Mind, Brain and the Path to Happiness: A Guide to Buddhist Mind Training and the Neuroscience of Meditation. Dusana Dorjee. New York: Routledge, 2014. Pp. 154.
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The neuroscience of meditation is, at present, the most promising field within the arena of the Buddhism and science dialogue. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Buddhist scholars Thomas W. Rhys Davids (1843–1922) and his wife Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids (1857–1942) inadvertently paved the way for this dialogue by construing Buddhism for their western audience as a "science of mind," praising the Abhidharma ("Buddhist psychology") for its sophisticated analysis of mind and consciousness.[8] The first serious attempt to bring scientists and Buddhist scholars to a roundtable took place in 1979 and turned out to be fraught with unforeseen problems of reciprocal misunderstanding: The late cognitive scientist Francisco Varela and others organized a conference entitled "Comparative Approaches to Cognition: Western and Buddhist,"[9] but recognized that the mutual understanding of, and respect for, these two investigative traditions needed a great deal of preparation. The strained conference was, nevertheless, ground-breaking in that it inspired an ongoing dialogue in the form of the Mind and Life conferences with the Dalai Lama, which began in 1987. Varela's aim was "to reinstate first-person experience as a source of scientific knowledge, and open scientific inquiry to methods such as meditation."[10] Meditation was to become the ultimate research tool.

The present work by Dusana Dorjee, cognitive neuroscientist at Bangor University in Wales, is a recent product of the interaction of science and Buddhism. The author is herself an embodiment of the science-Buddhism dialogue, as she self-identifies not only as a scientist, but also as a long-term meditation practitioner and teacher in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of Dzogchen. Dzogchen (Tibetan *rDzogs Chen*, "Great Perfection") refers to a specific meditation tradition of the Tibetan Nyingma School, the first school to be established in the country of Tibet in the seventh century CE. This tradition teaches an approach to meditation that can be understood as nondual, since the practitioner is led to a state in which the dualistic subject-object structure of ordinary experience dissolves. Nondual forms

8. David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

9. Richard J. Davidson and Anne Harrington, "Appendix: About the Mind and Life Institute," in *Visions of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists Examine Human Nature*, ed. Richard J. Davidson and Anne Harrington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 248.

10. Barry Boyce, "Two Sciences of Mind," *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time* (September 2005).

of meditation differ in practice and goal from classical mindfulness traditions. To date, no scientific research has focused on the particularities of Dzogchen practice. Dorjee's book is therefore an interesting and welcome contribution to the dialogue. The author raises awareness for the breadth and richness of Buddhist meditation traditions.

The book's structure follows the progression of Dzogchen practice according to Dorjee's understanding. She describes a fourfold pyramid of mind training. Meditators start with the cultivation of the right intention (first stage), which demands a reflection on the meaning of happiness. Genuine happiness transcends the limitations of hedonism, embraces an awareness of impermanence and death, and is indissociably linked to a sense of purpose in life. At the second stage, meditators train in attention and "meta-awareness," i.e., in the capacity to sustain attention on an object while at the same time cultivating a monitoring element of attention which verifies and corrects the mind's activities. Practitioners then have to gain mastery in emotional balance (third stage) which Dorjee describes mainly in terms of developing "the four wholesome emotions" of loving kindness, compassion, rejoicing and equanimity. At the fourth level, the "stable and fairly balanced mind becomes a tool for exploration of the different notions of 'self' and the deepest self-transcending element of consciousness" (34). The path to happiness culminates in enlightenment, which in the Dzogchen tradition signifies the recognition of the clear light as the nature of the mind, which is pristine awareness, or, in Dorjee's words, "an exceptional state of mental balance" (129).

Dorjee attempts to straddle three approaches in her book: She introduces the scientific study of meditation from the point of view of psychology and neuroscience; she describes the theory of the Dzogchen path, and she gives practical instruction on how to put the stages of the path into practice. Her work stands out among the scientific studies of meditation in that she does not shy away from analysing the entire Dzogchen path, including a discussion of the motivations to embark on a spiritual path, and of the final result, enlightenment. She is right in criticizing the reductive, secular approaches that treat meditation solely as "a way to reduce stress and cope with or prevent illness" (ix). However, the grand approach of Dorjee's work is also its greatest weakness, since none of the three approaches is explored with the thoroughness it deserves. Her treatment of Dzogchen includes indiscriminately numerous teachings that are common to all Buddhist traditions, such as the four immeasurable attitudes, mind training, or mindfulness. Her explanations would benefit a great deal from John Dunne's detailed examination of different types of meditation.[11] Dunne distinguishes between classical mindfulness, including

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11. John D. Dunne, "Buddhist Styles of Mindfulness: A Heuristic Approach" in Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation, ed. Michael D. Robinson, Brian D. Ostafin, and Brian P.

Śamatha, Vipassanā, and Tibetan mind training on the one hand, and nondual forms of meditation, including Dzogchen, Mahāmudrā, Chan, Seon, and Zen on the other. Dorjee's claim that Dzogchen is the only type of nondual meditation is untenable, and her treatment of common Buddhist practices as uniquely Dzogchen reveals her lack of a broader understanding of the complexities of Buddhist traditions. Dorjee's explanations pertaining to Buddhist concepts refer the reader sometimes to primary sources, but more often to contemporary, secondary literature by scholars of psychology and Buddhism. This lack of precision turns her book into a weak resource for all those who seek more than a rudimentary understanding of the philosophy and practice of Dzogchen.

The strength of this book lies in its accessibility. Dorjee has the ability to present psychological and Buddhist concepts in a concise and clear way, which is ideal for any interested newcomer to the material. She enhances the theoretical sections with practical guidance into the progressive stages of meditation practice. Given the fact that hers is a pioneering work, it is a courageous contribution to the field of scientific study of meditation, as she challenges the present limitations of reducing the study to secular forms of meditation. According to Dorjee, these are, at best, foundational levels of meditation. To understand the mind in all its facets, Dorjee proposes to expand the scope of research, and to recognize the value of examining all four stages of the fourfold pyramid of mind training.

Meier (New York: Springer, 2015), 249–70.