the unary trace. It is in contrast with vidyā, this

[94] Italicised by the author. Just as with Trungpa's metaphor of dance, which brings fluid openness to a halt and solidifies 'I am', dancing in the space, appropriating consciousness is the very locus, or seed, of fundamental misrecognition: stable with regard to unstable/impermanent, as per Vipallasa Sutta.
[95] Given that this consciousness is imperceptible and unrecognisable, it can be regarded as unconscious, which, as a locus of intensities and drives carried as 'seeds' from previous (life)times, conceals the subject's causes of suffering.

glimpse of infinite potential and unmediated knowing, the subject arising into being as the subject of a signifier, suffering from the symptom (mis)perceived as oneself.

In the Mahayana text *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra,*[96] the Buddha speaks: 'Nirvana is the ālaya-vijñāna where revulsion takes place by self-realisation.'[97] During the vipassanā meditation retreat I asked Venerable Jotinanda to explain the above line from the sutra. Belonging to the Theravada tradition, he compared ālaya-vijñāna with bhavanga-citta, yet he didn't focus on the latter, stressing that, regardless what vehicle we're operating under, the main predicament is that 'now there is dukkha'.[98] He then gave a discourse on the revulsion towards the constituting elements of the chain of Dependent Origination that generate dukkha. He concluded that until the subject is completely repulsed with greed, hatred and delusion, he won't turn away from the conditioned.[99] Evidently enough, from the above analysis, both schools speak of the same process.

Mindfulness of phenomena

This section encompasses various aspects of all previously mentioned objects of a vipassanā praxis. They can be subdivided into those to be observed and known:

- Six sense bases (with corresponding consciousnesses)
- Five aggregates of existence
- Four Noble Truths (when they arise, modes of understanding, abandoning, realising and development are applied to each truth respectively);

and those to be abandoned – the five hindrances – and cultivated – the seven factors of enlightenment.

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[96] Laṅkāvatāra is a product of a hybrid school that combined basic Yogācāra doctrines with Tathāgatagarbha thought. (Lusthaus 2002, 7)
[97] The Lankavatara Sutra. A Mahayana Text. Translated for the first time from the original Sanskrit by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-nondiacritical.htm.
[98] Oral communication, 2 January 2018, at the vipassanā meditation retreat, Melaka, Malaysia.
[99] Ibid., 98.

The five hindrances can be regarded as an unfolded account of 'greed and distress towards the world'. In relation to the Real of not-yet-known, the hindrances are that about which the subject insists on being ignorant. They are affects of suppressed signifiers for the neurotic, distinctive colouring of psychotic jouissance and that which drives 'propping up' of the Symbolic order in perverted subjectivity.[100] With refinement of basal afflictive structures mentioned above by virtue of the Path, the hindrances take on subtle forms of momentary impulses, yet they retain the basic quality of that which hinders the subject's realisation of no-self, namely jhana. The five hindrances are :

- Sensory desire (Pāli: kamacchanda)
- Ill-will (Pāli: vyapada)
- Drowsiness and lethargy (Pāli: thīna-middha)
- Restlessness and remorse (Pāli: uddhacca-kukkucca)
- Doubt (Pāli: vicikicchā).[101]

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment to be cultivated are:

- Mindfulness (Pāli: sati)
- Investigation of the Dhamma (Pāli: dhamma vicaya)
- Energy (Pāli: viriya)
- Joy (Pāli: pīti)
- Tranquility (Pāli: passadhi)

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[100] Reference to Lacan's symptomatic of subjective structure is derived from Fink's *Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis.* The rigour of Buddhist practice enables the subject to confront defilements/hindrances head on, rather than to dialectise the subjective position, which leads to germination of hindrances. Fundamentally, all subjective positions are a form of delusion and thereby are something to be known and abandoned. In the case of psychotic subjectivity such is impossible, since there is nothing else but the ego (Fink 1999, 86). However, effect of hindrances can still be alleviated by loving kindness, sense restraint and construction of benevolent 'delusional metaphor'. (For more on 'delusional metaphor' see the following subchapter.) For the neurotic, affects of the repressed are to be brought to consciousness through thorough introspection and then abandoned (See chapter three 'Movement improvisation'). Perverted subjective structure, as it was mentioned earlier, would require withdrawal of desire from the world and 'fusing the mind with the Dhamma' (Ajahn Kalyano in oral communication, roughly July 2019).

[101] These translations are derived from Ajahn Thiradhammo's *Working with the Five Hindrances*.

- Concentration (Pāli: samādhi)
- Equanimity (Pāli: upekkhā).

Needless to say, reversing the cycle of Dependent Origination by means of confidence and faith generated through the Path is naturally accompanied by an arising of these factors. Practices of taijiquan and movement arts are, as well, a cultivation of these factors.

Taijiquan: cultivation of vitality

We think we think with our brains. Personally, I think with my feet. That's the only way I really come into contact with anything solid. I do occasionally think with my forehead, when I bang into something. But I've seen enough electroencephalograms to know there's not the slightest trace of a thought in the brain.

Jacques Lacan[102]

The above anecdote was the response to Noam Chomsky's question on thought during Lacan's lecture at MIT in the United States. Chomsky concluded that Lacan must be mad in trying to convince the American scientific community that the source of human intelligence is located in the feet. From the taijiquan perspective, though, Lacan's statement makes perfect sense, since a practitioner of taijiquan is not reliant on conceptual thinking only.

Nuancing the Imaginary narcissism with the metonymy of desire in a signifier is indeed a crucial, albeit alienating, step in the formation of subjectivity according to Lacan (Eyers 2012, 53). It is breaking the dyadic clinging of an Oedipus complex, that primal seedling of lust and aggression, with the Name-of-the-Father, which introduces spaciousness into a fragile and fundamentally paranoid narcissistic structure. It is not the basic spaciousness of non-identification, but a space where desire can be articulated

[102] Roudinesco quotes this passage from Robert Georgin's *Jacobson*, Les Cahiers Ciste. (Roudinesco 1999, 379)

independently from that of the (m)other. However, and that's what analysis and vipassanā praxis disclose, that desire, which gains a glimpse of freedom in language, is a desire of someone else. Namely, as one examines the self and its desire thoroughly, there's nothing can be found, which is legitimately one's own. Fundamental confusion rooted in 'unrecognisable perception of the stable external world', conceals emptiness of the five aggregates.

Therefore, in rediscovering the Real, one ought to apply the Symbolic supplementary. Only that which is known directly can be symbolised. Otherwise it is called 'delusional metaphor' or conceptual proliferation (Pāli: papañca).[103] Exhaustive experience of vipassanā encourages one to choose words carefully in order to account for phenomena experienced, since, and psychoanalysts know it well, interpretation doesn't so much reveal the truth, but creates it (Fink 1999, 121).

Practice of taijiquan, much like vipassanā, bears on gradual rediscovery of the instability of th internal world, developing faculties of 听 (Chi: ting - listening) and 松 (Chi: song – release). The subject's capacity for knowing without thinking thus awakens. 太极拳 (Chi: taijiquan – the fist of the supreme ultimate) is taught via a hands-on method, therefore I will minimise reference to any written sources here in favour of the teachings I received via verbal transmission from masters and friends as mentioned in Appendix D. Hence, this entire subchapter can be treated as a phenomenological account.

Taiji or the Supreme Ultimate is a state which follows 无极 (Chi: Wuji – Emptiness) and precedes the division of energy into Yin (Chi: 阴, root character 月 yue - moon) and Yang (Chi: 阳, root character 日 ri - sun) and the subsequent unfolding of multiplicities. Thus, it refers to desire in its non-dialectised, yet not stagnant (as it is in neurotic) state.

The subject observing impermanence in the body sees the waves of yin and yang alternating with each other in a continuous sequence perceived as misery and happiness.

[103] What Lacan calls a 'delusional metaphor' is a process of fermenting an entire cosmology induced with idiosyncratic meaning as a way for a psychotic subject to construct a world and a place for oneself in it at the level of the Imaginary (Fink 1999, 86). In regards to conceptual proliferation, signifiers are related to the signified (in Lacan's earlier appropriation of Saussure's terminology (Homer 2005, 38)) only, thus circling around the Thing, without ever naming it, which is located strictly at the level of the Symbolic.

Applying *proper thought*, one knows the flux of impermanence and dwells unperturbed by it. *Proper understanding* of the balance of energy refers to the subject no longer shaken by passions, yet who is not dispassionate. It refers to the subject not following the lures of oscillating desires to act, be, become (improve, develop, achieve, exist or cease to exist), yet who is not lethargic, stupefied or lifeless. It refers to the subject acting in accordance with the disposition of the current flow of events applying *proper mindfulness*.

Taijiquan cultivation is closer to a samatha (Pāli: calm abiding) meditation than to vipassanā. In vipassanā, mindfulness practice is directed simply to observing objects as they are. It is certainly married with suffering, impermanence and no-self. In a samatha practice tranquilisation takes place (i.e. a continuous inducing of the mental-physical continuum with thoughts of peacefulness, acceptance, and benevolence).

Therefore, taijiquan is a cultivation of vitality 养身 (Chi: Yangshen - the accomplishment of oneself). It causes the living faculties, such as sympathetic joy, equanimity, compassion and loving-kindness to arise. It abandons the 'deadly' faculties, such as dissatisfaction, aversion, lust and delusion. Subsequently, cultivation of strength, energy, happiness and delight takes place.

Vitality is the opposite to sickness. It is a tendency towards overcoming and expanding, breathing fully and wholesomely. There is a mindful restraint in vitality. There is a restraint from indulgence into toxic states of the mind and its activities (greed, hatred, delusion). There is also a restraint from the dispassionate states of the mind and its activities (depression, drowsiness, remorse). Vitality is a wholesome state of being, not burdened by obligations, obscurations and bitter regrets. Vitality is embracing and endearing. It affirms, yet it doesn't ignore. It transforms resentment into compassion and thus uproots ignorance.

In the cultivation of vitality, one refrains from interaction with unwholesome phenomena. One appreciates and nourishes wholesome phenomena – generosity, openness and gratitude, which constitute *proper effort* of the Path. A taijiquan cultivation practice 站桩 (Chi: zhanzhuang - standing pose) brings about and applies *proper effort*. The subject is neither sinking into dispassion nor rising into self-indulgence. One is just in the middle:

standing relaxed on earth, mobile, evenly filled throughout the whole body. One is internally connected (i.e. free from hidden remorse, sense of entitlement, angst, ill-will and resentment). Thereby natural force simply fills the empty space of the body. One is induced with wholesome qualities: enthusiastic, daring, striving, thriving intensity. Sustenance of *proper thought* (Chi: 意 Yi) is gentle, compassionate, caring, yet steady: like holding a bird in your hand.

Delight in vitality is a freedom of movement/stillness. It is an abandoning of constricting fetters, which impede *proper thought* from manifesting instantaneously. A very natural and a very evasive state arises there from. Being able to sustain it is the art of energy: samādhi.[104]

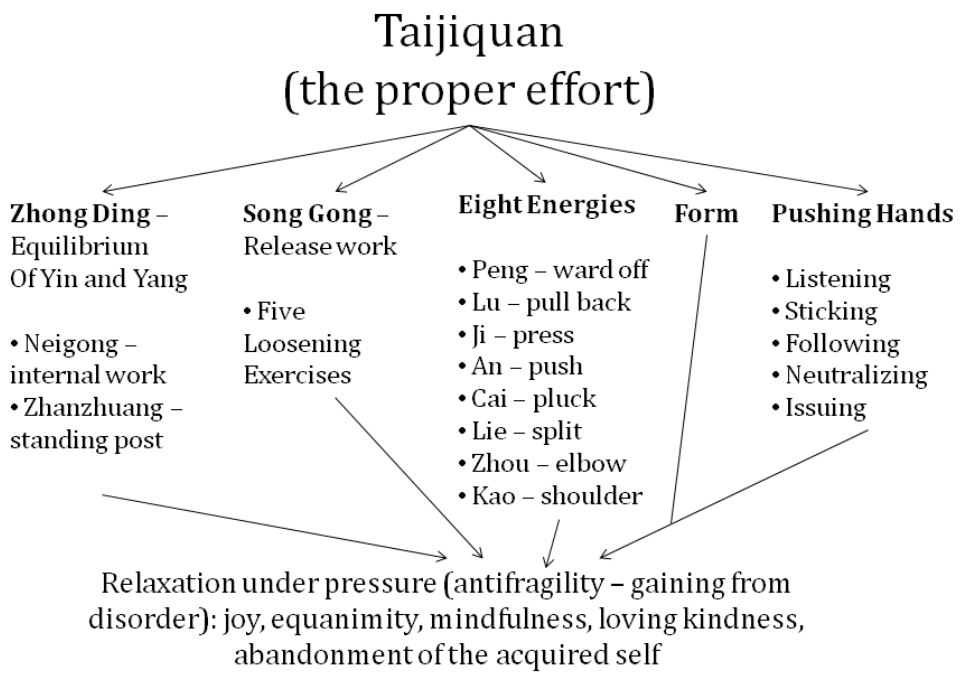
One can touch the feet with mindfulness, standing on the earth, and the spine holding the structure, and everything else is simply hinged upon it. The crown of the head is suspended and the scalp is released. Through nonchalant listening, the cranial bones shift and free up the circulation in the brain, which frees the nervous system from the tension and the noise. Through listening to the way it is, thoughts dissolve. Through abandoning insisting on the way it should be and resisting the way it is, feelings pacify. The soft tissue releases, and the joints find their natural position. As covetousness and grief are abandoned, the heart elevates, the diaphragm frees up and bellows of the lungs expand and contract freely. Internal organs find their placement within the abdominal and pelvic cavities. The shoulder girdle easily rests on the spine and ribs, which frees up the cervical nerves and the trachea, and the breathing becomes serene. The pelvic girdle is seated on the kua (Chi: hip crease) and so the upper body is connected with the lower body. Thus the energy from the ground through the lower extremities is allowed to rise into the upper body, which brings about uniformity and connectedness. In the middle is the dantien (Chi: a cinnabar field), where the energy is cultivated and nurtured as innate vitality. Hips and knees are released, hence fully activated to maintain the powerful presence of a worthy being on Earth. The lower legs are nimble,

[104] Samādhi (Skt. uniform/equanimeous knowing) is a one-pointedness characteristic of absorptions. It is to be expanded upon in the conclusion of this chapter.

strong and light, having received the weight of the whole body. Through the feet, this weight pushes off the earth and springs back up. The soles of the feet may start to burn as the circulation of the energy intensifies. The stability spreads throughout like dense water filling up the body from within. A calmness, confidence, powerfulness and security arise with it – a knowing of one's rightful being here and now. Just being, which is neither a metaphysical construct of elated qualities, nor a shy, scattered standing by. Just being, one listens. Nothing is happening. The world is standing still.

A developed insight practice helps to see directly into the emptiness of the five aggregates. Practicing taijiquan one breathes out the tension of self-identification and breathes in the tranquility of no-self, i.e. the way of things as such. One listens and releases. The energy sinks and the power arises all by themselves. Nothing else should be done. Nothing impinges or oppresses the subject.

An initial application and sustenance of *proper thought* and *proper effort* foster a process of release, 放松 (Chi: fangsong), a release of psychophysical tension, grounding and sinking of the energy. It is a manifestation of the *tranquility* enlightenment factor – a deep relaxation.



Scheme 6: Taijiquan or proper effort

Taijiquan and the Real

Vitality in taijiquan practice is a naturally arising phenomenon. Vitality infuses emptiness and thus the attainment of delightful presence occurs. The past is let go of, the future is not speculated about. Nothing is envisaged, nothing is created, and nothing is expressed: there is no becoming. The flow of the present moment happens as it is. The only present moment is where one can utter confidently from deep within: I am. It is because it is.

In the practice of a taijiquan standing cultivation, form, eight energies, loosening, neutralising force or application drills, the needy self is abandoned. The depressed, angry, frustrated, dissatisfied self takes leave. Sometimes its cry is very pronounced. It is masked as if

it is a weeping of the soul, a weeping for acknowledgment, satisfaction, gratification, feedback. Without knowing that all those dispersed desires are the avoidance of the present moment the way it is, self paints pictures of hell on earth, of dreadfulness of existence. Yet self is a part of existence. It is the doer which creates hell on earth via the conceptual proliferation and desiring alienated from the simple, ever-present joy of being: the now. In order to protect its individuality, the validity of its desires, the importance of its will, the ego self creates weakness, distress, disease, blockages of countless beliefs of incapability. It speaks. It moves. It does. It becomes. It strives. It achieves. It rejoices in accomplishment. It then becomes frustrated as the high of accomplishment is worn out and the low of boredom, meaninglessness and existential despair takes over. Unable to see through the sway of illusion, which is ignorance itself, the ego creates worlds, explanations of worlds, strategies of survival in worlds, plans, schemes, events and more. The ego is resourceful out of fear of being. It is resourceful in self-nagging, in giving up on oneself, in leaving, in breaking up, in being offended. The ego is not real. The ego is a hysteric fullness. The ego is hovering like a swarm of bees on a spring fly-out into the air of the Real. The ego is a continuous noise of a tremendous magnitude. The more it hears itself, the greater is that magnitude.

Practicing taijiquan, one listens to what is. The continuous noise of the beehive is there. But then one listens deeper. There is the noise of bodily intensities, the nightmarish paranoiac buzz of fragmented imagos. One listens deeper still. There is a quieter humming of the unknown. There is some chamber within, which longs for expression. One may confuse it with the innermost dear core of self, the most intimate place of one's precious existence. One may want to nourish, cultivate and express it. Yet one listens beyond even further, letting this last lure of acquired subjectivity just be. One goes further still, into the darkness. And in there one meets the formless, the no-self characteristic of existence, the spirit.

Practicing taijiquan one moves from the ego body into the Real body. The ego body is populated with constraints, blockages, discontinuities. It is fragmented, irritated, filled with intensities, striving to become better, stronger, faster, more beautiful, less tense, more nimble, less clumsy, etc. The Real body just is. It is the body capable of virtually any movement pattern. Practicing taijiquan one is accustomed to being able to perform any

movement pattern via listening, following and doing what needs to be done. What needs to be done thus happens.

Practicing taijiquan one faces the ego in forms of resistance towards or insistence on doing what needs to be done. Confronted with the external force, the ego body will manifest as impossibility. It will deviate from the natural tranquil presence established via application of *proper thought* and *effort*. It will contort into unconscious postures, tense up, and get irritated. It will burn out, complain, give up, and reinforce itself with anger. It will become depressed, discouraged, offended. It will suffer.[105]

The way of taijiquan and the Real body is to surrender to what is happening. The impossibility arises – surrender. The ego burns out – a surrender. The wholesome joyful strength, tranquility of bodily presence, confidence about being able to conduct the external force wisely by doing what needs to be done – surrender into it. Do not mind what happens. Listen. Know. Let go. Thus, satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā and taijiquan are basic methods of rediscovering the Real. They develop a capacity to skilfully be with arising intensities. Being at peace with what is happening, contentment, is their fruit.

***

Here I recommend viewing the creative work *Pushing Hands*, which illustrates a foundational practice of taijiquan partner training.

Conclusion: proper concentration

Intensities accompanying an encounter with the Real such as fragmentation and discontinuities in the body are predicated on the absence of mindfulness and misuse of the

[105] For the account of skilful practice pertaining to the release of blockages characteristic of the ego body, see chapter three, 'Movement improvisation'.

internal bodily force, called 劲 (Chi: jing – essence). This force is developed via the practice of skillful being called 内功 (Chi: neigong – internal work).

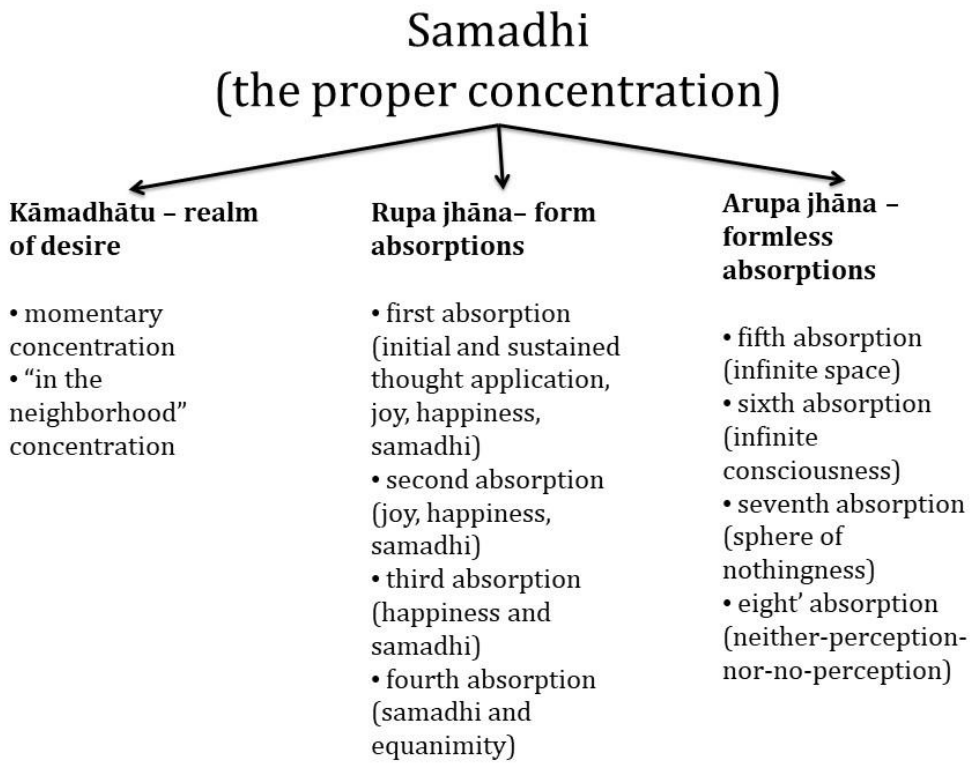
Attending to the body with *proper mindfulness* of breathing, the subject enables organs, sinews and membranes to release and fluids to circulate. From the deep release (Yin) the true subtle power (Yang) arises naturally. A distribution of this power through skilful movement unifies the body and mind,[106] making the subject whole, tranquil, joyful and free.

Moving the body externally with poor mindfulness, self-destructively (i.e. motivated by aversion – depression, guilt, hatred, dissatisfaction, etc. – towards the body and life) depletes qi (energy), scatters jing (essence) and causes shen (spirit) to dwell in delusion.[107] External training of the musculature and tendons, endurance, speed and agility, devoid of insight, touches the subtle body only secondarily, via the peaks of physical exertion.

A taijiquan practice invigorates the internal, thereby releasing the external. Meditation fosters the development of the unconditional acceptance of anything that arises with detachment from both the external and internal. Hence the subject with a healthy, strong and happy disposition can develop the practice of absorptions (Pāli, jhāna).

