

Article

LETTING GO TO LET BE: PSYCHOANALYSIS AS CREATIVE FLOW

Sara L. Weber¹

This paper explores experiences of surrender to an aspect of mind that is unconfined, empty of dualistic concepts, and lucidly aware. Ghent's concept of surrender, Farber's unconscious will, and Buddhist philosophers' essence of mind all link to creative processes described by Poincaré and Mozart. This impressionistic collage points to the spaciousness to know beyond our usual stories. From this essential mind more wholesome actions proceed.

KEY WORDS: surrender; will; agency; mind essence; spaciousness; mindfulness

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-024-09469-3>

I first met Jeremy Safran twenty years ago, when he came to a talk on Buddhism and psychoanalysis that I had organized for the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. The panel comprised the founder of the thriving Insight Meditation Society, Joseph Goldstein, alongside Robert Langan and myself. It was my first paper on Buddhism and psychoanalysis, titled "An Analyst's Surrender" (Weber, 2003). Jeremy sat in the front row but did not introduce himself. Weeks later, he reached out to ask to include my paper in the book he was editing at the time, *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue* (2003), now a classic. So began our friendship, occasioning professional collaboration on our mutual interests: Buddhism and the role of surrender as elaborated by the late Emmanuel Ghent (1990), whose "surrender" was not a miserable defeat but a creative letting go of constraint.

This paper continues the collaboration with a focus on will and agency. During a discussion with the organizers of Jeremy's memorial conference, the question of will in Buddhism came up. In practicing Buddhism, do you

This paper is part of the Special Issue, *Remembering Jeremy Safran: Continuing the Conversation*, Guest Edited by Drs. Ali Shames-Dawson and Adrienne Harris (Vol. 84, issue 3).

Address correspondence to: Sara L. Weber, PhD, 225 Carroll St., Brooklyn, NY 11231, USA.
Email: slweber@slweber.net

become a passive victim of all that life dishes out? Do you forego any will, any agency? How do we understand various kinds of will? How do we differentiate will from willfulness? If you meditatively subdue your reactions, have you lost your engagement with the world? Pondering these questions has led me to reflections on psychoanalysis, admixed with thoughts on creativity from artists, scientists, and predominantly Buddhist philosophers of mind. I hope these meanderings will bring some fresh thoughts about mindful agency to brighten our understanding of our psychoanalytic view of mind.

Surrendering and doing, with all the fears and wishes that arise, manifests a fluid dance. How does one open oneself to Buddhist insights that may differ from the psychoanalytic? How do insights gained on the meditation cushion affect action in the world? How can one will mindfulness when will, in the form of willfulness, leads one astray? How does one apply the interrelationship of spaciousness, stillness, letting go, and surrender to one's actions in the world? How can sitting still, relaxing, watching your mind—whether in a psychoanalytic session or on your meditation cushion—enhance your capacity to act rather than react? How might you guide your actions to be less impulsive and willful, instead more wholesome and creative? Let us see.

Buddhist meditation instructs one to sit still on one's cushion. Be silent, don't move, don't even scratch an itch. Watch your mind stream along without making any effort to control it. Let go of effort and willpower. Relax.

A Buddhist poem by Venerable Lama Gendun Rinpoche (n.d., p. 11) entitled "Free and Easy" advises:

Happiness cannot be found
 through great effort and willpower,
 but is already present, in open relaxation and letting go.
 Don't strain yourself:
 there is nothing to do nor undo.

There is a serenity and equanimity that one can, sometimes, experience while meditating. It evokes a wish to live in that state all the time. Who does not desire to live peacefully and at ease? In his famous paper "Masochism, Submission, Surrender: Masochism as a Perversion of Surrender," Emmanuel Ghent (1990) said: "There is, however deeply buried or frozen, a longing for something...to make...surrender" possible (p. 109). Ghent was not suggesting that this quality of surrender was about being happy and serene all the time. For Ghent this quality of surrender was to a "true self" which could sometimes know deep pain. In both Buddhism and psychoanalysis, full embodied knowledge of that deep pain is freeing, bringing

about a significant peaceful release through surrender to fully knowing profound, previously intolerable pain and suffering.

Novice meditators often think that they are doing something wrong, or they object to the instructions, or don't like the meditation teacher, when their meditations are not experienced as blissful and relaxed. It is very human to want to escape the struggle of facing the difficulties of living, though doing so leads to more suffering. Our defenses are innumerable. Among Buddhists it is thought that people who cling to a passive bliss state have lapsed into Zen sickness. The wish to be at peace requires that we let go of our defenses to find that sense of surrender.