[106] See chapter three, 'Martial arts' on the unification of body and mind in detail.

[107] Pertaining to the primacy of proper mindfulness, Kelly writes: 'Awareness of the subtle body sensations is the ground method. Unless this is well established in the early years, the rest will be based on imagination and illusion. The awareness of sensation is satisfactorily established when a clear consciousness, accompanied by warmth and a sensation of life energy, arises at every single point within the body.' (Kelly 2004, 31)



Scheme 7: Samadhi or proper concentration[108]

What leads to absorptions is samādhi – stilling the mind or establishing the enlightenment factor of one-pointedness (Pāli, ekaggata).[109] Samādhi is the final factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, which means all the previous factors must have been thoroughly practiced before attesting to it.

[108] The scheme of samādhi relies on Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and on Ajahn Anan Akiñcano's discourses *Seeking Buddho* as well as on teachings of Ajahn Chah, who 'preferred to avoid speaking in terms of jhāna. Instead he would refer to various jhāna factors. His reasons were that jhāna factors such as happiness or equanimity were directly experienceable by the meditator, whereas 'jhānas' were simply names for different constellations of these factors. They were, in other words, conventions.' (Jayasaro 2017, 360) Momentary concentration (Pāli: khanika samādhi) and 'in the neighborhood' concentration (Pāli: upacāra samādhi) on this scheme are placed under the realm of desire because they are states of short-lived and partial calm where five hindrances are not securely overcome. (Jayasaro 2017, 363)

[109] '"Cittass' ekaggatá" is rendered here as "unification of mind" in the sense of agreement or harmony (cf. samagga) of consciousness and its concomitants in focusing on a single object. It is sometimes rendered "one-pointedness" in that sense, or in the sense of the focusing of a searchlight. It may be concluded that this term is simply a synonym for samádhi and nothing more, firstly from its use in the suttas, and secondly from the fact that it is given no separate definition in the description of the formations aggregate.' (Buddhaghosa 2010, 81)

The stage of absorptions begins when the dispassionate mind abandons the ego body and conceptual fabrications.[110] Thus, without self-inflicted suffering of doubt, criticism and regret the subject enters the spheres of four material absorptions (Pāli: rupa-jhāna).

1. First absorption – consisting of the following five elements: initial application of thought, sustained application of thought, joy, happiness, and one-pointedness
2. Second absorption – consisting of the following three elements: joy, happiness and one-pointedness
3. Third absorption – consisting of the following two elements: happiness and one-pointedness
4. Fourth absorption – consisting of the following two elements: equanimity and one-pointedness.

(Biddhaghosa 2010, 79-198)

A practitioner of taijiquan proceeds through these four levels of jhāna. First there is the initial application of *proper thought* (Chi: 意 Yi) as following: the correct body alignment, technique, form and intention to execute these. Sustained application of this thought mobilises energy (Chi: 气 Qi) and results in movement. With movement, joy, happiness and one-pointedness arise. All of this happens naturally as the knowing quality rests on the object (bodily alignment according to taijiquan principles). Progressing further, the constituting elements cease one by one, until there is only equanimity left.

Equanimity is understood as fading away of joy, happiness and one-pointedness, which is a seamless 'isness' devoid of heavy disturbances and defilements. Whatever arises

[110] According to Visuddhimagga, the preliminaries for absorption are the unification of mind obtained through mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment, and the defining of the four elements. (Buddhaghosa 2010, 83)

in this space is met with equanimity, coloured with equanimity and thus loses its characteristics of pleasant or unpleasant, right or wrong, ascribed by the ego.

The image of the body of water in the beginning of this chapter offers a simile to rediscovering the Real. Via equanimity, a taijiquan practitioner inhabits the body of water. The process of continuous noting devoid of judgment and clinging establishes *proper understanding* of the way things are. As a result, the body of water arises: fluid and uninterrupted energetic intensity, loose and capable of responding to the flow of the moment: having no technique.

Further, rediscovering the Real in the sphere of the unknowable is the practice of the four formless absorptions (Pāli: arupa- jhāna). These are states one enters having completely abandoned all mental proliferation and the five hindrances:[111]

1. The sphere of boundless space
2. The sphere of boundless consciousness
3. The sphere of nothingness
4. The sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

(Buddhaghosa 2010, 790)

There was disappearance of the body on the final day of the vipassanā meditation retreat. There was only breath left and the space around exponentially grew, having not been confined by the limits of the body. A paradox is that the term 'embodiment' becomes utterly inadequate in such a state. There is no body. The Real is beyond the body.

[111] 'When a bhikkhu enters upon a jhána without [first] completely suppressing lust by reviewing the dangers in sense desires, etc., and without [first] completely tranquillizing bodily irritability by tranquillizing the body, and without [first] completely removing stiffness and torpor by bringing to mind the elements of initiative, etc., and without [first] completely abolishing agitation and worry by bringing to mind the sign of serenity, etc., and without [first] completely purifying his mind of other states that obstruct concentration, then that bhikkhu soon comes out of that jhána again, like a bee that has gone into an unpurified hive, like a king who has gone into an unclean park.' (Buddhaghosa 2010, 144)

With the body disappearing thus, I finally was unburdened, released, at peace with myself, knowing that truly I am not the body. Later on, with flashbacks from distant childhood, I recollected experiencing such states while lost in thought, absorbed deeper and deeper into effortless concentration, beyond thought, beyond body, beyond imagery. Having been sick quite often, I would find seclusion from the body in the jhana, without having any name for it.

The formless absorptions are represented by the three highest levels of the Borobudur temple. There are no stories, no bas-reliefs here, there is no form conceived. There are only stupas, sitting Buddhas and empty space.

There can be no movement in these absorptions, because there is no body.

The Real in the context of absorptions and 'no body experience' can be thought of as the 'groundless ground' of subjectivity. It is here that jouissance of the mystic, which is beyond the Symbolic, can be 'felt'.[112].The tremendous peace and energy that accompanies this absorption can be confused for the deathless, even by advanced practitioners.[113] Therefore, this energy must be directed towards developing the direct knowing by means of Vipassanā.

[112] '"Other jouissance", which speaking beings cannot articulate in words is logically conditioned by the phallic function, even though it lies beyond this function: it exceeds language, but is not exempt from it.' (Dimitriadis 2017)

[113] Ajahn Maha Boowa of the Thai Forest Tradition describes his samādhi, which arose upon thorough investigation of 'the entire body being ablaze with pain': 'It was an incredibly amazing experience. The pain was completely gone. The body had disappeared. An awareness so fine and subtle that I cannot describe it was the only thing not to disappear. It simply appeared, that's all I can say. It was a truly amazing inner state of being. There was no movement – not even the slightest rippling – inside the *citta.*' (Maha Boowa 2005, 19-21) Ajahn Maha Boowa remained attached to samādhi for five years until his teacher Luang por Mun 'forced him to confront his misconception and move to the practice of wisdom.' (Maha Boowa 2005, 32)

Figure 7: Borobudur temple stupas, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2018, digital photo, Willy Heramus

It is hard to conceive the Real as sheer abandonment. Yet there is nothing sad in it. Quite the contrary, it is liberating and joyful to enter the infinite space of peace. Having been there, one knows clearly what one is not.

Having climbed and circumambulated all the nine levels of the Borobudur temple, I was standing alone amidst the swarming crowd of Indonesian tourists, who were ceaselessly eager to take a photo with me. I kept it solemn and still.

There is nothing I know about the world, I thought. Everytime, like a newborn baby having just opened its eyes from the dream of ignorance, I look at it again and again as if I've never seen it before.

Figure 8: Borobudur temple stupas, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2018, digital photo, Willy Heramus

There is stillness amidst the movement, which I came to know through the practice of samādhi. There are many engraved stories and emotions, like bas-reliefs of the Borobudur temple, stuck within – the climb to the top wasn't easy. I was born in a small settlement, in the Far East of Russia. There nobody knew about Buddha Dhamma or the Borromean knot, or even about mind-body interconnectedness in its basic form of healthy human relationships, where one does not harm another. Through the core of compassion (i.e. wishing for the suffering to stop) I came to learn the subtle, the genuine, the beyond-ego, the formless within.

Having realised the true difficulty of attaining this knowledge at the ignorant level of the realm of desire, where senses overwhelm and constantly deceive the ego-identified subject,

I experienced compassion towards all living beings. That experience lifts the heart open and eliminates the poisons of hatred, covetousness and grief towards the world. The hurtful memories still arise, and I let them fly into the heavens. I let them rain then from the heavy clouds with ever-cleansing tropical storms.

Figure 9: Borobudur temple stupas, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2018, digital photo, Willy Heramus

Standing thus, a realisation occurred.

Having climbed up, just as seamlessly and happily one is to climb down. For there is no difference between the realms of the Trailokya. The temple of Borobudur is one, so is the world. The stillness is within the swarm of Samsara.

The noise, in its lowest frequency of whale songs becomes impossible to hear.

So is the absorption: the hysteria of the ego at its highest merges into silence. So is the body in its highest functionality in tune with mindfulness – it disappears into profound stillness.

Yang becomes Yin.

Chapter 3 – Skillful Means of Movement Arts

The Eightfold Path of the Buddha, the path of practice, has eight factors. These eight factors are nothing other than this very body: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one tongue and one body. This is the Path. And the mind is the one who follows the Path. Therefore, both the study and the practice exist in our body, speech and mind.

Venerable Ajahn Chah[114]

The Noble Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering via the direct knowing of oneself. Practicing movement arts, the subject of Emptiness gains direct experiential, intuitive insight into the body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.

In this chapter I intend to show that movement arts are a mode of knowing unshackled by identification with the Imaginary and the Symbolic selves. A movement practitioner applies *proper mindfulness* to enquire directly into the conditioned self and to experience the way it is. The particular attributes of chosen movement disciplines are conducive to recognition and release of the conditioned self.

I continue answering the main research question: how to alleviate, integrate and embody psychophysical intensities, which arise in the subject encountering the unknown and the unknowable (i.e. the Real) thereby transforming traumatic contingency into liberating insight.

Martial arts

I'd like to revisit the encounter with the Real. Lacan elaborated on this topic widely in *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. In this 11th book of his 'Seminar' series, he compares the encounter with Aristotle's category of *tuche*, which arrives (as if) from the

[114] Chah, Venerable Ajahn. *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 87.

outside, thus disrupting or shattering the *automaton* of symbolic consistency. However, as Eyers puts it:

> 'It is not so much that the Real imposes itself from an outside, as form on matter, but rather that the very arrival of the Real as cause is always-already prepared for by the Symbolic context upon which it impacts, a context that contains within it the Real aspect of signification as its "extimate" limit'. (Eyers 2012, 57)

Taking into account that the subject is shaped by the imagos of primary identification and inscribed into the Symbolic by signifiers-in-isolation, it is evident that 'Symbolic context' creates the ground for trauma. Further, taking into account the perception of stability of the external world as the very ground of appropriating consciousness, it is evident that any 'real Thing', marked with characteristic of impermanence is traumatic.

It is in this respect that Yogācārin thinkers advocated 'revulsion of the base' (Skt: asraya-parivrtti) of ālaya-vijñāna, that is, transformation of the very basis of personal experience, from afflicted self-centeredness to the state of perfect enlightenment and wisdom (Waldron 2003, 246).

Now, the unconscious self-centered clinging for stability is magnified by the encounter with the 'negative' Real. For the ego rooted in the illusion of permanence in the specular image, the radical (Real) difference becomes induced with a maleficent paranoid craving for non-existence and annihilation. The originators of the martial arts addressed here, Shaolin gongfu and Shotokan karate, were aware of the aforementioned deluded fragility of human consciousness. Thus these practices are an antidote to basic bewilderment.[115]

Laṅkāvatāra Sutra, mentioned in the previous chapter, is regarded as one of the most obscure texts of Buddhism. Its vague frontier between religious seriousness and

[115] 'Basic bewilderment or mindlessness is experiencing things as if the world didn't exist and we didn't exist.' (Trungpa 1981, 1680)

nearly absurd platitudes (Dumoulin 1998, 54) brings it close to Lacanian *lalangue,*[116] rooted in 'paranoid knowledge'.[117] This sutra's composition emphasises the inadequacy of reason and points the way to a direct experience, which in turn points to the inadequacy of words as a means of understanding reality. It is said that Bodhidharma gave the Laṅkāvatāra sutra to his disciple Huike (Dumoulin 1998, 45). According to Suzuki, teachings of the Chan tradition weren't derived but confirmed by this scripture (Dumoulin 1998, 46). It is the Chan tradition teachings that were foundational for Shaolin monks and Okinawa martial arts practitioners.

The obscure (father) figure of Bodhidharma stands as a cornerstone for development of the core praxis of these arts, namely the Sinew Changing Classic (Chi: 易筋经 Yi Jin Jing).

John McRae writes:

> 'It is ultimately impossible to reconstruct any original or accurate biography of the man whose life serves as the original trace of his hagiography – where "trace" is a term from Jacques Derrida meaning the beginningless beginning of a phenomenon, the imagined but always intellectually unattainable origin. Hence any such attempt by modern biographers to reconstruct a definitive account of Bodhidharma's life is both doomed to failure and potentially no different in intent from the hagiographical efforts of premodern writers.' (McRae 2003, 24)

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[116] '*Lalangue*, of course, refers to the language of the unconscious based on homophony, and to the alterations and obliterations of language that circle around the *objet a* as object of the drive, and the object cause of desire. *Lalangue* is the language of the One, and how the Real appears within language and not only in mathematical formalization and jouissance.' (Moncayo 2017, 27)

[117] Lacan refers to paranoid knowledge in his understanding of the mechanisms of psychosis: 'All human knowledge stems from the dialectic of jealousy, which is primordial manifestation of communication… The beginning of this dialectic being my alienation in the other, there is a moment at which I can be put into a position of being annulled myself because the other doesn't agree. The dialectic of the unconscious always implies struggle, the impossibility of coexistence with the other, as one of its possibilities.' (Lacan 1993, 39-40) Here Lacan shows that paranoid knowledge is located at the stage of narcissistic identification not yet being nuanced by the metonymy of desire in a signifier (i.e. in a pre-Oedipal or psychotic subject). He states that 'the entire dialectic of delusion is to be located in the gap between the Other in so far as it's not known, and the other who is me, the source of all knowledge'. The line between 'paranoid knowledge' of the psychotic and 'the language of the One' is precisely the degree of exposure to the 'real Thing' or things as they are.

It is striking that Derrida refers here precisely to the Real as an unattainable limit of signification. Such is Bodhidharma, whose 'self' is lost to empirically unknowable time. However, what's at stake is the function. Name-of-the-Father breaks a rivalrous and competitive ground for the foundation of the subject (Lacan 1993, 39) by introducing metonymy of desire in a signifier, which makes human coexistence possible. However, what if this Name is such that it doesn't name (Moncayo 2012b, 63)? That's precisely a function of Bodhidharma. It points towards the Path.

In this picture, Bodhidharma has a solemn, terrified and saddened look. Reading into his face I can imagine a witness to the sufferings and delusions of humanity. There is also the intensity of powerful insight: no matter what it is, I will not turn my gaze away. This is the Real gaze, which bears witness to acute experiences, unmediated by the Symbolic. It can only be sustained via compassion, joy, loving kindness and equanimity. The self-realisation sustained by noble wisdom is this insight: dis-identification from the mind-stream and emotional pleasure-pain. One lets it happen. One lets the face change. One lets the subject of Emptiness mutilate.

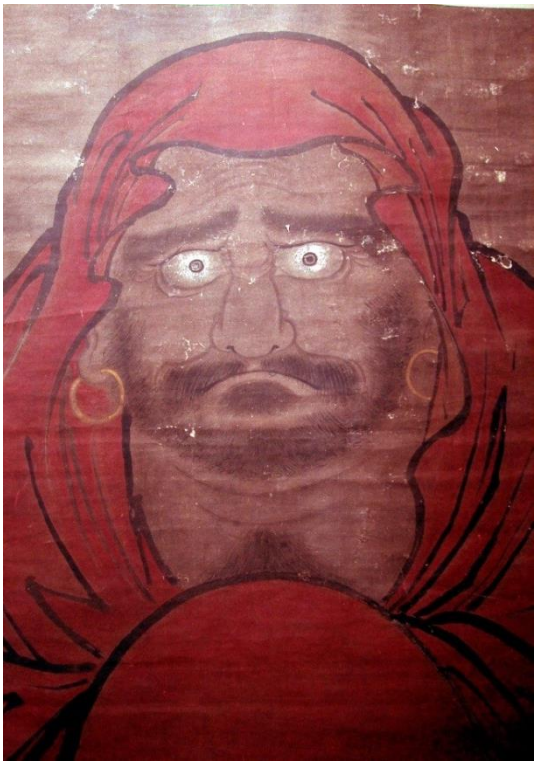

Figure 7: Bodhidharma, Himeji Castle, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, digital resource

The enigmatic father of Chan, who legendarily sat in front of a cave wall on Mount Song for nine years, was an ideal 'trace' to attribute authorship of the *Yi Jin Jing* (Sinew Changing Classic)[118]. Modern scholarship attributes authorship to a Daoist practitioner, who, in turn, attributes it to Bodhidharma. Its composition is marked by a tension between its dual goals of military perfection and spiritual liberation (Shahar 2008, 4368). The latter is characteristic of the open and vibrant exchange of ideas between traditions of Daoist physical and spiritual development, Shaolin combat methods and Chan meditation in the late Ming period, which led to the development of elaborate systems of psychophysical cultivation (Shahar 2008, 3798). Taijiquan and other internal styles originated in this period.

Shahar writes:

> 'It was not earlier than the mid-Qing that Shaolin monks gradually absorbed the Daoist legend of the Chan master as the source of their martial tradition. As the Sinew Transformation Classic became widely popular in military circles, and as the monks themselves began to practice it, they started attributing their methods to the Indian saint.' (Shahar 2008, 4368)

As we investigate its principles, it becomes evident why both spiritual and military practitioners found the Sinew Changing Classic useful. According to Damo Mitchell, founder of the Lotus Neigong School, prolific writer and charismatic teacher of Daoist Internal Arts, the principles can be summarised as follows:

- To help the body regain any lost physical vitality
- To enhance the blood flow

[118] Shahar uses term 'Transformation', while Mitchell uses term 'Change', I agree with the latter and use the term Change, as it connotes a natural process that occurs all by itself, when the principles are adhered to.

- To open channels of the body
- To strengthen the flow of Qi through the body
- To prepare the body for more advanced work involving the marrow and brain (Mitchell 2018, 1411).

The last principle of this process approximates a practitioner to the 'revulsion of the base' of the storehouse consciousness (i.e. change of self-centered clinging at its very somatic foundation) prior to any signification taking place. This is the function of Dhamma, or the name, which doesn't name.

According to the Laṅkāvatāra sutra, the karmic seeds of all past experiences are preserved in the storehouse consciousness.[119] Since all past experiences are inevitably inter-referential in all human individuals (i.e. they arise from the common pattern of identification with traits of (m)others, breeding aggressive possessiveness and rivalry, as demonstrated in the first chapter), that which reverses the cycle of Dependent Origination, namely the Path practice, revolves the base of appropriating consciousness.

The practice of insight brings confidence where there was previously ignorance. However, as per the definition of ālaya-vijñāna, traits of identification (karmic seeds) are wired in the very flesh and bones of the subject. The noble practice of martial arts brings the subject into a direct relationship with one's defilements. The strenuous and zealous nature of this practice is the antidote to possessive rage, intrinsic to the realm of desire. It also brings forth the true extent of mastering strength and nobility through enthusiastic effort.

Defilements implicated in primary narcissism and nihilistic cravings of the 'negative' Real become fuel for martial arts as well as spiritual practice. Ajahn Chah of the Thai Forest

[119] The Lankavatara Sutra. A Mahayana Text. Translated for the first time from the original Sanskrit by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. http://lirs.ru/do/lanka_eng/lanka-nondiacritical.htm.

tradition admitted that because of violent anger, enormous lust and stupidity he developed meditation.[120]

As the subject's insight practice develops, the storehouse consciousness gradually ceases being imperceptible. The storehouse consciousness' object, which is bodily materiality and mortality, comes to the forefront. It is here this subtle mind, which normally underlines mental formations, or links thought moments to one another (Buddhaghosa 2010, 133), becomes directly perceivable. This is due to immersion of the knowing quality into material sense faculties as per mindfulness of the body.

Further, what changes in the body due to this practice, are the sinew channels (Chi: 經筋 jing jin), which are physical aspects of meridians, and the Huang (Chi: 肓 – membranes)[121]. Mitchell writes:

> As the Qi conducts through the Huang, there is a reaction and the fibers of the Huang pull taut. This is what is alluded to within the Sinew Changing Classic when it states that the Qi must mobilise; the result of this is the engagement of Huang (Mitchell 2018, 6633).

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[120] This quote is derived from stills at the Wat Pah Pong monastery in Ubon Ratchatani, displayed on Ajahn Chah Memorial Day 18 January 2018.

[121] Mitchell draws from the vast body of knowledge of Chinese medicine and Daoist internal arts, describing the Huang: 'The Huang are said to exist in all of the spaces of the inside of the body; they uphold organs and envelop them in a protective layer… The Huang are said to fill the entire body but have their origin' within the solar plexus region of the body. This makes the physical 'centre' of our body the middle of this giant organic cobweb of connective tissue.' (Mitchell 2018, 1465-1477)
In regards to sinew channels, and this is crucial for movement arts: 'They are said to originate on the extremities of the body and travel inwards towards the heart region of the chest. What is important to recognise is that they are elasticated in nature and travel in continuous pathways along the limbs and trunk of the body without being isolated into parts as the muscles of the body are. It is a major part of the body development within Neigong to connect the sinew channels together into one elasticated unit. The end result of this is a feeling like you are wearing a kind of biological wetsuit. Whenever you move your body according to the sinew channels, it feels as though you are carrying out a gentle, whole-body stretch.' (Mitchell 2018, 1453). It is the opening of these channels that allows a practitioner to articulate the body perfectly in line with intention.

Given that Qi is a form of 'vibrational information',[122] which extends through the body from the mind qua meridians, it is self-evident how mindfulness of the body leads to change as per principles of Yi Jin Jing. In Daoist arts full engagement of Huang is considered to be a high attainment (Mitchell 2018, 4404). Indeed, direct realisation and full engagement of (initially) imperceptible functioning of bodily membranes, unlocks enormous pools of energy and freedom, which were bound up by neurotic identification, by signifying structures (vibrational information), which as Fink puts it, mortify the body and repress the jouissance.

Jouissance bound up by neurotic signifiers is a highly flammable drive. This drive or, as my Shotokan Karate sensei Igor Doroshin defined it, the 'healthy aggression', becomes the main engine behind the martial arts practice.

Encountering the Real is traumatic due to seeds of hatred, greed, egoic delusion of permanency and various forms of identification, which block the immersion of the mind into the body and generation of benevolent jouissance. These drops of wrath, poured over the highly flammable aliveness of the aggressive libido, become unbearable intensities, anxieties, paranoia and irrational fear. The kinetic impulse behind these intensities is vigorous, violent, and rapid movement, characteristic of convulsions or seizures. Martial arts and spiritual practices alike harness this kinetic intensity through diligence, respect and discipline, directing it with the breath into the accomplishment of a technique or a ritual and thus 'taming' the drives. A technique or ritual is executed in accordance with the principles of grounded alignment, central equilibrium, full energetic expression and vigor inherent to a particular style of martial or spiritual art.

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[122] Mitchell classifies 'Eight Experiences' in relation to the release of trapped vibrational information during a Qigong practice. It is notable that affects of repressed signifiers, which are the foundation of neurotic symptoms, can be released through sitting meditation, standing cultivation practice and spontaneous energetic movement (see subchapter 'Movement improvisation'), without associative verbal engagement, transference and countertransference. However, this type of release requires a strict framework, whereby only the somatic aspect of the affect, what I call 'intensity', is experienced fully and thus released. If an emotional quality is added, it reinforces the afflictive tendency, making the repressed return. It is detachment and strong foundation in the mindfulness of the body, which are prerequisites of correct release. Intensities as per the 'Eight Experiences' are shaking, excitement, feeling cold, feeling hot, feeling light, feeling as if sinking, feeling tight, feeling soft. (Mitchell 2018, 583)

Shaolin gongfu

Shaolin gongfu (Chi: 少林功夫 skilful practice of the young forest) contains numerous Qigong exercises – animal forms, classic forms, weapon forms, strength and conditioning drills, sparring drills and more. It is the most variety-based martial art. While each individual, in accordance with their predisposition/karmic seeds can find a suitable style, method or regime of exercise, there are general practices, which are followed by everyone.

General practices are extensive athletic conditioning (running, marching, sprinting, jumping), stretching (dynamic stretches, static stances, partner stretching, etc.), strength training (holding postures, calisthenics bodyweight exercises, weightlifting exercises), Qigong exercises (eight brocades Qigong, iron robe Qigong, etc.), basic kicking, punching, repetitive acrobatic drills, etc. Further subdivision consists of basic forms (Chi: 套路 Taolu – curved path) with or without weapons, advanced forms with acrobatic elements, animal styles forms and internal forms (Neigong, as mentioned in chapter two) for opening the meridians and nourishing the internal organs, thus building up the Huang and connecting the sinew channels into one elasticised unit.

Individual predispositions are discovered in the process of polishing out gross defilements such as indolence, resentment and stupidity. There are six to eight hours of rigorous training a day. Having accomplished this routine, one has no more raging energy left for maintaining the unskilful psychic activity. Everything is brought to the Path. What is characteristic, a unique individual trait, whether it is an inclination to a particular animal, body constitution favourable for hard styles, or sensitivity beneficial for soft listening styles, then emerges as a natural difference rather than a temporary compulsion.

Thus, the subject learns to be at peace with their individual traits/karmic seeds and tailors a practice which flows in union with those traits. One does not try to wipe out the individuality in favour of abstract perfection. It is rather carving the natural perfection out by nurturing the positive seeds. Mastery thus emerges as being at peace with peculiarities of oneself and others.

Being brought up in the village environment, I've seen how unskilful emotions repeatedly manifest in daily life of humans. The magnitude and heavy energy of the emotional outflows of the people in this environment was truly suffocating. Being a naturally vigorous and flammable person, endowed with acute sensitivity, I experienced my surroundings as a very threatening place. One thing that alleviated the nightmare was nature. The pristine snow-covered hills of winter; the lush and soothing green and blue of summer: the river flowing through the valley; the warm colours of the slow autumn of the Far East, where everything ripens and comes to resolution; the awakening of the spring in the rebirth of the flora and the heart. I could be in nature all the time. I could watch running water and listen to the whispering of the wind in the wavering tree crowns, gazing through them into the blue sky for hours. Yet sooner or later the raging joy arose and the unbearable glitches carried me across the landscape in movement.

When I first came to China, I faced the magnitude of internal dis-ease in myself. Training at the Haerbin Shaolin Wushu School for seven hours each day left no choice but to surrender. I didn't know the Chinese language. All I could do was watch – sensing and repeating exactly as it was shown and done. It was an inspiring journey of the breath. Being enclosed behind the fence of the school, I could breathe through movement.

Every training session started with a run to mobilise the energy. As the weeks continued, it felt like there was no more power left, yet as each training progressed, energy was emerging out of nowhere.

My body, trained in Shotokan karate and parkour, had not experienced such fullness of movement before. It was a squeezing out of the illusion of permanency and emergence of the Dao. The food was insufficient, the verbal communication was limited, and there was no way of leaving. The only avenue of expression of the passion was gongfu. I dedicated my entire attention to each posture, form, technique, kick and punch. I perceived fully the 感觉 ganjue (Chi: awakened sensation) behind each pattern and repeated it. Countless repetitions were a labour of the heart.

I lost about ten kilos, my gaze sharpened, my heart was beating out of my chest and I could breathe. There was no suffocating grasp of resentment left to hold me, no sense of futility, and no aversion. I felt capable, really capable and skilful in myself to do whatever I wanted without self-sabotage.

As my skills developed I felt the force of nature become manifest in me. This force is indifferent to right and wrong, possible or impossible. This force just outflows. It is always skilful. Regardless of the underlying emotion, when it is put on the rails of gongfu, it is a skilful practice. Nature doesn't stand judgment. Just like a tree, indifferent to the argument of humans resting in the shade of it, a practitioner of the martial art is not bothered by the chattering mind within.

Shotokan karate

Shotokan karate (Jpn: 松濤館空手) is a style created by Gichin Funakoshi at the beginning of the 20th century. *Shoto* was a penname of Funakoshi. It means 'pine-waves' – the movement of pine needles as the wind blows through them. The legend I heard was about Funakoshi training in Okinawa during his youth. The training took place at night, and the silence between the outbursts of *kiai*[123] was permeated by the sound of the wind amidst the pine trees. *Kan* means training hall. And *karate* stands for empty hand.

The origin of this art goes back to the fourteenth century and is closely related to the cultural and commercial exchange between Okinawa and Southern China, in particular Fujian province. Consecutive decrees forbidding carrying weaponry in Okinawa also contributed to the development of bare fist fighting systems (Bishop 1989, 28). The empty hand we know of today isn't only referring to a bare fist, but to the Zen principle of Mu (Jpn: 無 - without) – emptiness at the core of subjects' minds, speech and actions. Kasulis writes:

[123] *Kiai* is a vigorous scream at the peak of power release in karate practice. One can parallel it with Zen *katsu* – a shout, which expresses a moment of Satori.

> ‘The Zen Master does not speak, but, to use Heidegger's phrase, he lets "language itself speak”. For the enlightened, speaking is itself a response to the directly apprehended situation. Language should not predetermine experience; nor should it arise from an independent agent who brings something to the situation. Language must be the vibrating of the undetermined without-thinking within the conditions of the concrete occasion. Only if both aspects vibrate harmoniously does the language itself ring true.’ (Kasulis 1981, 138)

Taking into account Lacan’s writings where language merges into speech and the analyst’s position, whereby the ‘person’ of the analyst must disappear if he or she is to stand in for the unconscious (Fink 1999, 32), ‘the undetermined without-thinking’ can be compared to the Symbolic Other, which breaks the rivalry of Imaginary relations. Not only language should come from what Kasulis calls ‘relational aspect of Zen person’ (i.e. from relations of metonymy within the Symbolic) but also from direct knowing, which doesn’t predetermine experience by premediated conceptual structures.

Such is the aspect of transcending *Jutsu* (Jpn: 術 - technique) and arriving to *Do* (Jpn: 道 - way) – spontaneous skillful response to a certain situation (Chi: 無爲 wuwei – without action), which arises from direct knowing. Shotokan karate techniques are subdivided into *kihon* (basic techniques: strikes, kicks, stances), *kata* (sequential forms) and *kumite* (sparring: fixed and free). Unlike Shaolin Gongfu, which is rhizomatic in its multiplicity, Shotokan karate is arboreal, comprised of three distinct elements, forming the trunk, branches and leaves respectively.

Zen moves directly inward, cutting through signifying structures, mental formations and karmic seeds, to the intimate core of the storehouse consciousness, thereby revolving its basis from that of perception of solidity into an unmediated-by-conditioning ‘prereflective’, using Kasulis’ term, knowing of the present moment. This is the way, according to the Laṅkāvatāra sutra, by which the storehouse consciousness is identical to the womb of the perfectly enlightened one (Skt: Tathāgatagarbha).

Karate, as a way of practicing towards the above, by definition, *proper understanding*, effectively cuts through the multiplicity of afflictive predispositions and carves a human being out of the five heaps (Pāli: kandha) of identificatory material, as one is – empty of self. In empty (of identification) vessel the knowing quality dwells in its somatic basis: intention, qua Qi, channels and nerves, are immediately transferred into actions of body, speech and mind, which allows direct spontaneous yet skilful response to situations. A karate practice of vigorous, rapid movements of a highly heated body can be a way of approaching a Zen seated meditation method for those whose predispositions are not conducive solely to a sitting practice. Seeing Zen as a refinement of Chan Buddhism corresponds to seeing karate as a refinement of gongfu - a condensation of Yi Jin Jing principles into minimalist perfection.

Shotokan Karate was the first martial art I practiced. I loved it and I suffered in it. The lightning-like moves of strikes and kicks, as if an iron ball attached to a tip of the whip, were liberating. I could directly release the frustrating compulsive tension and breathe freely through vigorous exhalations. It was liberating until the intensity reached the bottom of my heart, where sorrow lurked. And then the heat was unbearable. There was no way to sustain the refined Zen composure. It was a heated hell of guilt and misery. Back then, out of pride I couldn't allow for crying or breaking down. I endured stoically, yet at times lifelessly.

My body was exhausted like a sponge after each training session. My kimono was drenched. My forearms and shins covered with bruises from kumite. Yet my heart was elated. Each heavy endeavour helped to disperse sorrow a little bit more. It was an act of purification. I was out there and I was better than before I entered the dojo.

Competing as part of the university team was the greatest challenge. The terror of the possibility of a direct contact, of hurting and being hurt by others bewildered me. It was such a brutal torment. Even more hurtful was the experience of shame from not showing up to competitions. My life was not stable, I resented what I was doing and studying. I had sought out avenues of self-expression – not winning or losing. I looked for internal mastery, not

internal hell. Yet the hell was the path to mastery. The instability was the condition of existence.

As I was to discover many years after in the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā, everything is all right with hell, instability and internal turmoil. Everything is all right with a terror from hurting others as well; every living being naturally detests enmity and danger. The detachment from the senses is only a primary relief, yet the heart comes back after a while to commemorate the hurt by weeping and the power of this release is unstoppable. It is far greater than the lightning power of kicks and punches directed by unembellished intention. It is the power of softness, of shapeless emotions, which know no contentment within alignment. It is the drive, which spreads in waves and doesn't submit to willpower trying to control it. All that is needed is kind acceptance, allowing the sorrow to be, thus breeding compassion.

The stainless zazen[124] *posture is such a refinement of the drives – sheer receptiveness and openness of the heart – so the breath travels through intensities of the body, without craving to transform anything. Change just happens by allowing everything to be via spaciousness. The heat of training is a boiling vessel of this expansion first. Then it requires no heat: the basic space is just there; the subject is merged with the way. The imbroglio of resisting ego unravels, revealing suchness of self-nature.*

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[124] Rendering Dogen's phenomenology of zazen, Kasulis makes a distinction between thinking (conceptuaisation of phenomena), not-thinking (conscious negation of the process of conceptualisation) and without thinking (prereflective awareness of a stream of ever-changing phenomena). Without thinking is a correct principle of zazen, whereby neither negation nor affirmation of arising phenomena is exercised. He concludes: 'Without the objectifying activity of thinking, there is in zazen only the experience of universal flux, the flow of temporal events. Therefore, to practice zazen is to accept Buddha-nature (impermanence) as it presents itself. To authenticate the presence of Buddha-nature is enlightenment (Kasulis 1981, 82). In relation to the footnote on suchness, made in the conclusion of chapter one: refinement of the drives in zazen, or recognition of three characteristics of existence, pertaining to the drives, is a psychophysical process, which may involve varied somatic manifestations, such as aforementioned 'Eight Experiences'.

It is advised here to see the creative work *The Living*, an account of a free martial arts practice.

Parkour and the Real body

Conjugating the unknown it is crucially important to stand steadily on one's own feet. Here, by standing steadily I don't mean being able to maintain oneself upright. It is about the strength undetermined/unrestrained by anything mentally fabricated. The limitations imposed by habitual self-image and humiliating conditioning are such mental fabrications.

When the words and images overwhelm, when the head is about to blast, when the body is as if distorted from the inside… there is no logic that can be applied, no geometry of cause and effect: a web is so complex that it cannot be untangled. One is trapped, oppressed, torn apart and dismembered by the proliferating intensities. Rather than giving explanation and untangling the endless clots of the complex called 'self' by means of the Symbolic, one can address the Real qua the Real. One can gather all this suffering and put it into motion.

This is what parkour has always been for me. It isn't escaping or ignoring the pain, the neurosis, and the horror of the unknown. It is riding the wave of it.

Underneath the images, words and intensities, there is the aliveness, bursting out. The power, rawness, sexuality, drives, dreams are all throbbing towards the surface, towards the revelation. It asks to breathe like you never breathed before. It asks to move like a savage, like a horde of buffalos, like a waterfall, ever-collapsing, yet inexhaustible. It asks ***to be*** *fully. The aliveness which horrors mask is not going to wait to reveal itself. It is either invested into feeding of neurosis, limitation, stagnation and giving up – the ego; or directed into fullness, untangled, undivided freedom beyond right or wrong, into being present completely – the Real body.*

The Real body can be discovered via direct contact with reality: no agency of symbols and images involved. For example, the subject is given a task to get from point A to point B across an uneven terrain with obstacles. One is not given any technical advice, goal, promise of reward, encouragement or discouragement.

The subject makes the pass by means of the capabilities arising at the moment of application of the effort. The subject is neither striving nor giving up, neither reaching nor escaping, but is just maintaining mindfulness of the present moment, devoid of judgment and anticipation, applying oneself to the task. A result of this pass would be a glimpse of the Real body.

The Real energetic configuration arises via the interaction devoid of the abstract goal, framework of style and acquired knowledge. It arises when the subject applies him or herself unassumingly to the task. In such a way, the acquired subjectivity dissolves, exposing only that which is real.

I consider parkour to be the primary and very honest way to tackle sensory experiences of encountering impermanence since it educates the subject in dealing with one's gross strength, plain capabilities and obstacles of the natural world. There is no intermediary to alleviate the acuteness of sense-contact and no filter to obscure its raw beauty. The way it is becomes the only way in parkour and hence the Real body emerges in the process. One makes the jump or falls, passes through the obstacle course or doesn't, overcomes the obstacle or is stopped by it: there is no in-between, no signifier to substitute for another signifier in metonymic displacement.

The Real body becomes carved out of the lump of the acquired body of identifications. The subject discovers the unfathomable within via the medium of relational interaction. However, interacting with the environment, it is very important to maintain balance between the alignment and the level of fatigue. The alignment of the subtle body[125]

[125] The subtle body, according to the Tibetan Book of the Dead glossary, comprises a network of subtle energy channels, vital energies and seminal points of energy (Padmasabhava 2006, 507-525). Energy channels are roughly equivalent to the meridian system as per Chinese medicine. Vital energies are said to flow through the channels and support various conceptual states in the subject's mind, which approximates them to 'vibrational information',

discovered via the practices of vipassanā and taijiquan is maintained via the continuous flow of mindfulness. The blockages, caused by afflictive emotions of grief, fear and resentment are noted and left alone. There is no direct work into blockages because the wholesome practice of parkour engages the entire body in a way, which makes presence of the hindrances insignificant. In fact, the hindrances contribute energy for the practice.

Clearly perceived frontiers of the body become blurred in the practice. As one discovers the extent of the *antifragility* of the body, its contour is perceived as pliable. The body appearance becomes tuned with the movement pattern and the task it performs. The body emerges as a conduit of the practice and hence one becomes free from identification with a specular body image, shape, state and an attachment/aversion to it.

I believe that it is crucial to know the history of parkour in order to illustrate its correlation with the Real. Julie Angel gives an unfolded historical account on the parkour practice in her thesis.[126] My goal here is to outline the spirit of training methods, which preceded the development of parkour.

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The grand ancestor of parkour is the French military practice known as 'le method naturelle' or 'natural method', developed by Georges Hébert (27 April 1875 - 2 August 1957). Herbert, a member of the French marines, took inspiration from the bodies of people inhabiting African nations during his travels:

> 'Their bodies were splendid, flexible, nimble, skilful, enduring, resistant and yet they had no other tutor in gymnastics but their lives in nature.' (Hébert 2014, 11)

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or Qi. Seminal points are male/female generative essences, comparable to *Jing* in Neigong training systems. Here, by 'alignment of the subtle body', I mean a congruent flow of a knowing quality through the entire body, non-blocked by 'mortifying effects of language' and repressed emotional affects, as well as ignorance or absence of mindfulness.

[126] Angel, Julie Margaret. 2016. *Ciné Parkour: a cinematic and theoretical contribution to the understanding of the practice of parkour.* The first ever doctorate thesis on parkour.

Another significant event that motivated Hébert to create a physical education system was the eruption of a volcano near the town of St. Pierre on the Caribbean island of Martinique, where he was stationed. At that time he organised the escape and rescue of more than seven hundred people. This act shaped his belief that athletic skill must be combined with courage and altruism. Later, he developed this ethos in the personal motto: 'Being strong to be useful', which in turn became a motto of early parkour practitioners.

Developing his system, Hébert synthesised various approaches to physical education existing at that time. He also took inspiration from the teachings of philosopher Jean-Jacque Rousseau, who believed that only the observation of nature could lead people to the true methods of physical development. Hébert writes:

> ‘The final goal of physical education is to make strong beings. In the purely physical sense, the Natural Method promotes the qualities of organic resistance, muscularity and speed, towards being able to walk, run, jump, move on all fours, to climb, to keep balance, to throw, lift, defend yourself and to swim.
>
> In the "virile" or energetic sense, the system consists in having sufficient energy, willpower, courage, coolness, and firmness. In the moral sense, education, by elevating the emotions, directs or maintains the moral drive in a useful and beneficial way.
>
> The true Natural Method, in its broadest sense, must be considered as the result of these three particular forces; it is a physical, virile and moral synthesis. It resides not only in the muscles and the breath, but above all in the "energy" which is used, the will which directs it and the feeling which guides it.
>
> With regard to the development of virile qualities, this is obtained by the execution of certain difficult or dangerous exercises requiring the development of these various qualities, for example while seeking to control the fear of falling, of jumping, of rising, of plunging, of walking on an unstable surface, etc.’ (Hébert 2014, 14)

Figure 8: photo of Georges Hébert, digital resource

This is another example of insight in regards to mechanisms of psychophysical development common to all human beings. Hébert's Natural Method, like taijiquan, emphasises concentration, willful energetic effort and feeling. The Chinese word for feeling 感觉 (*ganjue*) literally means 'awakened sensation'. It is such a sensation that is aware of the energy in the body, whether it is blocked by the emotions or whether mindfulness is lacking to clear the blockage. In this respect, Hébert points out virile qualities, 'elevating of the emotions' and 'maintenance of the moral drive'.

Cultivation of vitality as per taijiquan, however, is based on the principle 'without action', which doesn't require 'elevation' and 'maintenance' in the active sense. With the right feeling it is enough to be non-burdened by the five hindrances in order to benefit from the intense physical practice. Furthermore, when *ganjue* is present, one can easily pick up the natural tune of the environment and interact with it harmoniously. It also allows the

knowing quality to engage one's body directly without the need for relying on any premediated technique or principle.

The Natural Method was widely popularised in France in the first half of the 20th century and was used to train the military. It is via engaging in the practice of the Natural Method that Raymond Belle, father of David Belle, who is one of the founders of parkour, became known as 'the force of nature' and a national hero of France.

Raymond, who was born in Vietnam under French occupation, became separated from his parents andwas subsequently raised by the military as a boy soldier (Angel 2016, 13). When Raymond came to France, he joined the regiment of firefighters. What is known today as 'parkour' emerged from 'parkous du monde' or firefighters' obstacle course. David was inspired by his father's practice and acknowledgment, but unlike his father he had different drives to pursue in life.

Figure 9: photo compilation of Raymond Belle and Paris firefighter regiment, digital resource

David was one of the practitioners who formed a group called Yamakasi in Lisses, France. In Congolese Lingala, *ya makási* means 'strong in one's body, spirit or person'. Originally, they called their activity *l'art du déplacement* - the art of movement. Their practice consisted in maintaining values such as honesty, respect, humility, vigour, hard work and vitality. On the external level they were going out on the streets to practice the ways of interacting with the world. No one was considered superior or inferior in the group, no excuses or negativity were allowed during the practice. The movement patterns were only considered useful if they could be repeated at least ten times without sustaining injury to the body (Belle 2009, 43). Behind their training was the motto of '*hebertisme*': 'being strong to be useful'. The training process was an exploration, a game, a sequence of challenges, both collective and individual practice with the aim of creating a foundation for being oneself (Belle 2009, 53).

'A foundation for being oneself' that David mentions, is the drive on the side of the Real, seeking wholesome non-destructive expression. It wasn't a passion in any military or negative sense with a horrific residue of annihilationism. It was, in a sense, a direct engagement with phenomena out of the noble intention to understand oneself. As David explains:

> 'Parkour teaches you to be sure of what you are able to do at that particular moment.' (Belle 2009, 45)

Understanding arises out of multiple repetitions, just like the insight into the nature of existence arises from multiple acts of noting[127]. Time and time again drilling a jump or pass in the natural environment, without any confines and sport normatives involved, a practitioner arrives to unmediated certainty: what is here and now and what can be done. No competition and rivalry is involved. Parkour has a different spirit. It is a dialogue

[127] Venerable Jotinanda referred to applying the knowing quality to establishments of mindfulness as 'noting'. Oral communication, Melaka, Malaysia, December 29th 2017.

between the conditions of the subject and the way things are, whereby balance is discovered through relational interaction.