This brings up many questions.

How passive is surrender? Are we truly passive during meditation? Can we clarify the paradoxical directive inherent in Buddhist meditation that we try to will not to will?.

Only a certain degree of restriction of action and involvement in the ordinary, busy world can create the spaciousness needed to see what is arising in one's unconscious. Psychoanalysis too, uses the parameters of time, location, inaction. Psychoanalysts ask patients to let go of goals; to allow whatever arises to come into mind. *Say whatever comes to mind with free-floating attention.* Buddhism goes further, restricting movement more fully: Do nothing but become aware of your mind and body, be silent, don't talk, don't make eye contact with others, withdraw from the world and all the usual business for the period of meditation. Make room to know. This is a very active "passivity." One takes refuge for a time in withdrawal from the ordinary world—an active renunciation of the ordinary, to focus more fully on what *is* here and now.

Ghent (1990) makes a very clear distinction between submission and surrender. Ghent sees agency in surrender to a true self. For Ghent, psychoanalysts, and Buddhists, surrender is not passive, "heavy or lugubrious" (p. 111), nor does it come with resignation. Surrender can only happen with active radical acceptance. "It transcends the conditions that evoked it. It is joyous in spirit... but cannot be made to happen" (p. 111). This active radical acceptance includes direct contact with, among other things, painful experiences in one's life, aging, one's inevitable death, and other existential fears.

A common misconception is that Buddhism suggests one be without will, without agency. In fact, while meditating you actively will not to will. You will yourself to get to your meditation cushion, to be quiet and still enough to witness lucidly the ebb and flow of experiencing the mind and body. You sharpen your awareness. You also will yourself to let go of reactive defenses that arise with pleasant and unpleasant experiences, to let go of clinging and aversion, to let go of your identification with what is arising, to let go of

judging, dualities, fixing, planning, avoiding and all the other things we use to obscure naked knowing. By inviting one's defenses to settle down, the willful work of managing one's pain subsides. One opens, relaxes, surrenders to what is. Eventually you see the naked truth of your suffering, unconscious thoughts, feelings, perceptions all arising in spacious compassionate acceptance. This may or may not be "joyous in spirit" as Ghent described (1990, p. 111), but it has the qualities of compassion, wisdom, serenity, and equanimity. Tears of joy are quite likely. During meditation one is aware of it all without any plans for what one should do. Once you have stopped reacting you can act more wisely with grace and ease.

Life requires us to make decisions and to act, particularly when we are suffering. How do we know when our actions are a direct expression of our "true selves," rather than reactive and defensive? How do we know when our will is directing us in wholesome versus unhealthy ways? What are some guidelines we can use to help us find our way through the maze? After all, we don't get relief from effortful ambitious striving, dogmatism, self-punishment, doubting, or even from fantasies of being carefree, and we cannot let go easily of all effort. We still have work to do. Ghent points out that since surrender is not voluntary, we cannot make it happen, but we can create the facilitating conditions for surrender to happen.

The existential psychoanalyst Leslie Farber (1966) described two realms of the will. The first realm is Unconscious, and the other is Utilitarian.

In the Unconscious realm, thoughts and feelings flow spontaneously rather than having a particular object. In this Unconscious realm there is a sense of freedom that arises from not having to know where the energy is going and not worrying about the consequences, released from self-consciousness. There are no dualities, no "self" and no past, present, and future. One thinks, speaks, acts forthrightly and responsibly, without a known direction or goal.

In the Utilitarian realm of the will, all that arises has a goal. We do this to get that. Thoughts, images, feelings may be deliberately thought out in hopes of attaining a discrete, tangible, objective. The goal can be conscious or unconscious. Great works, writing, exercising, making dinner, neurotic and narcissistic ways of relating to others, rape, murder, you name it, all arise from this realm. Sometimes the conscious goals and the unconscious goals of this realm are in conflict. You may want to lose weight but find yourself eating a whole box of cookies. You may want to raise your children in a way so that they will not suffer as you did, but you find yourself repeating the patterns from your childhood. Or, in pursuit of safety, you start a war thinking consciously that you will rid yourself of your enemies, while unconsciously you hope to rid yourself of your unacknowledged,

unconscious sense of powerlessness. In the Utilitarian realm of the will, unwholesome thoughts and actions stir up distress.