Paths of Yamakasi members separated. French film director Luc Besson made films featuring the original Yamakasi group in *Yamakasi - Les samouraïs des temps modernes,* and with David Belle in *Banlieue 13.* These two films and their sequels popularised parkour worldwide. Undoubtedly, these films inspired countless young people all over the world and produced that which Julie Angel addresses in her book as 'Parkour's High-flying Rebellion',[128] or the culture of genuine movement enthusiasts.

Parkour practice adopted by the younger generations, including myself, has become a form of rebellion to some degree. Elements of rebellious attitude were present in each parkour community I've encountered – USA, China, Russia, Malaysia, Australia, Philippines, and more. Externally, it was a rebellion against consumerist society values, oppression of the human vitality by the mass media and corporate cultures, forces of old, conservative and reactive, etc. Internally, I argue it was an eruption of the Real from under the constrains of constricting social codes and negative self-identification. It was a rebellion against the conditioned self, which smothered innate love, vitality and basic spaciousness – non-dualistic permeability of the subject and the space. The Real body has been emerging globally and by means of deeply humane ethics of this practice – relatively peacefully and respectfully towards others. Interpersonal conflicts weren't pronounced because parkour takes place between the subject and the space.

Alex Pavlotski's ethnographic study of the global parkour community via his thesis 'Visualising Parkour', reveals that as a complex phenomenon parkour is not devoid of internal conflict yet united by a cross-cultural human drive for movement, community and self-actualisation (Pavlotski 2015, 3).

Development of exceptional movement skills and strength of the body and mind allows parkour practitioners to step out of the codes of society fostering delusion of ego-identification. This liberated vision naturally results from a liberated body and as such can become a ground for the arising of compassion. Martial arts practice corresponds to

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[128] Angel, Julie. 2016. *Breaking the Jump: The Secret Story of Parkour's High-flying Rebellion.*

parkour in this way. The eventual goal of both disciplines is a harmony within oneself, which becomes a harmony with the environment and with all beings.

Jouissance and Parkour

Jouissance is unconscious energy at work, repetitively producing externalisations, physical symptoms or any other signifying effects (Nasio 1998, 47). As unconscious energy is put to work, the illusory nature of the subject's ego is unwrapped. The dissolution and cessation of the ego by means of traversing the fantasy is accompanied not only by liberation of desire, but also by the dawning of the unknown (the Real to be symbolised). If release and surrender as per taijiquan and meditation practices are not developed, fear will arise.

In parkour practice, however, fear often comes prior to a dawning of the unknown. This practice is very closely tied with mortal danger and is both pitfall and liberating insight.

It is a pitfall because fear is all-permeating, toxic and paralysing. A constant exposure to fear wears out the concentration and blocks the wisdom. It can turn the subject into a shrunken, offended, oppressed creature, ever-haunted by pain and terror, ever-expecting the next blow to arrive. Its paralysing effect on the body creates a condition of chronic tension which shortens muscles and ligaments, thus blocking Qi and constraining free self-expressive movement. Effects of consecutive injuries and ever-present pain condition the nervous system into a permanent fight or flight response, thus never giving the subject rest and tranquility. This is what makes consequences of encountering the Real as trauma so difficult to integrate.

However, mortal danger is also a liberating insight because having overcome fear, the subject can face the unknown without any ambiguous residue of ego-identification. Introducing oneself to the possibility of greater freedom of motion has a tremendous effect on the subject. As Hébert pointed out, 'execution of certain difficult and dangerous exercises' leads to the development of virile qualities. Parkour training methods advocate a

gradual approach to dangerous challenges, an evaluation of risks and progressions, whereby big jumps are never performed without the extensive preceding practice of smaller jumps, and jumps on heights are always supported by ground training. Yet there is always 'a leap of faith' – a challenge which one cannot approach securely and progressively but only face it as it arises, as it is.

Gather everything in the present moment, concentrate the mind into one breath, inhale, with a spotless clarity, knowing that the chances are either make it or die, direct the spirit and the body towards the envisaged accomplishment of the goal, and make the leap. Here and now is the entry point.

On the slope of the Ayu-Dag, again: the bear-mountain of Crimea.

The passage towards the top is close to its end. Many frontiers have been passed. The last one brought me to a point of no return. There is no way back. The gap behind was only one way. The challenge ahead is debilitating. With only a backpack with me, no protective gear, nobody around, I'm sitting in the rocky cavity staring at the only way up. It is a narrow ridge on the edge of a rock wall with a one-thousand-eight-hundred-foot drop on the other side. The chances are evident: the only way out is up. Numerous scenarios are pictured by the agitated mind. I realise: first calm the breath. I breathe in and out long, almost entranced. I look in the eyes of the horrific pictures of falling down, of never seeing my loved ones again, of burying my dreams. I look into the eyes of loss. Breathing goes on. The heart pumps. Yet nothing is calmed.

So be it the way it is, I have no time to wait for a miracle.

With one-pointed focus, I rise and approach the ridge. I start the climb. At this moment, every thought vanishes from my mind, except one: I want to see her again, my beloved. No doubt about it. My movements are precise like never before. I run up like a reckless monkey. I leave no exit strategy. I am still. I do not move. It moves.

In no time I find myself on the plateau, having cleared the ridge. And in this moment, when the breath is fresh and piercing as if every pore is breathing in life, the eagle cuts the air

above my head with its flight. I hear the rustle of its wings and note its silhouette disappearing behind the summit.

I made it. The laughter of relief.

My memory of that experience is so pristine. The signs, symbols and phenomena are one. And most unforgettable – the clarity of the peak. This is clarity in contrast with ambiguity, isness in contrast with conditionality, aliveness in contrast with drowsy existence: the fearless jouissance.

It occurred to me, that having the pristine chance of either make it or die is the Real state of being from moment to moment.

One concentration, one heartbeat, one breath and one movement.

The multiplicity converges here into a single chance.

I could be dead.

I live.

For Lacan, words of meaning stand on the side of the Imaginary: they are the imaginary face of the Symbolic. Striving for meaningful experience, therefore, belongs to the ego or the ego ideal for success. But discourse is fundamentally directed towards Being and circles around the Real of jouissance as a form of lived experience (Moncayo 2017, 53-54).

The experience described above is the closest I've ever had to being One. Time and time again in parkour training I've been on the edge of this experience. I took leaps by choice, always having an exit strategy. It was a controlled and safe environment despite the risks involved. Yet approximating myself to the intensity experienced back then made every jump a certainty. Furthermore, having extrapolated this intensity on other moves, I enriched every training session with extraordinary luminous depth. Every move became more than just a move. It became an act of living performed with care, love and knowing. A result of this move was delight in aliveness – a joy of presence in the here and now. A joy of

just being. It doesn't require conditions of perfect technique, recognition or rush of adrenalin. Simply showing up and being is enough.

This is the jouissance of bearing the unbearable: an embodied experience of the thoughtless love. This is what I've been arguing in my disquisition: every seemingly horrific or meaningless experience of encountering the Real is an opportunity for liberating insight, a benevolent and enriching experience of luminous suchness guided by the loving heart.

A thousand thunders and the stillness of the mountain peak coexist within this moment on the frontier between being and non-being as oneness. It is the outrage and the serenity condensed in one moment. There is no place for fear in it, for there is no one to experience fear. One is the life. One is the moment. One is the loving Real gaze.

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Here I recommend viewing the creative work *Glimpse of Infinity*, which illustrates practices, fostering development of the Real body.

Swimming and the body of water

The arts which bring the subject to full exertion are rediscovering the Real. The arts which require the abandonment of technique and foster bare endurance are rediscovering the Real. The arts which cause the subject to loosen the controlling grip of the Symbolic and goal striving of the Imaginary are rediscovering the Real. Eventually, the art of no-art or ability to perform brilliantly any given movement pattern as it arises will be the Real art.[129]

[129] 'To transcend technique is to respond to the presence of the moment now before us. The determinateness of past conditions must vibrate in unison with the openness of the present. A Taoist principle states that a painting should be done in one stroke. In a literal sense, this is usually impossible, but the point is that

The Real body is utterly non-limited by the fetters of habits. It is *the body of water*. Hence, *the body in water* is the closest approximation to such a functional state.

Firstly, swimming is a direct experience of the Real. It is the art which leaves no room for variations: one either swims or drowns. As mastery of this art rises, many ways to make it easier or harder appear. However, there is always a way of practice leading to pushing the boundaries beyond the conceptual and habitual: a self-exertion to the peaks and navigation through the haze of the unknown, as if never having known how to swim.

Being in water is about patient endurance and bold exertion. I argue that the same is crucial with physically being in the psychic Real. Patient endurance is the aspect of cultivation of vitality. The main prerequisite for movement arts is the strong, enduring and alive psychophysicality. It is a healthy mind unburdened by hindrances. It is a healthy body uninterrupted by blockages. It is mindfulness and vigour guiding over both. Cultivating vitality via *proper effort* is crucial in the practice of movement arts.

Secondly, being in water is entrustment and release. This entirely corresponds to principles of taijiquan. A good friend, who introduced me to the technique of effortless swimming is my taijiquan teacher, Anand Raj. The technique he used was Total Immersion swimming as taught by Terry Laughlin. Yet it isn't reliant on the technique. Rather, it is the principle of continuous mindfulness in action.

A natural configuration[130] of the body permeated with mindfulness in water is as follows. Body weight is given to water, head sinks underwater, spine aligns away from it, shoulders are relaxed, hips and legs are afloat aligned with the spine. A 'towing line' attached to the crown of the head is visualised and the movement of fish-like propulsion by

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the painting must, in every instance, be one act without the interference of conceptual reflection.' (Kasulis 1981, 141)

[130] Due to habitual tendencies, which include not only postural psychosomatic habits, but also kinetic habits ingrained through incorrect training, 'natural configuration' of the body must be rediscovered through correct practice. Terry Laughlin (2014) gives an unfolded account of such a systematic correct swimming practice. He draws not only from lifetime of coaching swimmers, but also from laws of marine engineering regarding efficient shaping of sailing vessels, which human body is. He refers to Zen practice regarding correct mental attitude of non-struggling, applies yoga breathing techniques for relaxation and martial arts principles of consistent and disciplined effort, refining seemingly simple in-water balance and stroke techniques. I discovered that proper mindfulness, when applied in water, indeed results in such a 'natural configuration' of the body as correct swimming practice aims at establishing.

turning the body around the axis of this line is performed. Arm stroke is synchronised with opposite leg kick. The arm sinks the palm down through water, returns to the hip, the thumb slides along the side of the body effortlessly. The body turns to generate propulsion, and the arm sinks again in water. Breathing happens on both sides since the head turns together with the body. The head isn't tilted backward, but aligned with the spine as the body rolls on the side to breathe (Laughlin 2004, 1490).

Further relaxation and sinking of the head, neck, torso and hips follows as propulsions progress. The body is completely immersed in water, in such a way that a downhill gliding sensation arises (Laughlin 2004, 1495). In such a way, the effort of musculature becomes less and less and entrustment in being held by water becomes more and more. The fish-like propulsions allow the use of the whole body force guided solely by *proper thought*. In such a way one becomes aligned with water and moves through it naturally, without striving, struggling or exhausting oneself.

As I swim laps in the pool, a slight dizziness comes, a buzz of indifference and boredom arise in the mind. Venerable Jotinanda likened the mind to an untamed wild elephant. The mind wants to rejoice in physicality, in the sense of exertion, in the variety of spinning, flipping and dancing underwater. It wants sensual excitation, unwinding, proliferation. The mind is so in tune with the body: it is revealing every sense of lack, every discontent, every dormant desire. One can spend life after life following that mind and splashing in the pool of conditioned existence.

Yet here I choose to follow Buddha Dhamma. It is a skilled elephant tamer, who does not break the spirit of the bestial vitality and does not give in to it.

I simply choose to engage proper effort and sustain a one-pointed focus on execution of repetitive, effortless, boring movement patterns of swimming. That is all. I proceed, note and listen. Here, all the four vipassanā objects arise clearly with equanimity: body, feelings, consciousness, and phenomena. The water environment is conducive to equanimity. It is freer than the sitting posture for a fiery body with a predisposition for movement like mine. So I can observe with alleviated suffering.

Every neural-muscular tension caused by the mental defilements, identification with concepts, streams of discursive thinking, and negative emotions are all dissipated through bodily propulsions. The tension becomes less and less, the breathing normalises into a uniform flow of seamless inbreath-outbreath, pouring into one another.

The wholesome indulgence in the factors of enlightenment, slipping into subtle states of absorption, a simple bliss of equanimity, are all recognised as impermanent states. I welcome them, I'm grateful for the ease, I let them go, seeing their arising and disappearing. With that clear seeing comes the liberation from needing to feel or be in a particular 'good' way; the piercing desire to escape being in a 'bad' underperforming way ceases. There is just a way.

Laps back and forth, which lead to no resolution, no completion, no accomplishment are the moments of being-as-such. It is finding myself aligned with the flow of phenomena and breathing easily.

The states arising thus are very wholesome. The body does not feel heat or cold, the mind does not perceive right and wrong. The touch of water is noted by every fragment of the skin. From the tip of mindful attentiveness to the sense of deep viscous warmth in the bottom of my pelvis there is continuity. It is not acute. It is not the solid powerful energetic presence of a traceur. It is a uniformity of subtle power. It is the very foundation of powerfulness that there is in a human being, whose mind permeates the body and rests within it. Yet it is perceived by the conditioned senses as weakness. I feel vulnerable, naked, unprotected, entrusted and allowed to whims of water.

This is it, I think, the Embodiment of the Real – a giving in, a release, becoming newly born or even before birth, entrusted, safe within the uncertainty, one and whole within impermanence, myself within absence of self.

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It is recommended to now watch the short video *Embodiment of the Real*, which summarises the practices attended to so far.

Movement improvisation

Benevolent jouissance is a direct reclaiming of oneself from acquired subjectivity. Encounter with the Real, as mentioned in previous sections, is traumatic due to the always already preconceived symbolic-imaginary milieu characteristic of consciousness.

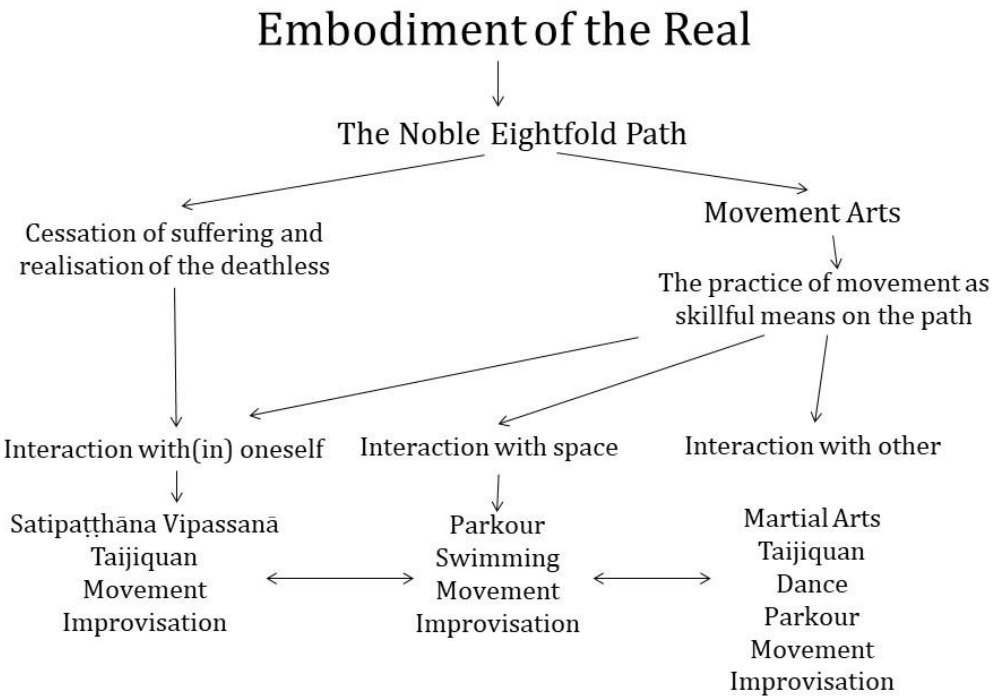
The Buddhist model of mind illustrates how sense experiences, images and signifiers impinge upon sense-consciousnesses, causing reaction from the ego consciousness (Pāli: manas), which impresses on the storehouse consciousness, leaving traces and dispositions (Gregory 2008, 105), which, reinforced over time through repetition, become 'seeds'. Further, due to reasons that elude explanation (Dumoulin 1998, 47), 'seeds' are set in motion, processed through ego consciousness and actualised through six sense consciousnesses (Gregory 2008, 106), thereby constituting an indirect experience of phenomena. However, phenomena are always already available in their 'dumb reality', as I have argued above. It is not the filtering of consciousnesses and lack of mindfulness that obscures their suchness as much as it is a malevolent improper attitude, devoid of gentleness, kindness, love and faith.

The Western encounter with Buddhism as per Gregory's rendering[131] is exemplary of the way the Real is apprehended and gradually distinguished from the entanglement of a subjective milieu as a 'vacuum plenum', which causes a researcher to 'stumble' over irreducible complexity and beauty, and begin to reexamine, thereby rediscovering oneself in reflection of the field, which is being researched. Buddhism as a 'discourse fundamentally directed towards Being and the Real of jouissance' (Moncayo 2017, 54) is

[131] Gregory, Katleen L. 2008. *Parallel Readings: Western Encounters with Buddhism*.

like the 'thing in its dumb reality' (Lacan 1997, 55), which disarms the meaning-making frenzy of the ego with gentle detachment and an equanimous smile on the lips.

After giving an account of the 'revulsion of the basis' of storehouse consciousness by means of absorption of the mind into the body, which allows spontaneous interactive response to situations, I'd like to turn to the final practice where all previously addressed methods culminate.



Scheme 8: Embodiment of the Real

As shown in the scheme above, movement improvisation is constitutive of all modes of human interaction. Without a preconceived idea of how to act, any action is spontaneous (i.e. improvised). Paraphrasing the old Zen axiom and quoting Bruce Lee at the same time, sensei Igor Doroshin once instructed us: 'Before I started learning karate, kick was just a kick and punch was just a punch. When I was learning karate, kick became more than just a

kick and punch more than just a punch. As I've completed my studies, kick was a kick again, and punch was just a punch.'[132]

There can be no ideal spontaneous action prior to any identification. Development of the subject, as illustrated in the first chapter, involves separation, identification and symbolisation at its core. In exceptionally rare cases basic sanity and spaciousness in certain individuals is not completely overshadowed by imaginary and symbolic conditioning. Those individuals are known as prophets, saints, enlightened beings. Their love is always more than their selves. However, the majority of people go through and complete (with due diligence) the process described above by the sensei.

Generally, the subject arrives to the study of anything qua impetus of encountering suffering.[133] It may be social or existential demand, trauma, crisis, loss, etc. Generally, the first thing to do is to dialectise the subject's desire, extinguished or overstimulated by the encounter. The conditioning context[134] of fundamental ignorance can be seen as the cause of desire's crisis par excellence. In this sense, traversing fantasy is shedding light on the 'labels' of identification. Any such 'label' binds a clot of energy known as 'affect'.[135] As mindfulness is applied, 'affect' is set into motion. The latter is what I call intensity.

Below are structural guidelines for the process of free improvisation, designed to unravel psychophysical intensities. Improvisation is taking place in a natural setting where the practitioner is barefoot.

- Find a suitable place to stand.

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[132] Oral communication, October 2007, Far Eastern Federal University karate team training hall, Vladivostok, Russia.

[133] Ajahn Kalyano in oral communication in April 2019 referred to suffering as teacher: 'ajahn dukkha'. Ajahn Chah often emphasised that wisdom cannot arise without suffering as impetus.

[134] Emphasising conditioning effect of ignorance Gregory writes: 'A mind obscured by ignorance is said to lose the 'experience of lucid openness' to itself and to the world.' (Gregory 2008, 108)

[135] 'Label' or thought, which pertains to perception of an object, is repressed in the case of the neurotic. In other words, 'reality is affirmed in some very basic sense, but pushed out of consciousness'. Whereas for the psychotic, reality is foreclosed – denied entering consciousness (Fink 1999, 89). In either case, affect, initially linked with thought, becomes detached. Affect is repressed energy, which produces psychosomatic symptoms in the neurotic, or waves of malevolent jouissance invading the body as if from the outside in the psychotic. Guidelines for improvisation presented are applicable to a neurotic subjective position, not a psychotic position.

- Close your eyes standing upright and released in the Wuji posture.[136]
- Bring mindfulness to the space behind and above your head, then gradually envelop the space around the body with mindfulness.
- As the latter is established, immerse the mind inside the body, distributing it equally throughout body's interior space, flooding the inner body with mindfulness, which simply observes, devoid of evaluating, judgments or any other naming activity.
- Accept and forgive whatever intensities that may have arisen within the light of awareness.
- Note a persistent intensity which does not dissolve in the light of awareness.
- Listen into it.
- As clarity of the feeling tone emerges, open your eyes and enter any kinetic intensity, movement pattern or movement task that corresponds the most to the feeling tone.
- Allow your imagination to unravel into playing with movement patterns and fluctuations of the feeling.
- Willfully abandon controlling faculties of superego and ego, noting the habits which gradually fall away as the intensity is unraveling in accordance with body's natural tendencies.
- Refuel the process of improvisation by noting the natural qualities of environment, by resonating with them: adopt the qualities of nature internally, actualise them via the interaction through 'touch'.
- You may invigorate the process by speeding up the movements, thus bringing the body to a heated state.

[136] Wuji (Chi: 无极 everlasting, unbounded; refers to emptiness in Daoist cosmology, which breeds 太极 taiji) is the foundational cultivation posture for internal arts. Mitchell gives a detailed account of the intricacies of this posture (Mitchell 2018, 2130 – 2490). For the purposes of improvisation practice outlined here, it is sufficient to lower one's center of gravity, as if sitting on a stool, but never reaching it, without creating strain on the knees and rounding the spine.

- As the peak of exertion is reached and the initial plethora of intensities is exhausted, attend with awareness to the breath.
- Observe the natural quality of the breath: rising and falling of the internal bellows, while still moving.
- Finally repeat the entering two phases of the process: attend mindfully to the space behind and above the head enveloping the whole space around the body with awareness gradually; breathe with the outside space of the body.
- Gradually come to a stop, immerse the awareness within the body: seamlessly occupy the whole inner space without blind spots.
- Note if the initial intensity which informed the improvisation is still there. If it is, what is its feeling tone now? Further observing, give it no fuel of labelling, just breathe through the whole inner body as if through the uniform transparent space.
- Stand completely still and released in a natural posture (not the Wuji), note the sensation on the soles of the feet in contact with the ground.
- Note the quality of empty space around you and within you.
- Be in this empty space long enough, absorbing awareness into the breath.

Unraveling clots of affects, thereby dialectising desire, invigorates the body and mind, bringing out vitality. However, there are two main pitfalls to improvisation practice:

1. Attachment to external movement: the subject becomes enthralled with kinetic qualities and sensations, which the movement of unraveling intensities stirs up. Thereby, focus shifts from the kernel of energetic blockage to the surface expressions, located at the level of the Imaginary, linked to the hindrances of sensual desire and ill-will. This is not conducive to correct release of affects, instead it enforces further affects.
2. Physical proliferation: just like mental proliferation, it carries the subject along the worlds of mentally induced states. Given the abundance of skills available to learn on the market of movement today – yoga, martial arts, dance, etc. – it is foreseeable how multiplicities of 'kinetic concepts' may 'assail a person with

regard to past, present and future forms made conscious through the body'.[137] With this contemporary advent of movement arts, the body can be regarded as a seventh sense. For movement practitioners, especially dancers, sense contact received through the other six senses is interpreted kinetically (due to training), thereby giving rise to 'kinetic consciousness'. Hence, on the basis of neurotic affect, entire worlds of proliferating physical experiences arise. It is arguable that such is useful even in the case of performance art.

Avoiding the above pitfalls by adhering to basic instructions is paramount. Eventually, intensities dissolve, and movement stops. In Daoist terms, this internal arts stage of 'spontaneous energetic movement' is considered temporary. The subtle body goes through the necessary process of purging the stagnant energy, which at later stages can take the subject into a very deep and meditative state as the body's functioning switches from the acquired to congenital channel system (Mitchell 2018, 5652). The latter pertains to the release of affect-caused blockages, which constitute the conditioned self, and makes the body malleable, conducive to deep absorption of the knowing quality into material sense-faculties, where true internal changes, those of Huang and sinew channels as per Yi Jin Jing, start to take place.

Eventually the praxis congregates around sitting and immersing awareness into the breath. However, I argue that it is necessary to learn the kinetic aspect of the process of unraveling intensities in order to do the sitting practice correctly. Sitting or standing cultivation goes through the same stages as improvisation outlined above, except that the intensity is not allowed to unravel kinetically. Instead, it unravels internally, thereby changing the body. Skillful means of movement arts accustom the subject to the alignment and mindfulness necessary for sitting practice. Thereby, the mind doesn't drown in the influx of defilements, but always retains lucid openness.

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[137] Paraphrased from Majjhima Nikaya: '…in dependence on eye and form, there is the arising of eye consciousness, the meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling; what one feels, that one perceives; what one perceives, that one thinks about; what one thinks about, that one conceptually proliferates about. With what one conceptually proliferates about as source, proliferating perceptions and deliberations assail a person with regard to past, present and future forms made conscious through the eye… [and the other senses] (M. I, 111f).' (Thiradhammo 2014, 51)

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It is recommended to now watch the creative work *Evanescence.* While this improvisation piece doesn't follow the exact guidelines as above, it still retains the principle of unraveling the conditioned self.

Conclusion: the field of action

As stated in the Introduction, my method for this research is the *field of action* (Pāli: kammaṭṭhāna), which embraces the whole of what we do in the scope of a meditation practice and involves the appropriation of skillful means (Skt: upāya) to resolve particular issues that arise in meditation. According to Mahayana Buddhism, training in skillful means refers to the first five of the six perfections: generosity; discipline; patience; perseverance; and meditative concentration. When integrated with discriminative awareness, the sixth perfection, a union of discriminative awareness and means (Skt: prajnopāya) is formed (Padmasabhava 2006, 511).

Movement arts, as addressed in this chapter, in due turn fosters cultivation of the skilful means, which overlap with the seven factors of enlightenment, as mentioned in chapter two. Taking into account the subjective positions as per Lacanian psychoanalysis – neurotic, psychotic and perverted[138] (Fink 1999, 62-63) – it is evident that the means of

[138] 'Lacan's diagnostic schema is remarkably simple', Fink writes, however, mechanisms behind each subjective position are complex. It is beyond the scope of this research to touch upon the intricacies of this schema. It has already been touched on that for the neurotic the main mechanism is repression, for the psychotic it's rejection and for the pervert it's disavowal. Eyers clarifies how the Real is involved with each position in his book *Lacan and the Concept of the Real*. Relation of the Real to psychopathology (such as schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorder, bipolar, obsessive neurosis, hysteria) is a direction for further research for myself, which is connected to the support and counseling work that I do. Regardless of the character of psychic disorder, as I've noticed, bringing the subject to lucid openness by giving attention to anything that arises in the interaction, has immediate beneficial and lasting effect.

overcoming afflictive limitations have to be varied and individually selected. Engaging in this practice I encountered characteristic features of all three subjective positions within myself. With the vipassanā method at the core, continuously relating to material sense-faculties of the body, I followed the approach of 'just being'. It goes as follows: if there is no afflictive tendency present, just being in the body is effortless. If there is suffering present, skillful means are to be applied. When meditation is sufficiently developed as per Yi Jin Jing principles, immersing the knowing quality in the body is sufficient[139] to clearly understand suffering and thereby let it go. If it isn't yet developed thus far movement arts are to be applied.

Martial arts are conducive to countering afflictions pertaining to anger. Since anger arises in conjunction with rivalry and possessiveness, characteristic of self-centered narcissistic clinging, located at the core of appropriating consciousness and a first egoic identification during the mirror stage, it is countered by thorough, total and intense psychophysical engagement. Strenuous practices of Shaolin gongfu and Shotokan karate are designed to burn out egoic attachments and delusions, fostering necessary discipline, perseverance and concentration. Respect and comradeship, characteristic of these arts, help to develop ethical, as opposed to competitive, relationships with others. By nourishing natural idiosyncratic inclinations, Shaolin gongfu helps to bring out wholesome qualities in the subject. By cutting through resistances and polishing the form to perfection, Shotokan karate fosters indestructibility and independence (being unsustained by anything in the world[140]) in the subject.

A parkour practice develops the Real body, thereby countering the egoic delusion of permanence, delimiting self-image and doubts in regards of one's capabilities. Practicing parkour, one develops clear comprehension regarding the present moment situation and

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[139] Oversimplification 'immersing mindfulness in the body', in fact, refers to applying mindfulness (Pāli: sati) and clear comprehension (Pāli: sampajañña) to mental-physical phenomena, which in turn gives rise to wisdom (Pāli: panna) in regards to how these phenomena are (Chah 2007b, 54). Wisdom (Skt: prajna), as per Mahayana, is formally defined as 'the discriminative awareness of the essence, distinctions, particular and general characteristics, and advantages and disadvantages of any object within one's own perceptual range, at the conclusion of which doubts are removed, thereby pertaining to the true insight into emptiness of all phenomena (Padmasabhava 2006, 460).

[140] Maha-satipatthana Sutta: The Great Frames of Reference translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.22.0.than.html.

field of action. Moreover, one develops altruistic conduct, following the motto of hébertism ('being strong to be useful') thereby exerting a generous effort. Faced with bare obstacles of the environment, the subject develops antifragility – the ability to gain from suffering and challenges. Learning to gradually approach risks, one develops discriminative awareness. Having cleared hindrances of delusion and doubt, one is in touch with the reality of oneself, which gives rise to benevolent jouissance.

Swimming is conducive to patient endurance, which is defined by the Buddha as the supreme incinerator of defilements.[141] Entrustment and release acquired through positive buoyancy and correct effortless technique are helpful in developing equanimity of insight (Pāli: upekkha vipassanā)[142] in the situation of a lesser gravity impact.

Movement improvisation introduces general guidelines for any type of movement practice, which are always already embedded yet not emphasised in the aforementioned arts. By accessing psychophysical intensities at hand and unraveling them through suitable movements, a practitioner unbinds affective clots of the acquired subjectivity, thereby preparing the body for change qua immersion of mindfulness during deep absorptions. It is important not to indulge in movement itself, following sensual and ecstatic impulses, and not follow the path of 'physical proliferation' as those take energy away from resolving the symptom, namely egoic identification with pertaining subjective positions.

Movement skills of relating to oneself, space and other contribute to abiding peacefully in the space of the psyche. Obstacles in the form of defilements and states deeply saturated with negativity may arise in the psychic space. A practitioner of meditation skilful in movement can choose many avenues of dealing with those obstacles. This internal mobility brings the subject closer to knowing things and oneself directly.

The direct knowing of satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā can be thus defined as *proper understanding* during the embodied experience of interaction with inner and outer

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[141] Ajahn Jayasaro refers to ovāda pāṭimokkha quoting the Buddha in this article: https://www.amaravati.org/a-dhamma-article-by-ajahn-jayasaro-letting-go-within-action/.

[142] Venerable Jotinanda elaborated on this concept in an oral communication, which occurred during a vipassanā retreat on 31 December 2017. He explained that as insight into characteristics of reality gains sufficient momentum, as if a film put on a fast forward, suffering loses its characteristic of bearable and unbearable and starts to be evenly perceived with equanimity.

phenomena either in movement or in stillness. This direct embodied knowing is what Venerable Ajahn Chah of the Thai Forest tradition called 'the taste of freedom'.[143]

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For the account of the internal arts practice, which embraces skillful means of movement arts with goals of the insight practice, I recommend now referring to the creative work *Samma Patipada*.

[143] 'One who studies and doesn't practice is like a ladle in a soup pot. It is in the pot every day, but it doesn't know the flavor of the soup. If you do not practice, even if you study till the day you die, you'll never know the taste of freedom!' (Chah 2007, 88).

Conclusion

The Noble Eightfold Path was nominated as a method for this interdisciplinary research. It was justified on the grounds of the synergistic quality of factors of the Path. It was demonstrated that these factors form a dynamic whole, whereby development of each factor inadvertently affects other factors. In another sense, these factors make a loop, which originates and terminates with *proper understanding* or direct knowing of the way of things. It was argued that method, which is designed for direct unmediated knowing of the way things are, is most suitable for this research on embodiment in a twofold way. Firstly, it allows a working of different disciplines in relation to each other via a common purpose of liberation from suffering. Secondly, it reconciles engagement with broad fields of knowledge, such as theory of the subject, establishments of mindfulness and movement arts, with intricate subtle practical details pertaining to each discipline.

One aspect of *proper understanding*, which wasn't explicitly mentioned in the thesis main body, is recognition that there's mother and father to anyone.[144] I consider this recognition to be fundamental and propose that the intercultural subject in a postcolonial cosmopolitan world should be approached not as a conduit of peculiar cultural forces, but as the subject of familial structural dynamics. That is, arising into being qua (m)other's desire and conditioning of the law, generally represented as a function of a parent's or libidinal-linguistic forces, which are present in every socio-cultural milieu. Any subject comes into being through identification with the above 'primordial principles'.

Another aspect of *proper understanding* is recognition that the situation, at which the subject arrives qua that identification and which is albeit necessary and unavoidable, is yet fundamentally dissatisfactory. It is dissatisfactory due to delusion (i.e. not seeing things as they are) at the core of the subject's arising into being via desire and speech.

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[144] In the discourse to Cunda the silversmith, the Buddha speaks on proper understanding: 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits and results of good and bad actions. There is this world and the next world. *There is mother and father* [Italicised by the candidate]. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are brahmans and contemplatives who, faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves.' This is how one is made pure in three ways by mental action.' – Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta: To Cunda the Silversmith, Aṅguttara Nikāya, 10.176, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.176.than.html#mind.

In chapter one, I showed the role of the Real in the development of subjectivity: to ward off the jouissance of dispersed psychophysical intensities and stabilise the polymorphously chaotic flux of sensations an imaginary unity in the specular image is grasped jubilantly via identification. However, this acquired identity, the blueprint of the ego, is inextricably tied up with desire of the other, whomever that primary caregiver may be, male or female, and who's love it is directed to meet. Hence, stability becomes dependent on the (m)other's desire. This is attachment, which is mutual between a nascent subject and the (m)other.

A situation whereby the subject's energetic unity wards off suffering of fragmentation, qua dependence on the image created for the other, is known in a Lacanian framework as the 'imbroglio of primary narcissism'. From the Buddhist standpoint, basic sanity, or vidya, the knowing quality always present in the open space, becomes entangled by the ties of dependency, mistakenly believing that without self-image, which is designed to be desired by the (m)other, the subject is incapable of sustaining one's existence. This is the beginning of duality of self and other. Characteristic features of this duality are possessiveness regarding the object of desire, rivalry with and aggression towards those others with whom the object is shared: the Oedipus complex.

Hence, functions of the father, whomever it may be, his name and prohibition on sensory gratification through attachment to the (m)other, arises to structure the subject independently from the imaginary narcissistic unity. The father's law, by nominating a (m)other's desire, frees the subject from the narcissistic imbroglio; yet liberation from the Imaginary is implicated by alienation in the Symbolic. What stands between the subject and knowing things as they are is the language, or, more accurately, the unconscious, structured like the language.

I showed how the subject, driven by the unconscious desire, which belongs to someone else in a metonymic displacement of signifiers, assails in wandering through the realm of desire, which, paraphrasing a Buddhist cosmological context, represents a commonplace neurotic state of human beings who are unaware of the implications of the familial structural dynamics they were born into. Unaware and entangled in narcissistic identification and conceptual proliferation, the subject's condition is that of ignorance –

avidya – an overshadowing of a lucid openness characteristic of the knowing quality with mental formations, which conditions consciousness in repetition of afflictive habits, causing suffering.

A situation therefrom is described by the cycle of Dependent Origination. Consciousness, which retains seeds of misguided perception of stability regarding that which is inherently unstable (the Real), conditions 'name and form', which are further classified as the five psychophysical aggregates.

It was shown that suffering is 'implicit yet unassimilable' in the five aggregates due to a mistaken perception of stability in their regard. The Real has been located within the aggregates as impermanence, dissatisfactoriness and selflessness of all phenomena pertaining to the self. The eruption of a contingent traumatic event in the fabric of subjective reality has been rendered dependent on this reality. As such, the influx of energetic intensities, which shatters and subverts the self is the symptom. Yet the symptom does not relate to intensities, but to the self, in a sense that the self 'covers the hole within the whole' via delusion, which lays as its foundation. It has been shown that the symptom contains a positive dimension of the impetus for insight. The shocking quality of encounter with the Real as an acute perception of materiality and mortality, which are unassimilable qua language, arouses 'healthy panic' in the subject.

'Healthy panic', a term coined by Chögyam Trungpa, is rendered here as an awakening of the sense of danger inherent to *proper understanding*. The perspective of endlessly wandering through samsaric realms and experiencing the suffering of shock and disillusionment arouses a sense of urgency and a wise desire to abandon delusion at the core of self-existence. From here on the subject's sole intent is to know things as they are, which is to rediscover inherent instability, flows of energetic intensities, which were warded off by the advent of the Imaginary-Symbolic self. In relation to the self, intensities of the Real are the 'unknown' (i.e. that, which resists symbolization).

In chapter two, I provided an account of the basic practices that access the Real by means of the Symbolic. Through structural guidelines and sets of proper attitudes, satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā enables the practitioner to understand body, feelings, consciousness

and phenomena for themselves. The process of insight is the investigation of intensities pertaining to the above four groups of objects, penetrating deeply with the knowing quality into their symptomatic clots, and thereby discovering absence of any inherent existence in their regard.

I proposed the Subject of Emptiness to signify a tendency to move from dissatisfactory entanglements of desiring identification towards a liberating serenity of insight and to eventually reach final realisation. Given that the subject is empty of inherent existence, yet unaware of it due to ignorance, it is the multiplicity of desires, drives, beliefs, and afflictive habits that determine subjective positions in the world. According to a Lacanian diagnostic scheme, there are three fundamental subjective positions: neurotic, psychotic and perverted. All three pertain to a certain disposition of forces between familial structural dynamics and the Real.

For the neurotic, facts about the Real, or things in their 'dumb reality', are repressed, which causes a build-up of fantasies that withhold affects of repressed signifiers, thereby destroying the possibility of benevolent jouissance. For the psychotic, 'things as they are' are foreclosed and denied symbolisation, which leaves a psychotic subject trapped in the imbroglio of primary narcissism. Having denied alienation in language, a psychotic's only refuge from the imagos of fragmentation is a delusional metaphor – fermentation of an idiosyncratic cosmology whereby the Symbolic is taken for the Real[145]; words and meaning possess unfathomable qualities as if things in themselves.

In perverted subjectivity, the Real is disavowed (i.e. the Symbolic lacks legitimacy to treat the Real). I mentioned in chapter one how 'perversions of view' (seeing impermanent as permanent, stressful as pleasant, not-self as self, and unattractive as attractive) are related to perverted subjectivity in terms of forever denying potency of the practice of insight in regard to the aforementioned displeasing characteristics of reality. In Lacanian terms, this is due to the Symbolic order have not been properly installed, since although the father's prohibition was sufficiently strong to alienate the subject from the (m)other's desire, it wasn't enough to separate a perverted subject from the dualistic imbroglio within the

[145] 'The schizophrenic does not defend himself or herself from the real by language, because for him or her, the symbolic is real.' (Miller 2002)

unnamable (m)other's demand to be her 'imaginary phallus'. The latter enables the perverted subject to continuously identify oneself as the (m)other's object of desire. I suggested that by means of 'fusing the mind with Dhamma' and grounding mindfulness in the materiality of the body, perverted tendency can be if not overcome, but at least suspended, till the subject consciously imprints upon oneself to cease placing one's raison d'etre into someone else's unconscious tendencies.

Subjective positions are examples of an unsuccessful revolt against dissatisfactory entrapment within the symbolic matrix of the world, namely Samsaric existence. As such, psychotic 'attempts' to stay closer to the 'source' (unsymbolised energetic intensities), deny the possibility of learning to name things without ascribing imaginary qualities to them. Yet, that lack of capacity for 'objective' nomination hinders any possibility of insight because things and oneself are continuously being endowed with enigmatic values as the very ground of 'sanity' for the psychotic. The neurotic pushes painful facts of impermanence and dissatisfactoriness outside of consciousness whenever they arise, instead breeding fantasies, self-descriptive stories and conceptual proliferation on the basis of the affects, separated from signifiers of those facts. Traversing fantasy and insight meditation are therefore beneficent for disentangling the neurotic position. The pervert is constantly escaping authority of language by identifying oneself with the (m)other's cause of desire, which makes liberation a forever-unattainable phantasm.

The Subject of Emptiness has been nominated to exemplify the inherent lack of existence within the attitudes of the above positions in particular and in the I-making 'with its perceptions and intellect' in general. Subjective positions arise through the cause and effect relationship within familial structural dynamics and depend upon persisting afflictive tendencies known as the five hindrances. A human being can be deluded in a variety of ways, yet none of those ways determines who one is. All positions are 'not-self' (i.e. they yield to the sincere practice of the Path and eventually disappear: that is the Subject of Emptiness).

It has been demonstrated how by placing the knowing quality onto four establishments of mindfulness, the subject gains insight regarding the 'unknown', namely the dependent nature of arising mental-physical phenomena, and a lack of inherent existence within these phenomena and suffering, which arises qua misunderstanding these

phenomena for what they are: lacking any persistent enduring self. Thereby, the first research questions have been answered, which can be summarised as follows.

The Real is the foundational experience of encountering materiality, mortality and fragmentation, which initiates development of the self qua identification with the specular image and the other of language. At the same time the Real, qua shattering traumatic events, is the initiator of dis-identification and insight, which lead to realisation of selflessness. It correlates with the Buddha Dhamma qua experience of suffering, which it represents. In such a way the Path of the Buddha is that of understanding the Real of suffering as the symptom, abandoning its cause, which is a mistaken perception of the self in name and form, and developing the praxis, which leads to benevolent embodiment and abiding in the Real pertaining to the way things are. The subject experiences the Real psychophysically by seeing the five aggregates for what they are in continuous application of the knowing quality 'to the extent of abandoning attachment and aversion towards the world'.

Further, rediscovering stability in the Real (i.e. developing energetic equipoise, non-reliant on the imaginary unity of the ideal ego and conceptual knowledge) is withstanding the arising and passing away of phenomena in the body and mind held up by the knowing quality only, which is the basic principle of taijiquan. If emptiness is defined as non-affirming negation, which doesn't imply anything in place of what's being negated,[146] precisely what happens in that 'place' is the domain of spiritual cultivation. It has been shown how, by fostering wholesome attitudes towards phenomena arising in the mind, and by installing correct alignments in the body, the taijiquan practitioner creates beneficial conditions for spiritual cultivation, which transforms the body from that of the ego body to the Real body. It was shown how unconscious tendencies of the ego body are made manifest through the application of taijiquan principles. In the standing-cultivation practice, form and pushing hands, afflictive predispositions and self-grasping tend to distort bodily alignment, thus blocking the flow of energy and rendering correct application of the technique ineffective.

[146] John Powers writes in personal correspondence, 3rd May 2019: 'In Indic Madhyamaka texts and in most Tibetan traditions, emptiness is a "nonaffirming negation" (med dgag), meaning that it's a mere denial of something mistakenly superimposed on phenomena by cognition, i.e., inherent existence. The negation doesn't imply anything in place of what's being denied. The doctrine of emptiness denies that there's such a thing and that minds are mistaken in believing in the appearances of inherent existence.'

In chapter three, it has been shown how the correct flow of energy in the body and development of internal structures known as huang and sinew channels (as per the principles of the sinew changing classic) contributes to advancement in martial and spiritual disciplines alike. Practices of insight meditation and taijiquan duly develop recognition, understanding and abandonment of egoic self-grasping, which clogs up the subtle body with toxic 'vibrational information', thereby mortifying it and delimiting its spontaneous energetic expression in tune with intention.

Correct application of taijiquan principles initiates 'burning out' of the ego body and promotes release of tensions accumulated due to internalisation of paternal prohibitions, guilt from breaking those prohibitions and fear of the unknown, which arises in the place previously occupied by prohibiting neurotic signifiers and adjacent affects. Fear of the unknown arises due to latent afflictive tendencies, which have been defended against qua the faculty of the super ego. As it has been shown in chapter one, the latent tendencies of primary narcissism, possessiveness and aggressive rivalry, are foundational defilements, recognised by psychoanalytic theory and the Buddha Dhamma alike. Insight meditation and taijiquan follow further beyond the egoic mortification to the root conditioning of this 'fathom-long body', working directly at purifying it from the five hindrances, which, as shown in chapter two, are the locus of drives pertaining to psychopathology and suffering.

Abandonment of the aforementioned afflictive tendencies leads to a benevolent experience of the Real, which I have demonstrated through practices of samādhi and jhāna. It is here that the duality of both experiencer and experience falls away. The subject's mind, according to Visuddhimagga, unifies in samādhi by means of mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment, and the defining of the four elements. I outlined the Real as the register of human experience, pointing to facts of materiality and mortality, and formulated my next research question as a hypothesis that the subject's encounter with the above facts, can be a liberating insight.

Hence, unification of the mind in samādhi is the answer to the next research question, namely, how can contingent intensities associated with the Real, be alleviated, integrated and embodied, thus transforming the subject? Beneficent and transformational effects of absorptions are far-reaching. Deep peacefulness, which is cultivated in this experience of no-

body, energises the mind by freeing the subject from the habitual perception of the ego-body overwritten with signifiers, and opens blocked energetic channels. As stated in the Visudhimagga, absorptions are entered not only through the recollection of peace as per tranquility of a samatha practice, but also through the recollection of otherwise upsetting facts of mortality and loathsomeness.

As mentioned in chapter two, the analytic breaking down of the body on four elements and their adjacent sensory manifestations brings the practitioner to 'equanimity of insight', whereby the arising of suffering in the body is no longer experienced from a dualistic standpoint of bearable and unbearable. This in turn unifies the mind in samādhi. It has been suggested that jouissance of the mystic in Lacan's formulation corresponds to absorptions in that it is experience, which exceeds language, yet not exempt from it, since its attainment is grounded in the form of intentional practice, approachable through technique defined in symbolic terms. The latter makes it a conditioned state and therefore unconducive to final liberation.

Hence, jhāna in and of itself is not the fruition of the Path. I demonstrated in chapter three that delusion is not only that, which the subject takes for permanent existence on the level of the symbolic and the imaginary self. It is also an 'imperceptible perception of [a] stable external world' on the level of storehouse consciousness, which is rooted in material sense-faculties. The latter refers to consciousness, which upon entering a womb appropriates selfless somatic processes – intensities of the unsymbolised Real – as its foundation. Therefore, revulsion of the base of storehouse consciousness by *proper understanding* and as developed through the practice of insight – not only regarding characteristics of reality pertaining to the self, but also to others and environment – is the fruition of the Path.

The above and other practical guidelines throughout the thesis have been reflective of dualistic perceptions, which separate experiencer from the experienced, self from other and space. Rendering this argument, I have been aware of a situation of separateness and reification, which persists in the unenlightened mind. Since a dualistic perception is a common working ground for human individuals on the path of spiritual cultivation, it wouldn't make sense for me to develop the argument in other terms. Moreover, I argue that

taking this unenlightened situation of dualistic perception as the base is crucial in being able to develop and apply skillful means, necessary for liberation. Being engrossed in this situation, experiencing suffering, amounts to the first noble truth: suffering must be understood. This builds up energies, necessary for revulsion of the base. Compassion and wisdom arise precisely from this situation.

I approached development of the unity of skillful means and discriminative awareness through a movement arts practice, departing from the situation of suffering. Conceptual knowledge regarding Buddhism is inadequate to understand suffering; it must be known in the body and mind. In the realm of desire, the dualistic situation of enthralment with appearances of phenomena is coupled with craving for uninterrupted existence in pleasurable feelings. The death instinct, pertaining to craving for non-existence, which I summarised in tendencies of the 'negative' Real, further complicates ubiquity of suffering. There is no lack of overwhelming experiences in bodies and minds. Therefore, I proposed that movement arts can be applied to not only work directly with gross causes of suffering, but also to gain direct non-conceptual knowledge of body, feelings, consciousness and phenomena.

In such a way, it has been shown that martial arts are an excellent means of developing the discipline, perseverance and concentration that is necessary to counter afflictive tendencies of aggressiveness and self-grasping. Rigorous training methods of Shotokan karate and Shaolin gongfu wear out and cut through the above defilements. It has been shown how multifarious methods of Shaolin gonfu foster peculiar character traits of practitioners, thereby bringing to fruition innate wholesome tendencies. So, too, how direct and precise Shotokan karate methods penetrate to the unhindered core of the subject, making the body readily permeable with the knowing quality. The latter allows for an abandonment of techniques and methods and thus to act spontaneously, yet efficiently, in agreement with any given situation.

The humane ethics of parkour have been shown to develop generosity in applying one's effort in order to cultivate strength for the sake of helping others. Through the example of parkour's history, it has been shown that altruistic motifs were generative driving forces of the founders and followers of this art. Due to the Hébertism motto of 'being strong to be

useful', a parkour practice enables a nourishing of the Real body by means of interacting with the environment without sustaining injuries. Practice with the intent of empowering oneself for an others' sake is imbued with antifragility – gaining insight from exposure to challenges, risks and unmediated impacts.

I have demonstrated that parkour as an exposure to the materiality of existence duly contributes to knowing things and oneself directly, without the intermediary of conceptual knowledge, which belongs to the Symbolic order and without meaning-making activity of the Imaginary. Direct lived experience of interaction with space and obstacles, which involves potentially mortal danger, effectively puts rivalrous and goal-seeking cravings to a halt. Exposure to spaciousness and the freedom to move unshackled by fear enables jouissance (which is generally barred by neurotic signifiers in a subject identified with the ego body) to circulate abundantly, thereby releasing the unconscious energy necessary to know suffering: bearing through the unbearable. The latter is also a characteristic of a developed vipassanā practice, whereby an 'equanimity of insight' arises that erases frontiers between the bearable and unbearable, which is peculiar to dualism of an acquired consciousness.

Swimming has been demonstrated as a 'soft' way of approaching the above stage in development of insight. Rendered as the art pertaining to rediscovering the Real via the criteria of bare endurance, abandonment of technique and full exertion, swimming is a way of cultivating one of the most crucial perfections (Pāli: pāramī): patience, 'supreme incinerator of defilements'. The experience of swimming is comparable to an insight practice: a practitioner maintains 'positive buoyancy' qua continuous mindfulness, exerts effort necessary to confront the five hindrances and cultivates factors of enlightenment in order not to drown in the influx of defilements, or entrusts oneself to surrender to the flow of psychophysical intensities qua direct *proper understanding* that all phenomena are without self, impermanent and unsatisfactory. As cessation of the enthralment with appearances of phenomena is achieved, and nothing else is being substituted, a spiritual cultivation begins.

I have shown how knowing the kinetic aspects of psychophysical intensities contributes to both standing and sitting practices of spiritual cultivation in the example of movement improvisation. The latter summarises all the movement arts addressed in the thesis via the faculty of 'dialectising desire' in the subject. It has been demonstrated that an

encounter with the Real, whether it is yet to happen or has already happened and caused dissonance to acquired subjectivity, is premeditated by a certain stagnation. Whether it is a neurotic body bound up with immobilising signifiers of lack or a perception of stability of the external world at the base of appropriating consciousness, what is at stake is not seeing and not experiencing reality directly in accordance with its characteristics.

Hence, practices of movement, which expose the subject to unmediated reality by means of their methods, in union with discriminative awareness (i.e. clearly discerning essential elements in the cloud of experience), are applied to develop *proper understanding*. Essential elements discovered practically are causes of suffering, such as repressed afflictive tendencies, unprocessed shock from exposure to materiality and mortality, self-grasping and drives, pertaining to the 'negative' Real, etc. An example of movement improvisation shows how affects of suppressed signifiers in a neurotic subject can be correctly unravelled and released, thus freeing the unconscious energy necessary for direct knowing. Or, in other words, bringing energy into its original state of lucid openness.

In such a way, I have shown how movement arts can be applied as skillful means on the Path. Application of movement arts has answered the final research question: 'How can the subject not only reclaim the freedom of movement and mental-bodily ease, but develop supernormal psychophysical abilities, happiness, peacefulness and bliss?' There are advanced stages of the latter, which are still beyond my comprehension. This research has merely exposed foundational methods of approaching the way of practice, which, if cultivated fully, leads to a complete cessation of suffering. As for myself, the trauma of loss, which propelled this disquisition, has been effectively resolved.

What can I say about the irretrievable loss of my parents now? It was predicated to lose them precisely by the very fact of being born into the world, having acquired the self and become split in a dualistic perception between so many forces. Inclusive of these forces are ignorance about the dependent state of things, innate defilements of self-identification and lack of skill in mindfulness. Stable withstanding in the world, unsustained by anything, could not be developed otherwise. Or…

Is it this dream I chose to dream?

As if in another life. Mother's warmth, her reassuring embrace, sense of safety, meaning and undeserved love. Yet a lurking sense of dissatisfaction, as if I've always already done something wrong just by being born. Father's shadow, his hovering presence, saturated with anger, ready to burst out, to cut off the comforting ties. Yet such lucidity, kindness, deep benevolent provision, securing future happiness and sanity in momentary, necessary, ruthlessness. They are the world.

When he collapsed, I was just beginning to accept and rejoice in the savage beauty of the way things are. His call of inspiration was pulling me out of her unclear, latently punishing demands for love and life. Yet he collapsed. And prematurely I had to become him. From there on I was to figure it all out for myself.

Intensity of suffering swept me off my feet, spun me in a whirlpool of disease, depression and dispassion, having closed access to a category of 'normal' in terms of conventional reality. Yet unbearable experience of seeing him irreparably shattered has also revealed something else. Gentle glittering of sunrays on the leaves of blackcurrant bushes just outside the verandah of our house, so incomparably luminous, that it hurts to look. Similarly, the oscillation of images and meaning making processes pertaining to how gravely unjust what happened was, blinded the mind's eye, and so, eventually, having looked at them, I turned away. Having turned away slowly, not abruptly, not rejecting, I was to discover an outrageous fact: they are empty.

So what is this dream that I've been dreaming?

Recoiled pleasantly, I've sharpened the gaze. If thoughts and images, representing the world, are not real, then how different am I?

What is real?

Collecting glimpses of knowledge here and there – nonfiction literature, existentialist philosophy, spirituality – I could not find a viable source of trustworthy information. So I've turned to something he taught me to love: movement.

Applying the insight of emptiness to movement patterns, fascinated, enthusiastic and energised, I soon discovered that all of them are attainable as soon as the doubt in oneself is

removed. As soon as any preconceived idea of what's doable is gone, and the self-delimiting body image is suspended; as soon as the very idea of what I am is challenged with emptiness, the path of action is here to walk. So there I went, 'emptying' painful saṅkhāras with action. Not using action to run away, but having action originated from the swarm of disease, depression and dispassion. Lucky me, that the dung of suffering was so fertile. It took me across half the planet, training, jumping, dancing, loving, learning, being friends, performing, creating, living fully to the max. The dream became that of movement, no longer dreamt, but lived.

He left first. Having fallen asleep in front of the TV, his heart burst, while his son was jumping off buildings in Washington DC, so alive and free, having no limits, but only obstacles in his mind to overcome.

She left four years later, in a dream on new year's night, poisoned by carbon dioxide from a newly built furnace, while her son, who pulled out at the last moment from going to see her, typed vehemently on a keyboard, in a friend's empty apartment, a letter to the girl he loved.

Having never seen them grow old, having never held their hands on their deathbed, I lost them both, abruptly, accidentally, to dreams. From there on, a hallucinatory metamorphosis, characteristic of the dream language of the unconscious, has been writing up reality. Not bothered much to decipher it, I've been crossing countries and continents as if being chased by a horde of wild buffalos. I continued to love, jump, dance, create and live, even fuller, till the 'seeds' unattended to before, ripened from deep within. To answer the question, posed by the enigma of this shattering contingency: what is real?

This is how I found myself first in the meditation hall in the outskirts of Melaka, second in the forest of Wat Nong Pah Pong and third in the Buddha Bodhivana monastery. Yet this Path marks a fading of the dream, which was chosen for me by the unseen flows of forces and accepted for the lack of a better alternative. From here on there is the Path. The Path is that of surrender, yet not capitulation. The Path is that of neutralising forces of energetic intensities, yet without abandoning vitality. The Path is a lucid dreamless gaze, inspired, yet serene. It is a beautiful totality of skillful being, available here and now.

To my parents: if we are to meet again in the world, may there be wisdom, compassion and unconditional love. As of now, I see you in dreams.

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The creative work *The Dream* is to be watched now.

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Appendix A – Theoretical context

The theoretical context of this research is situated within the framework of Lacan's four discourses.[147] Firstly, being the master's discourse, it is represented by the function of an undisputable narrative, which isn't concerned with the intricacies of how things work. It deals with the gross skeleton of knowledge derived from praxis and is formalised throughout the lineages of Buddhism and psychoanalysis. Its main purpose is that of bringing results (in the form of liberation from suffering) without concern for idiosyncrasies, which the subject holds on to. It demands unarguable obedience and respect, alienation in language and giving up attachment.

I begin by treating Lacan as the nonsensical master signifier and his rereading of Freud – the translated transcripts of his Seminars and the *Écrits* – where writing easily merges with speech, undoubtedly outflowing as the hysteric's discourse. In both instances, direct formulations are like a momentary crystallisation of otherwise water-like narrative. Hence drawing from Lacan is to 'mystify'[148] the exposition made by authors and analysts, which have followed. Among them are Eyers, Fink, Žižek and Moncayo. Why them? As Žižek proposed, it is by splitting himself from the International Psychoanalytical Association that Lacan kept Freudian teaching alive. Fifty years later it is up to us to do the same with Lacan (Zizek 2007,118/2252). As such, I bring attention to practitioners who find their original way through a contemporary situation, namely that of a cosmopolitan, post-colonial world

[147] Following Fink's exposition of the four discourses in *The Lacanian Subject*, I employ the scheme of the interrelationship between the master signifier, the split subject of the unconscious, the Other of language and the object cause of desire. In the master's discourse the 'nonsensical' signifier must be blindly obeyed (Fink 1997, 131), which hides the fact that the master is also the split subject of the unconscious. Suppositionally, the Buddha overcame that split completely, which renders his discourse unobjectifiable. The latter puts a practitioner (the subject alienated in language) in the position of embodying knowledge, expounded by the Buddha by means of the Path praxis. The fruit of the praxis thereby generates surplus enjoyment in the form of transcending all suffering and dwelling in line with the way things are, represented in this schema by the object cause of desire properly understood as 'nothing but confusion.' (Žižek 2007, 1080/2252)

[148] Here 'to mystify' refers to mist and mystical (i.e. something insubstantial) as put by Moncayo. Mystical experience, he continues, destroys identity in the sense that it destroys the illusory or imaginary ego-identifications. It is a necessary symbolic death that dialectically affirms a larger and more ultimate form of psychical identity beyond ego-identifications (Safran 2003, 338/446). Hence to mystify is to be aware of the larger container, the Symbolic order, which, as brilliantly employed by Lacan, embraces and diffuses individual opinions.

of information, where the subject has no other ground apart from being understood for what one is. Their ways are representative of skillful navigating of the four discourses.

- Psychoanalyst Bruce Fink, a student of Lacan's successor Jacques-Alain Miller, represents a transmission of Lacan's teaching to American psychoanalytic practitioners. His books, translations of the Seminar and *Écrits,* have been affirmative and authoritative sources to draw classic Lacanian understanding from. Here Fink and Lacan play a dual part on both sides of the master's and the analyst's discourses. As such, the analyst's discourse is not concerned with power, but one-pointedly drives the subject on the pass of his or her jouissance (Fink 1997, 146). The analyst's discourse isn't concerned with theory or rationally formalised knowledge, but with the symptom, namely multifarious signifiers of suffering. The task of this discourse is to distill the master signifiers of suffering from the rest of the narrative produced by the subject and correlate them with other fields of knowledge, thus bringing the subject where his or her unconscious was (Fink 1997, 135-136). In the course of this research the analyst's discourse nuances the master narratives of canonical Buddhist and psychoanalytic understanding by relating them to personal experience of suffering and such other fields of knowledge as movement arts. The latter is aimed at revealing a 'new knowledge' at the place of the split subject excluded by traditional practices of psychoanalysis and Buddhism. I believe that this knowledge is relevant to a contemporary situation as it introduces skilful means of movement arts in application to the problem of suffering, which allows the subject to pursue one's jouissance without succumbing to the dictum of the master narratives.

- As the representative of the university (academy) discourse, yet without being at the service of the ultimate authority of systematic knowledge (Fink 1997, 132), professor Tom Eyers renders the concept of the Real, emphasising its centrality throughout the entire corpus of Lacan's work. His book *Lacan and the concept of the Real,* as put by Žižek, does the impossible, namely it demonstrates genesis, transformation as well as clinical and philosophical implications of the Real as a concept. Eyer's research into Lacanian materialism (Eyers, 2011) can be approached as the important bridge between Lacanian teaching and Buddhism. The materiality of a signifier is that which can be interesting to compare with the Yogācāric conception of karmic seeds in the flow of storehouse

consciousness. However, the latter is not a project of current research. Importantly, I agree with Eyers' statement that Lacan's work is mistakenly periodised as placing emphasis on the Imaginary in early Lacan, which shifts to the Symbolic and finally to the Real by the end of his seminar. Eyers shows how the Real concerns Freud's exegesis, and how it is taken and developed by Lacan as the definitive limit of psychoanalytic praxis through his teaching career (Eyers 2012, 85).

- Philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek inserts Lacan's teachings into the tapestry of contemporary power discourses, such as politics, ideology, capitalism, pop-culture and the Western academy, adding the unavoidable touch of dialectic materialism. In addition, his outlook, that of an Eastern European thinker, makes that which I call the 'negative' Real accessible to understanding as a very much lived experience. It is tenacity and ruthlessness, confusion and despair of the post-Soviet space that inspire due urgency in the matter of unravelling per factum what is at stake for sanity, individual freedom and the generation of knowledge, devoid of the quality of any power instrument. In this way, Žižek inherits Lacan's way of articulation, that which operates by drawing from resources of all the four discourses. I believe that such a way is inextricably linked with an ability to identify suffering in order to untangle it – wise reflection (Pāli: yoniso manasikara).[149]

- Raul Moncayo is an American Lacanian analyst, who takes master's teaching to novel grounds, boldly bridging it with Zen Buddhism and the Jewish Kabbalah. There is no other extensive systematic attempt existing at present to 'marry' these traditions. Moncayo's exposition of two practices is not devoid of visible reification of fundamental concepts such as no-self and emptiness. However, this does not render his argument mistaken, since, even though applying ontological categories of 'true' and 'real', Moncayo speaks of phenomena, which occur in the clinical field of psychoanalysis, and does not claim statements pertaining to the 'way things are'. I believe that his endeavour is important for the development of non-sectarian spiritual practices, which treat direct symptoms of suffering via universal methods.

[149] In 'Untangling the Present. The Role of Appropriate Attention' Thanissaro Bhikkhu demonstrates the importance of such a way of approaching phenomena, which doesn't lead to 'a thicket of views' but instead promotes proper understanding and renunciation of causes of suffering, - https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/untangling.html.

Such an endeavour contributes to diminishment in conflict between views and terminologies inherent to two traditions and elucidates the universally applicable way of practice.

Thus, Lacanian teaching, through the former authors, remains not only alive, but gains new directions and unfolds with greater momentum. Further, to access development of Lacan's concepts in relation to his biography, I addressed Elisabeth Roudinesco's *Jacques Lacan. An Outline of a Life and a History of a System of Thoug*ht. Although, as Žižek points out, interpretations are sometimes problematic (Žižek 2007, 2077), this work provides valuable insights into the arts milieu and philosophical discussions contemporary with Lacan, thereby illustrating the climate, which led to evocation and reexamination of Freudian teaching. It was a climate of the 'end of history' in between two world wars, where rise of the dictators, class struggle, upheaval, turmoil and alienation in society gave origin to an immense amount of suffering, unprecedented in human history. Lacan's endeavour to demonstrate fundamental insubstantiality of subjective positions, ideologies and master-narratives, baring unconscious tendencies, which breed them, is indeed remarkable. Without engaging in political debate, Lacan remained true to the clinical field he was applying his interdisciplinary intellectual effort towards, namely, he was remaining true to the task of the alleviation of human suffering. He writes in the *Écrits*:

> 'In the emancipated man of modern society, this splitting[150] reveals, right down to the depths of his being, a neurosis of self-punishment, with the hysterico-hypochondriac symptoms of its functional inhibitions, with the psychasthenic forms of its derealizations of others and of the world, with its social consequences of failure and crime. It is this pitiful victim, this escaped, irresponsible outlaw, who is condemning modern man to the most formidable social hell, whom we meet when he comes to us; it is our daily task to open up to this being of nothingness the way of his meaning in a discreet fraternity – a task for which we are always too inadequate.' (Lacan 1977, 31-32)

[150] Here Lacan refers to splitting between the pleasure principle and the 'death instinct' as well as splitting of the neurotic subject in the conscious and unconscious.

University discourse, as a necessary requirement of this academic research, is represented by the emerging milieu of correlation between Lacanian psychoanalysis and Buddhism. Edited works of author collectives, such as *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: The Unfolding Dialogu*e as well as *Theology after Lacan: Passion for the Real* have been addressed. Important parallels between two traditions made in these books are summarised below.

In the chapter 'Lacan avec le Bouddha', Mario D'Amato makes a summary of historical engagements between psychoanalysis and Buddhism, including a list of references from Lacan's *Écrits*, which demonstrates Lacan's rather sophisticated understanding of Buddhism. D'Amato establishes theoretical points of convergence between traditions. Among them are the doctrine of no-self (i.e. constructedness of what is often taken to be a stable and enduring self-concept) (Davis 2014, 76). The unconscious, with reference to the Yogācāric model of mind centered on the alaya-vijñana, and the practice of meditation, which is supported by Freud's recommendation for analysts to cultivate 'evenly-suspended attention' and the latter's remarks on the similarity between psychoanalysis and mystical practices, aimed to deepen perception and access the id.

A great emphasis in D'Amato's essay is given to language as understood by both traditions. Drawing from his interpretation of Buddhist philosophy in semiotic terms D'Amato demonstrates that the fundamental cause of suffering is some form of conceptual discrimination (Skt: vikalpa), imagination (Skt: parikalpa) and proliferation (Skt: prapañca), in a sense that signs ascribed to fluid impermanent phenomena point to stable referents endowed with essential nature (Davis 2014, 80), which is an antithesis of *proper understanding*. Further, he tentatively bridges Yogācāric theory of the three natures (Skt: trisvabhava), that is imagined, dependent and perfected with the Lacanian model of three psychic registers – the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. He defines this three-nature theory in terms of a progressive refinement of semiosis: one must move from a deluded mode of semiosis, wherein objects posited by language are taken as 'a really existent thing'; towards a mode wherein everything is viewed as a casually dependent flow of signs, as representation only; and ultimately to a perfected mode (being actually the terminus of semiosis), which is realised as a nonconceptual awareness of thusness (Davis 2014, 81). I return to the

comparison of Lacanian and Yogācāric conceptual structures in chapters two and three: 'Mindfulness of Consciousness' and 'Martial arts'.

Further elaborating on Lacanian theory, D'Amato comes to a proposition that the Real, as 'the essential object which isn't an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence' needs not be the latter, but, as per Buddhist understanding, can be regarded as the domain of awakened awareness (Davis 2014, 84).

D'Amato's analysis supports the thesis that Lacan had a deep understanding of Buddhism. Apart from references to Buddhism found by D'Amato in the *Écrits,* there is the entire session in *Buddha's Eyelids – Seminar X* on anxiety, which deserves to be mentioned. In the seminar, Lacan elaborates on his encounter of the tenth century statue of Avalokiteśvara in the Chūgū-ji nunnery in Nara. In touching on the question of desire in Buddhism, Lacan unpacks the variety of the latter doctrinal foundations, such as non-dualism, cessation, reflected nature of experience, Buddha-nature, ultimate realisation and the figure of the bodhisattva. He transmits the Buddhist narrative with precision and ease. He refers to French sinologist Paul Demiéville[151] and Kumarajiva's text *The Lotus of the True Law* in giving an historical account of Avalokiteśvara's 'change of sex'. Further, drawing on witnessing 'the worn-out man praying before the statue', he recalls the 'effusive gaze' with which the man observed the statue long after finishing his prayer. In this encounter, Lacan sees an example of 'the radical mainspring that makes one go from the level of castration to the mirage of the object of desire' (Lacan 2014, 229).

Lacan alludes to Buddhism in a similar fashion to the way he does for a variety of philosophers and writers – drawing conceptual structures from their works to illustrate points he makes regarding clinical situations. This is congruent with Lacan's architecture of the Symbolic, where signifiers can be substituted for each other within the network of signifiers to symbolise unconscious structures, thus bringing the subject on their stead and annihilating signified affects (Lacan 1988, 178). Those structures reflect precise cases in the

[151] Demiéville's 'Buddhism and War' is informative for my research in relation to the military involvement of Chinese and Japanese Buddhists. However, it was not included in this manuscript due to exceeding the word limit. It can be found in the response to the examiner.

clinical field, namely a variety of symptoms of identification that the subject appropriates in order to sustain one's (unenlightened) ways of being. Symptoms of that identification, as will be shown in chapter three, 'Movement Improvisation', apart from being a function of the Symbolic order, are the fundamental cause behind the impossibility of benevolent encounters with the Real.

Lacan's critique of ego-psychology and the theory of the mirror stage, whereby the ego is nothing else but illusion constructed 'by means of imagos borrowed from the other' (Roudinesco 1999, 111) are exemplary of the spirit, which characterised the intellectual climate of France in between two world wars. This spirit is best captured in a 'revelation' of one of Lacan's teachers, philosopher Alexandre Kojève.[152]

> 'One night in 1920, working late in the library in Warsaw, he had a 'revelation' similar to the one Nietzsche had in Sils-Maria. As Kojève was meditating on Eastern and Western culture, he had a vision of Buddha and Descartes confronting one another like "the irony of the cogito" – like nonexistence challenging the ontology of the ego. This was Kojève's first experience of negativity. "I think therefore 'I' am not," was his conclusion.' (Roudinesco 1999, 100)

This shift of emphasis from enlightenment era to 'death of god' germinating in the climate of the 'end of history', as later proclaimed by Kojève, was characteristic of the disavowal of man's sovereign image of oneself as a master in his own house. One step away from this 'negativity' is a highway to annihilationism. I will expand upon this in subchapter on the 'negative' Real.

Further, in the Introduction to *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: The Unfolding Dialogue*, Jeremy D. Safran articulates common grounds between traditions, such as iconoclastic

[152] Russian born Aleksander Kozhevnikov escaped the Bolshevik regime after his stepfather was murdered and he himself was imprisoned. Having studied not only continental philosophy and phenomenology, but also Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese languages, he came to understand Hegel in a way that was both profound and easily accessible to his contemporaries. It is his weekly seminar on Hegel's phenomenology that Lacan attended regularly, thereby gaining philosophical insights for his theories of the subject.

attitudes of both towards prevailing 'regimes of signs'[153]: Brahmanism in India and Catholicism in Europe in favour of awakening from the comforting quilt of ritual and facing the hardships, cruelties and indignities of life. Safran also notes Freud's acceptance of transience of existence, which leads to greater appreciation of life, given that the subject does not recoil against the mourning that is linked to this acceptance (Safran 2003, 29/446), which dovetails with Buddhist understanding of impermanence.

Safran makes vague distinctions between goals of both traditions of practice. He states that the goal of psychoanalysis embodies the Western values of democratic individualism and associates liberation in this tradition with personal freedom. I would argue that this is not the case with Lacanian psychoanalysis, where the theory of the subject excludes the possibility of 'personal freedom', given that the subject's unconscious is structured by the discourse of the Other (i.e. an impersonal narrative, which crosses over individuality) and whereby resolution of the symptom, which amounts to liberation, consists of modifying the subject's relationship with the Real.

While Safran writes that the Buddhist model of liberation emphasises freedom from self-centred craving and as such can be corrective to Western individualism, which is reflected in the psychoanalytic perspective (Safran 2003, 31/446), I argue that in the case of a Lacanian praxis, this is not applicable. In Lacan the logic of dual statements is outgrown by a sophisticated reiteration of the metonymy of the signifier, which supplies us with a multidimensional network of meaning as a support of the subject's desire. In this vein, the subject is to be liberated from a variety of cravings, the first being that of primary narcissism, which is transcended via symbolic law (i.e. the castrating and alienating discourse of the Other, which underpins a child's identification with a (m)other's desire). The second craving is the law of the letter itself (i.e. the register of the Symbolic) which is found lacking as its organising faculty is overthrown by the vehement intrusion of that, which resists symbolisation, namely the Real of the symptom.

[153] 'A regime of signs is much more than a language. Rather, they act as determining and selective agents, as much in the constitution of languages and tools as in their usages and mutual or respective diffusions and communications.' (Deleuze 1987, 63)

Amongst the variety of authors who contribute to *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue*, only Moncayo gives an unfolded account of the correlation between Lacanian theory and the school of Buddhism known as Zen. Indeed, in his exposition these practices are united on the grounds of a common purpose. He nuances Engler's view, contained within the same volume, that prior to being nobody (i.e. no-self) the subject is to be somebody (i.e. the ego). Moncayo explains that such linear development may lead to the construction of no-self as another form of ego-identification – being nobody. For both Lacan and Zen, ego-functions are to be worked through and understood properly as functions of the interdependence of the larger, unconscious, symbolic structure (Safran 2003, 339/446). Moncayo's comparison is crucial for this research and will be employed throughout further chapters of the thesis, which build up on it.

University discourse pertaining to fields of Buddhist studies, history and philosophy is represented by the following authors: Williams (2002, 2008), Waldron (2003), Kasulis (1981), Garfield (2015), Gethin (1998), Griffith (1986), Osto (2004), Lusthaus (2002), Dumoulin (1998), Gregory (2008), Shahar (2008), etc. Apart from the endeavour to expound on this knowledge, which justifies academic's very existence and activity[154] (Fink 1997, 133), their works are evidently marked by a passion for contributing to the cessation of human suffering. This latter forms the foundation of this research. The Buddhist text *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life* by Venerable Praydh Payutto stands separately as it represents an engagement with the master's narrative in a scholarly manner, albeit performed from the ground of the Path praxis in a monastic context, which infuses it with visible confidence and rigor.

It is this field of correlative contributions between traditions of Buddhism and psychoanalysis that I'm hoping to nuance with my theoretical thesis. I consider the premise that both traditions allude to the shift in the mode of self-understanding from that of self-centered identificatory mechanisms to emancipated altruistic attitude towards the world to

[154] Fink, following Lacan, outlines the university discourse as that which provides a sort of legitimation or rationalisation of the master's will, which places a researcher at the service of the master signifiers (Fink 1997, 132). He suggests in the comments that an academic's jouissance is located on the side of alienation in language (Fink 1997, 198). However, if the Buddha Dhamma is taken as the master signifier and liberation from suffering as the goal, a researcher, whose sacrifice contributes to proper understanding of many, does brake away from being subjected to a blind will of the Other of language.

be a sufficient point of departure for my exegesis. Namely, I establish my argument on the tendency for movement from the continuity of desire to the practice of insight, and enriching the latter with the skilful means of movement arts as expounded in this thesis.

Furthermore, the master's discourse pertaining to Buddhism is informed by engagements with the following groups of sources:

1. Canonical texts: Suttas from *the Pali Canon*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu; *Visudhimagga: The Path of Purification*, translated by Bhikkhu Ñánamoli Thera' *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, translated by D.T. Suzuki; *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, translated by Gyurme Dorje;

2. Dhamma talks, books and collections of discourses by monastic teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition from the lineage of Ajhan Mun and Ajahn Chah. I'm very grateful to this tradition for their strict uncompromising adherence to the practice as established by the Buddha. Unmediated exposure to materiality, reliance on others for their nutriment and unequivocal understanding of the Suttas renders this tradition an honesty of genuine renunciants;

3. Books by monastic teachers from Mahasi Sayaddaw's lineage. Mahasi's *Fundamentals of Insight Meditation* and *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā. Insight through Mindfulness*, although not quoted in the thesis, these texts were informative in development of my practice. Venerable Sujiva's: *Tree of Wisdom, The River of No-Return* and *Essentials of Vipassanā Meditation;*

4. Books by Chögyam Trungpa: *Journey without Goal. The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha*, *The Sanity We Are Born With: A Buddhist Approach to Psychology* and *Smile at Fear: Awakening the True Heart of Bravery.* Trungpa's fidelity to Buddha's foundational teachings, such as Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, Five Aggregates, Three Worlds of cyclic existence, combined with their neo-orthodox interpretation as skillful means of engaging a western audience is a powerful and clear way of accessing this master-narrative.

The hysteric's discourse is entwined within the other four discourses of this research in the form of creative passages, written in italics, as well as via videos of movement practices and performances. Being the exact opposite of the university discourse, the hysteric

constantly questions systematic knowledge in service of the master signifier by introjecting something which doesn't directly fit into it. In doing so, the hysteric operates from the standpoint of the object's cause of desire, which means that the motor force of his discourse is the Real (Fink 1997, 134). In such a way, relating to the direct lived experience, reliving it again in moments of written recollections, I appeal to uncertainty, vulnerability and the sublime beauty of life, which continuously escapes conceptualisation.

Eventually equating the hysteric's discourse with that of science (Fink 1997, 133) in its true sense of the praxis, which treats the real by means of the symbolic, Lacan has exemplified the joy of knowledge available to the hysteric. It is in the hysteric that we find to a greater extent what Lacan nominated as *j'ouïs-sens* – pleasure of meaning derived from hearing the interpretation (Lacan 2018b, 58). This enables a transition from the parasitic, unbearable real of bodily intensities stemming from the symptom (suffering) and opens up a possibility of insight, which leads to *proper understanding*. The unconscious knowledge, greatly eroticised in the hysteric, thus questions the undisputable authority of the master signifier. In doing so, it shatters the web of systematic reasoning, which reigns in the stead of blind will (Fink 1997, 132) in the discourse of the university, thereby delivering enlivening yet ordinary solutions to the problem of suffering.

In such a way, the modality of movement arts, encompassing Daoist internal arts, martial arts, parkour, swimming, movement improvisation and a sitting practice, can be classified as the hysteric's discourse in Lacanian terms. It is never fully pleased with ready-made master narratives; neither is it seduced by scholarly precision and cross-referential knowledge of the university narrative, nor by the interpretive analytic endeavour to bring the subject to act upon one's desire. As a motor-force of the Real praxis, the modality of movement arts is informed by empirical knowledge derived from verbal teachings, journeys, engagements with other practitioners and countless hours of practice. Other important literary sources accessed in this research, pertaining to movement arts are:

1. Books by Moshe Feldenkrais. Although not referenced in the main body of the thesis, Moshe's works have been greatly influential on my praxis. It is by following the modality of Awareness through Movement, that I could fine-tune a body shattered by injuries and develop subtlety, listening and kindness in working with human psychophysicality.

Standing at the crossover of various disciplines, from Eastern martial arts to Western linguistics, physics and neuroscience, Moshe's work is foremost grounded in a compassionate endeavour to help human beings to find delight, insight and freedom in their body's movement. It is simplicity of fundamental locomotion, approached with rigor and detail, that renders Feldenkrais work foundational for any type of movement arts.

2. Books by Damo Mitchell on Daoist internal arts. Spanning wide fields of knowledge from traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, to Qigong, Neigong, inner alchemy and internal martial arts such as taijiquan, baguazhang and xingyiquan, Mitchell's work is very well systematised. In such a way it can be seen as a rare example of the hysteric's discourse, which skillfully appropriates the university discourse. In particular, Mitchell's *A Comprehensive Guide to Daoist Nei Gong* has been highly informative of the total system of internal arts practices, which follow from developing the physical body, opening energy channels and proceeding to stages of spiritual cultivation. References to Buddhist and Hindu cultivation systems are employed throughout his work making important interdisciplinary bridges, which contribute to a universal understanding of the practices. This pertains to an impermanence of psychophysicality thus accessed through the medium of the knowledge of change, developed by generations of Daoist and Buddhist masters and passed down as formalised practices. These practices are designed to plant correct causes in the subject, maintaining which, one can arrive at results naturally as per the law of change, without engaging in petrifying processes of subjective destitution.

Appendix B – Glossary of Interchangeable Terms

Appropriating consciousness / storehouse consciousness / subliminal consciousness / life-continuum - ālaya-vijñāna and bhavanga citta as explanatory devices, referring to consciousness, which contains karmic 'seeds'.

Awareness / mindfulness – the quality of being aware of an object.

Antifragility – a quality of gaining from the experience of suffering.

Affect – emotional energy, separated from a repressed signifier.

Emptiness / void / no-self – the way things exist, when understood through the practice of insight.

Energy / effort – the enlightenment factor of diligent self-exertion.

Energy / qi – movement of the vital breath.

Factors of the Path – specific attitudes and practices to be cultivated for liberation.

Human individual / human being / person – generic signifiers for a sentient human subject.

Hindrance / affliction / disease / poison – mental-physical phenomena pertaining to greed, hatred and delusion.

Ignorance/confusion/misrecognition / basic bewilderment / delusion – avidya as opposed to vidya (knowing quality), a quality of unknowing in regards to subjective structures, Dependent Origination, dhamma and things as they are.

Indestructibility – a heightened vitality, arising from release of suffering.

Insight / realisation / direct knowing – results of a mindfulness practice in the form of proper understanding.

Intensities / drives / jouissance / mental formations – manifestations of energy, which resist symbolisation, yet propel actions.

Karmic 'seeds' – reactive habitualised modes of responding to sense-contact impressed upon storehouse consciousness.

Knowing quality / basic sanity / vidya – primordial intelligence related to basic spaciousness, separated from the five aggregates, which makes liberation possible.

Liberation – cessation of suffering as per the abandonment of greed, hatred and delusion.

Material sense-faculties / body / form / somatic base – aggregate of form: rupa.

Mind / consciousness – composite term for mental aggregates: nama.

Mindfulness practice – deliberate application of the quality of knowing towards objects.

Movement arts / internal arts – any form of practice, which energetically engages the body (sitting meditation included).

Noble friend / teacher – a human individual, who is capable of offering help and guidance on the Path.

Psychophysical aggregates / name and form / mind-body / psychophysicality – form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, consciousness.

Practice – any form of intentional activity with a noble motive of liberation from suffering.

Praxis – that which puts man in a position to treat the real by means of the symbolic.

Qi / 'vibrational information' – extension of the mind into the body qua meridians/channels.

Reality / world / phenomenal existence / characteristics of reality – experience received through the five senses and the mind.

Recognition – correlation of previously disparate signifiers within larger frameworks of the Symbolic; a glimpse of seeing things as they are.

Self / ego / acquired or conditioned subjectivity / ego-consciousness / speaking being / conceit 'I am' / Imaginary-Symbolic subjectivity – conditioned part of a human individual, which came into being (qua body mortified by language) via various forms of identification, reification and misapprehension.

Self-realisation / enlightenment – insight into the way things exist attained by the subject.

Seeing things as they are – final fruition of the Path, cessation of labeling and identification, perfected proper understanding.

Signifier – linguistic sign.

Signified – meaning, which pertains to signifier.

Soul / spirit – metaphorical way to signify the vital breath.

Subjective position / subjective structure – one of the three psychopathological structures in a Lacanian diagnostic system: neurosis, psychosis, perversion.

Suchness / truth – things as they are in their 'dumb reality', uncoloured by conceptual knowledge and meaning.

Suffering – mental and bodily dis-ease.

The Path – trifold training of a human being in virtue, concentration and wisdom.

Thing – phenomena as such, in its 'dumb reality'.

Trauma / contingent phenomena / shattering experience – an exceptionally hurtful encounter with suffering.

The subject / a practitioner – a human individual in the process of self-rediscovery.

Appendix C - Three worlds diagram

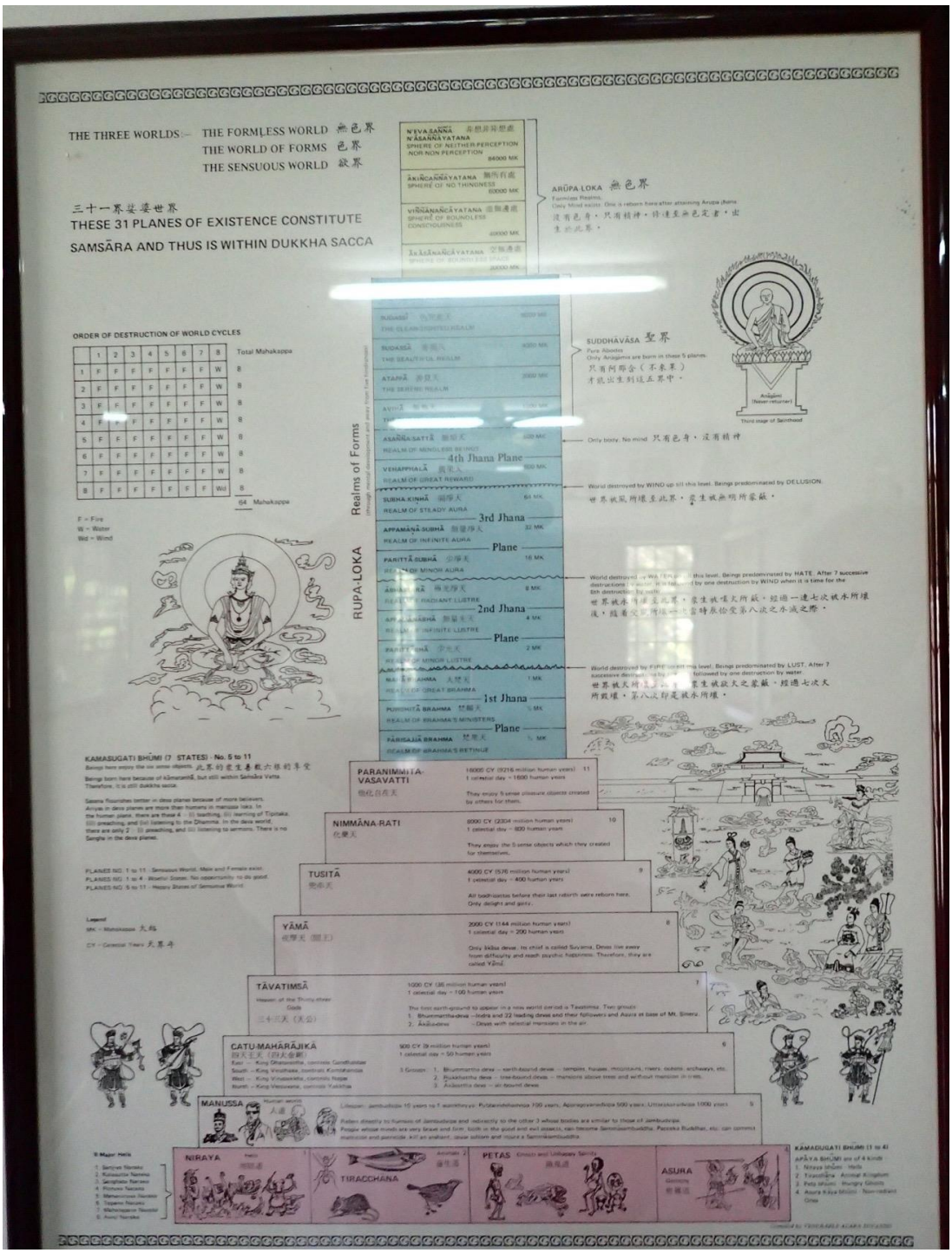

Figure 10: 'Three worlds' – Trailokya or 31 planes of Samsaric existence, Bodhiyarama hermitage, Kuala Kubu Bharu, Malaysia, July 2018, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev.

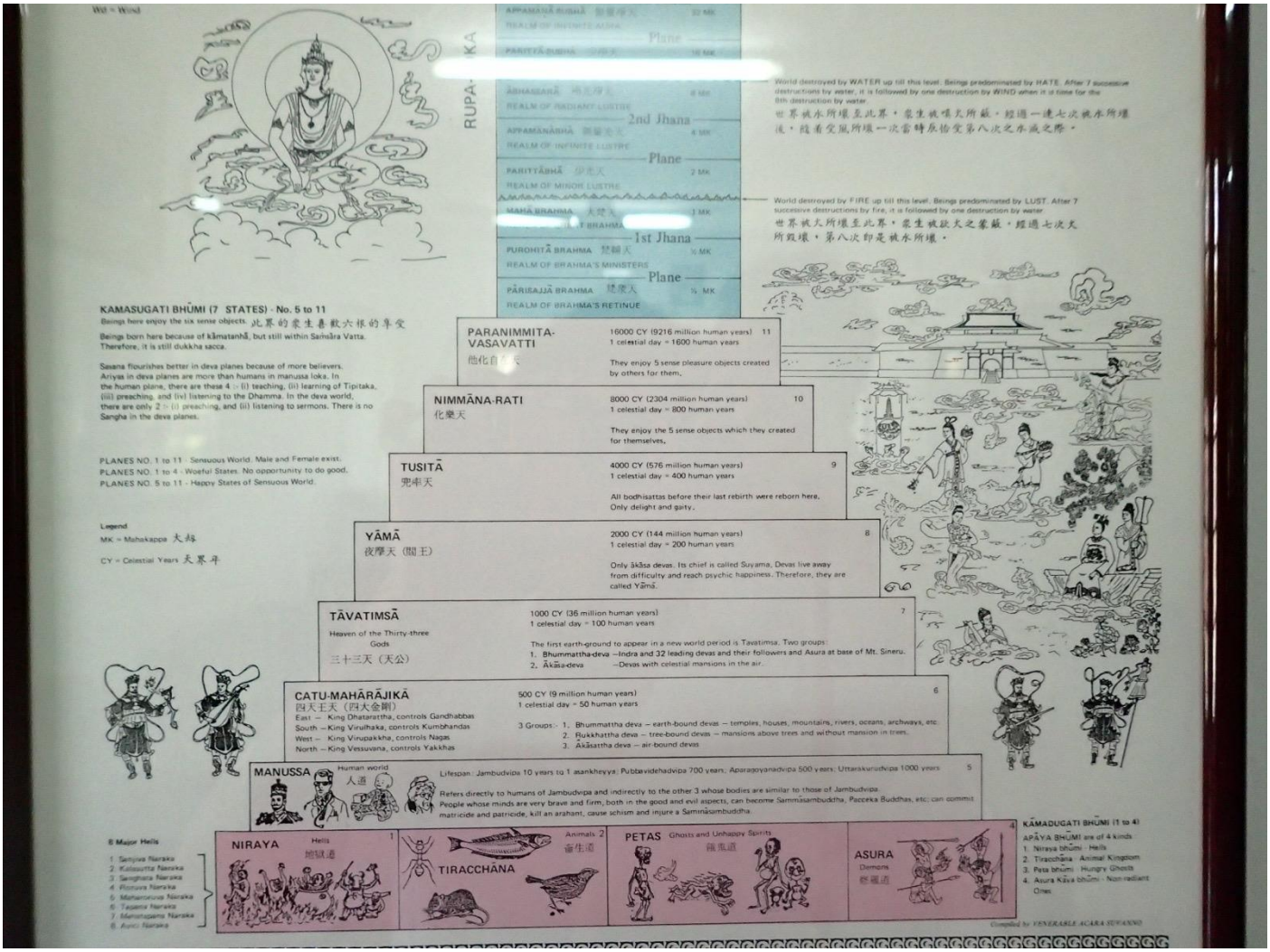

Figure 11: ‘Three worlds’ – Trailokya; six realms of Kammadhatu – Realm of Desire: Asura – angry gods, Petas – hungry ghosts, Tiracchana – animals, Niraya – hell beings, Manussa – human beings and six heavenly realms of gods, Bodhiyarama hermitage, Kuala Kubu Bharu, Malaysia, July 2018, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev

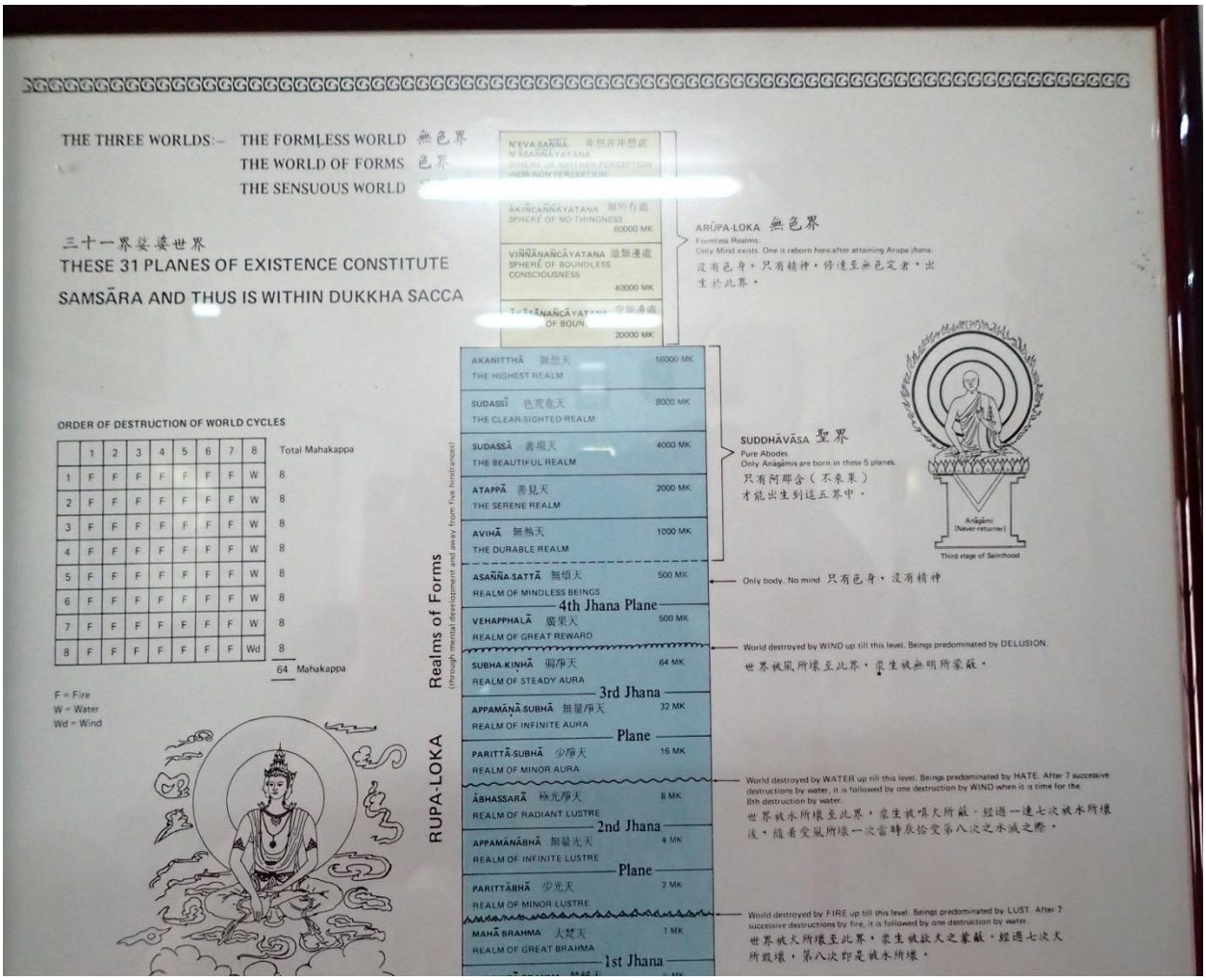

Figure 12: 'Three worlds' – Trailokya; 16 realms of forms and 4 formless realms attained via practice of jhana, Bodhiyarama hermitage, Kuala Kubu Bharu, Malaysia, July 2018, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev

Appendix D - Homage to Teachers and Noble Friends

Figure 13: Venerable Jotinanda and myself, Melaka, Malaysia, January 2018, digital photo, Naquia Basharudin

I thank my teacher of Vipassanā, the Malaysian Theravada monk, Venerable Jotinanda. His approach to the practice is immensely kind and careful. There is no insistence, threat or intimidating of a practitioner, there is no pressure, no intensity. His gentle guidance and sympathy helped me to enter the hells of personal history, restlessness and fury caused

by traumas and losses and the ownerlessness of those, thereby experiencing no body. He is a living example of contentment and friendliness required to face and unravel the undercurrents of the Real. I dedicate a deep gratitude to him.

Figure 14: Walking meditation during the celebration of Ajahn Chah's one hundred's birthday at Wat Nong Pah Pong, Ubon Ratchatani, Thailand, January 2018, digital photo, Evgenii Timofeev

The teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition I'd like to mention and thank here are Venerable Ajahn Sumedho, Ajahn Jayasaro, Ajahn Brahm, Ajahn Brahmavara, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Pasanno, Ajahn Thiradhammo, Ajahn Achalo and Ajahn Sona. Their Dhamma talks and books guided me on the Path of practice, helping me to understand Buddha Dhamma. I thank my friend, Julia Wu, from Shanghai, who introduced me to Ajahn Jayasaro and the lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah.

I thank Venerable Ajahn Kalyano, abbot of the Buddha Bodhivana monastery in East Warburton, Victoria, Australia. His Dhamma talks and answers to my questions regarding

the Path helped significantly to shape the exposition on Theravada teachings in my thesis. Ajahn Kalyano was ordained in Thailand and helped nurse Ajahn Chah during the years of his sickness. He would often be meditating all through the night by Luang por Chah's bed, encouraged to practice diligently in the presence of his teacher.

Figure 15: Chiao Sifu and myself, Yuntai International Kungfu school, Henan, China, November 2017, digital photo, Yuan Sifu

I'd like to mention and thank here the following martial arts teachers. My teacher of Shotokan Karate, 4th Dan, sensei Igor Doroshin who helped me to shape formidable determination and strength and taught me the basics of Zen Buddhism. I'm grateful to Sensei Uriy Chigirov, 3rd Dan Iwama Ryu Aikido, who transmitted to me nobility and insight of the metaphysical essence of the energy work and principles of interaction with other human beings. I thank Sifu Tian and Sifu Fang from Haerbin Shaolin Wushu School, under whose guidance I trained ceaselessly and refined the physical aspect of Shaolin Gongfu. And also

Sifu Yuan and Sifu Chiao from Yuntai International Gongfu School, under whose guidance I practiced Chinese kickboxing and Buddha Dharma. I'd like to mention and thank Vladimir Glotov, a teacher of Muai Thai boxing from Vladivostok, who guided me through extremely strenuous training sessions, fostering technical endurance, coordination and mindfulness. I thank Sifu Sergei Chornii from Crimea for invaluable lessons in gongfu, taijiquan, his amazing and inspiring stories and me giving a shelter in times of need.

Figure 16: Sifu Steven Kelly and myself, Breamlea, Victoria, Australia, March 2017, digital photo, Teya Deller

I'm immensely grateful to my teachers of taijiquan. Sifu Yu Wenxue from Haerbin taught me the basic Yang Style 24 movements form and Emei Qigong. With Sifu Anand Raj from Osho Meditation Resort in Pune I further refined the form and was introduced to the

pushing hands practice. Sifu Raj also taught me the Total Immersion swimming technique as developed by Terry Laughlin. Sifu Steven and Sean Kelly from Melbourne introduced me to Huang-style taijiquan, which is a sub-branch of the Yang style founded by the Malaysian master, Huang Xingxian. With them I've extensively learnt basic internal work, loosening exercises, 'eight energies', 32 movements form, pushing hands and combat drills of the art. Sifu James K. Lau King from Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia, a direct disciple of Huang Xing Xian, shared with me his friendly and playful approach to pushing hands: the springy force. Powerful and inspiring Sifu Adrian Moh from Bintulu, Sarawak, Malaysia taught me further about the relaxed force issuing, grounding, stability and peaceful strength.

Figure 17: Odelia Goldsmith, myself, Ido Portal and Kyle Shapiro, Shanghai, China, November 2011, digital photo

The movement teacher who had a great deal of influence on me is Ido Portal. I met Ido in Shanghai in 2011, when I had just started pursuing professionally the path of

movement arts as a parkour and martial arts teacher and performer. Ido's insight into the interconnectedness of all the movement arts, training endurance, power, joint mobility, elasticity and art of balance as basic factors for performing virtually any movement pattern was crucial in my development. Following Ido's encouragement I've been practicing locomotion, gymnastics strength, the art of balance, trying out, comparing and incorporating various movement arts' approaches into my movement practice ever since.

Figure 18: The Link Parkour Team: Kateřina Linna Hausková, Qian Ru (Martino Chen), Kyle Shapiro, Yang Lei (Maomao), Chao Zi, Liu Ling (Buding), Wu Bing, myself, Benjamin L. Chambers, Shanghai, China, July 2016, digital photo

The most significant influence, source of inspiration and certainty has been the parkour practice. It is the original art, which followed generically from my upbringing within the natural environment. I thank here the entire parkour community all over the world, the founders and the followers. Whichever city I went on the planet, I had the honour to practice the art of motion with these extraordinary, encouraging people. I especially thank my friends

and teammates from The Link Parkour Team Shanghai. We worked together on establishing this brand and company. For support, unconditional acceptance, time of playing, moving, discovering together, thanks to my parkour brothers and sisters Kyle Shapiro, Qian Ru (Martino) Chen, Yang Lei (Maomao), Chao Zi, Liu Ling (Buding), Simone Zhang, Benjamin L. Chambers, Kateřina Linna Hausková and others. A separate portion of gratitude goes to a parkour instructor from The American Parkour, Travis Noble Graves, whom I met in Washington DC in 2010 and who helped me in shaping the uplifting image of strength, acceptance and clarity coexistent with freedom and aspiration. And another portion goes to the friend from Russia, artist, traceur, stuntman Sergei Samorodov, whose ever-joyful spirit and constant strive for life always reminds me to dream and to believe.

Figure 19: David Rhein, Sarka Prikrylova, myself, Zita Pavlištova, PJ Rebullida, Jonathan Katz and Ea Torrado, at Azalea Resort, near Dumaguette, Negros Oriental, Philippines, February 2015, digital photo

Thanks to my teachers of contact improvisation: Jonathan Katz, Sarka Prikrylova, Ea Torrado, PJ Rebullida, and Zita Pavlištova. The beautiful and subtle art of sensitivity they taught helped me to find connection and ease with other human beings. Their compassion and accepting guidance encouraged me to release the tension, drop the armour, embrace the beauty of and opportunity for failure. I also thank my dear friend, Tom Hope, from Melbourne. Dancing contact improvisation with him was always a friendly, wild and unbinding experience.

Figure 20: Myself, Brendan O'Connor and Tony Yap on the bank of the Ganges River, Varanasi, India, October 2016, digital photo, Tony Yap

Thanks to my friend, teacher and colleague, Tony Yap and his disciple, Brendan O'Connor. They introduced me to the world of East Asian traditional trance practices and their application in a contemporary performance context. Through them I met the master of Javanese Bull Trance (Bantengan), Agus Riyanto; and masters of traditional Javanese court dances, Agung Gunawan and Deasylina da Ary. All of them taught me the art of surrender, of vigour within the softness, generosity and sympathetic connection of aliveness.

I was greatly influenced by Tony's dance improvisation, where every move is possible, where emotions are fused with physicality and awareness, where freedom is well balanced with restraint, and where the simple friendship between essentially different individuals is possible. Through taking part in the Melaka Arts and Performance Festival, travelling and giving workshops in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Australia with Tony and Brendan, I learnt to be at peace with differences. A movement practice we followed was a crossover of multiple cultural traditions. Essentially, within the multiplicity of ways, we were able to find and engage the core of being human in the world. Simple things like authenticity, enthusiasm and trust are the core of this practice. Trance leads inward, away from investing the external, to weakening of the self and merging with open space.

What unites all these teachers and the various practices they taught me are qualities of loving-kindness and concentration. Every art I learnt starts with kind mindfulness: paying attention, listening, then applying *proper thought* and sustaining it, then entering the multiplicity of ways and techniques or abandoning everything at once. The trance element unites all these movement arts. It starts with listening and being aware, proceeds to active giving into whatever takes over, and finally to just being.

Together these and many others not mentioned here noble friends (Pāli: kalyāṇa-mitta) are the giants, upon whose shoulders I was held. They are true parents, who have nourished, protected, encouraged and inspired me on this path, on this Earth.

Gratitude to all of you!

Appendix E – Creative works

Pushing Hands

Right from the start we know each other simply as beings. We don't have names. We don't have selves. We know our bodies. We know the space.

When we meet one another, there is contact. You know it. It is somatic and humane. There is sentient energy in front of you. We touch.

With every touch there is knowing: I can feel the earth underneath your feet. I release my weight and push off the earth. Issuing comes through and sends you away. Then we switch.

Sentient energy, which we are, is suspended from one single point – a quality of knowing. All else is heard, acknowledged and abandoned through the flesh. This is called release. Playing off each other we arrive to the start.

Simple beings, glad to be here, free from stress: skillfully forgetting our name and form, we are abiding in the space, between heaven and earth.

The Living

Why do I move?

- to quench suffering

- to promote peace

- to boost vitality

- to clear the mind

- because I can

- because it feels great...

Name many more here.

I wrote this thesis trying to explain why and show how movement is vital for nourishing the spirit.

I don't think I've succeeded.

Because narrative isn't movement.

Because what's named isn't Dao.

Just watch it and follow, take it to heart, let it breathe through you.

Because I breathe fully when I do it.

Because it brings breath in: it in-spires.

Because it's living.

Glimpse of Infinity

I was watching sunset on the jungle hilltop of Koh Chang (Elephant Island).

It took the sun surprisingly long to descend into the waters of the Siam Gulf.

I realised thus: Viewing time is dependent upon the position of a beholder. With 'proper view' one can see the gigantic ocean of time, where every event, possible and relative, can manifest. One can see the whole plethora of variations of unfolding circumstances, which direct one's life.

So I realised that I'm witnessing a Glimpse of Infinity: a moment where time waves collapse into a single, still particle.

I designed the movement in this video thus: a downhill propulsion of a traceur, rampaging through the jungle, culminating in a sequence of power yoga in gratitude to sea, sand and sky, resolving in a momentum turned inward, in the practice of insight meditation.

Meditating thus, I felt countless little lightnings travelling under my skin, the heaviness and hotness of the breath, the freedom of unrestrained physical presence. I also felt a momentariness of this experience: like everything else, it was passing: impermanence ensued.

The sun set behind me.

I jumped into the water to wash sand off my skin and hair.

I rejoiced, in pain, gratitude and wholesomeness, which were to be experienced by those who dare to break through the self.

It is a thousand thunders here, beyond the self.

It is endurance inexhaustible.

It is love.

Embodiment of the Real

How to be at peace?

Ground oneself in this present experience, listen, reflect mindfully, know it the way it is, breathe, adhere, join, follow, move, dance, jump, climb, swim, be.

Reclaim your integrity,

Embodiment of the Real.

Evanescence

It started as playing around, throwing moves. I then became weary from 'performing' and kicked back over the edge, opening my heart and throat to the sky, to breathe. I rose up and asked her:

- Do you have a topic for me?
- But I don't know anything about parkour.
- It's not about parkour anymore, it's just movement.
- Ok, so how do you want to move?
- Honestly.
- Then just be yourself, be in the moment… feel… listen to what's going on around you.

I kicked back again, this time standing, and I sensed. Same old, said the mind. But something gradually took over. Movements of oscillating grazing against the ground in touch with the concrete edge then followed, proliferated. Is it a ceaseless lament of birth, becoming and dying?

It is no longer kicking off the objects. A traceur now is reading subtle feeling tones within. How would it be to tell about pain and loss, and love and dream to a concrete wall? How would it be to never design it thinking about it?

This is how it is: the concrete wall is a steady partner in conversation endowed with an unwavering listening capacity. Yet it talks back all the time. This surface is way harder than this flesh, tendons and bones. Yet we dance: the beauty and the beast. The concrete, the fragile and the antifragile. The latter is the movement.

The heart knows no limits. Its moving expansiveness is all-embracing, overwhelming, all-inclusive, revering. Here this grey graphitised surface is my confession box. Are there words to describe this outpour? One can analyse: the experience of aging, getting sick, disintegrating, overlaps with a personal history of little lovely attachments and kitties cuddling in the warm basket of life. The unspeakable anguish over that which is lost, is being lost, about to be lost, couples with endless inspiration raining down from the wide blue sky. The dream I cherished over the years: to move freely, confidently, powerfully, honestly, is being told into the space, carried by the wind, pulverised through the atmosphere.

This dream was asked then: how to be? Facing existence, it grew to accept the dispiriting. It was an 'uneasy learning to masculinity', as my dear friend called it. This 'being a man' is being fierce yet gentle, deranged yet lucid, scared yet advancing, confused and honest. What does one really know? Only this moment. Only fleeting experience of aggregates of existence coming to be and disappearing. The striving of a man is to bring about the movement of insight, dispel the lethargy, tame the hatred, soothe the restlessness, abandon remorse and embrace, not repress, sensuality with a steady noble poise of peacefulness and wisdom. This striving is a descent into weakness and submissiveness.

This dance of a man is not to shine and impress beautiful ladies. It is about unfolding and exposing a vulnerable and unworthy creature hidden within. An absurd, erratic, abnormal, vehement, hysteric being, caught in basic bewilderment, wanting nothing but light, care, tenderness and embrace.

May the sun shine, may the rough surface caress shivering skin, may she, who suggested being yourself in the present moment and listen, see it all. For it is there first of all for a woman to see a man the way he is, unpolished by masculine attractiveness, unfixed by self-dominance, unenlightened and bewildered. And if there is seeing with empathy, empowerment happens, healing happens and enlightenment, which is a release of the heart from the grip of bewilderment.

Deep restfulness ensues.

Samma Patipada

This work has been particularly inspired by Ajahn Kalyano's talk *Samma Patiapada*[155]. It has also been inspired by talks of teachers from the Thai Forest Tradition in the lineage of Ajahn Mun, Ajahn Maha Boowa and Ajahn Chah, who are widely recognised to be arahants.

Samma Patipada stands for Proper Practice. There is a point in cultivation process, where the only way to proceed is to make continuous effort without basing it on anything. Such as, when unbearable intensities arise in body and mind, a practitioner relinquishes attachments to body and mind. This act of letting go brings a practitioner to the unchanging. Proper Practice then is to endure the unchanging.

The sequence of practices in this video starts with standing cultivation in five postures, which builds up intensity, bringing one on the verge of the unbearable. The energy thus built up is further redistributed through the five loosening exercises and 32 movements form. The latter nuances the process of letting go, which helps to sustain it in movement with gentle yet precise focus in accordance with taijiquan principles. As a result, energy channels in the body are opened, thereby breath circulates freely. Sitting cultivation, which follows and concludes the sequence, unifies the malleable, gladdened mind within properly prepared body.

I believe that Proper Practice of the Path is interdisciplinary practice, which applies resources of various other fields of knowledge in the noble striving for the unconditioned. Its cornerstone is to experience human psychophysicality 'as it is' in any posture and circumstance, thereby developing dispassion towards and release of psychophysicality.

[155] Kalyano, Vanarable Ajahn. *Samma Patiapada*. https://buddhabodhivana.org/blog/2018/01/21/samma-patipada/.

Proper Practice, as that, which belongs to the fabricated is the last to release. However, till then, it is, in my opinion, the most skillful refuge, available in the situation of a human being located between Heaven and Earth.

The Dream

For a week in a row I was reading Bardo Thodol, envisaging how two dear beings I knew might have been going through the intermediate state of reality.

Every little becoming breeds effect. Like a fragrance, which emits from the seeds of life events, rising into a wind, forming a tornado, at blazing speed it delivers one to a new womb. It is the Imaginary that propels the Samsaric existence.

There is only one plane of the Symbolic, which prevents it – the Dhamma.

Yet I can't help it here: emotions are too strong. I see them going, merging into the light: with gentleness and poise – my mother; with dignity and strength – my father. Their aspects, like parts of my body, remain. And so I dance them. I dance the fragrance, and the whirlwind, with gentleness, and strength.

There is little known by them of the other shore. May they know through me.

They haven't finished loving, interrupted by the blizzard. Let them love through me.

They weren't given time to let go, having both passed away in their dreams. Let them go through me. And let me let them go.

Amen.