It must be noted here that the Unconscious realm of the will can be both longed for and frightening. Letting go of the sense of control that the Utilitarian realm purports can be terrifying, oppressive, and exhausting. But it can also be exciting and productive.

While for optimal living these two realms are interdependent, often in practice they are not. In health, thoughtful actions from the Utilitarian realm of the will are informed by the Unconscious and authentic realm of the will. When the Utilitarian realm of the will dominates, then plans, automatic patterns, and rules determine robotic, cold, fraudulent, and compulsive behavior. But when the Utilitarian realm of the will harmonizes with the work of the Unconscious realm, authenticity comes forth.

Psychoanalysis and meditation offer ways to expand our capacity to recognize energies and forces of Unconscious will. Sitting still, letting thoughts arise and pass, letting attention float freely, letting go of clinging to wants and pushing away discomforts, letting go of memory and desire, the Unconscious becomes conscious without prematurely forcing a goal upon what arises. Through knowing the energies of our Unconscious will, we can decide to act ethically, meaningfully, and authentically in the world. Farber (1966) says:

I can will knowledge, but not wisdom; going to bed, but not sleeping; eating, but not hunger; meekness, but not humility; scrupulosity, but not virtue; self-assertion or bravado, but not courage; lust but not love; commiseration, but not sympathy; congratulation, but not admiration; religiosity, but not faith; reading, but not understanding. I would emphasize that the consequences of willing what cannot be willed is that we fall into the distress of anxiety (Farber, 1966, p. 15).

Perhaps we might add: one can will sitting down to meditate, but not finding freedom from suffering; one can will oneself to go to therapy, but not open to discovery or to change.

What are the dimensions of our Unconscious mind? Is it the font of creativity? Brewster Ghiselin (1952) collected reflections on creative invention in the arts and sciences from famous scientists, artists, writers, poets, and mathematicians. They describe how their works arose in their minds. Many of them talk about a state of mind that just happens: it is unconscious, timeless, egoless, and found at moments of profound relaxation. Mozart (1756–1791) describes being “completely myself, entirely alone and in good cheer” when without any expectation or goal, music begins to arise and evolves into a fully formed work (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 34). Remarkably, he states he does not hear “the parts *successively*, but I

hear them...all at once" (p. 34, emphasis in original). Later, in goal-directed, utilitarian effort, he works out the details as each instrument coheres into an opera, having no difficulty remembering exactly what he heard.

Henri Poincaré, a French mathematician and theoretical physicist, was very interested in how his mind came up with answers to complex mathematical problems. Like Farber, he noted that there were two realms of his mind: one in which he worked consciously on a problem and one in which the answers arose without effort, without awareness of working on it. In one instance, he describes hours of working on a mathematical proof to no avail. On vacation at a later date while stepping onto a bus, not consciously thinking about the problem, the answer spontaneously arose in his mind. Upon returning to work, he was able to work out the details of the proof. This had happened to him often enough that he thought seriously about the phenomenon. He found that these sudden illuminations had an inherent aesthetic, an inner beauty² and were unforgettable. He observed that:

the subliminal self is in no way inferior to the conscious self; it is not purely automatic; it is capable of discernment, it has tact, delicacy; it knows how to choose, to divine... [T]he privileged unconscious phenomena...directly or indirectly, affect most profoundly our emotional sensibility (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 28).

The interdependence, the dance, between conscious effort (the conscious will) and the part of the mind that is spacious, relaxed, entirely without time or ego (the unconscious will) is thus illuminated.

Buddhist philosophers also speak of two inter-related realms of the mind. Poetically, Mingur Rinpoche (b. 1975) advises: "Acknowledge the wave, but stay with the ocean" (2019, p. 11). He observes that normal awareness is cluttered by our day-to-day activities, chores, concerns, etc. The awareness he is pointing to is a different aspect of mind—an aspect of mind that exists beneath our reactivity, beneath our chattering minds. This quality of mind is not self-conscious; not concerned with me, my, or mine; does not react or cling to anything; is outside of time. It is unconditioned awareness, also called bare awareness. If we can stay grounded in awareness beyond the well-worn stories we tell ourselves, beyond the interference of elaboration and intellectualization, beyond even concepts, can we find the capacity to be more resilient when things are tough?

Early Buddhist philosophers made a similar, radical distinction. Padmasambhava, one of the founding fathers of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, around 749 A.D., gave this advice:

Though the view should be as vast as the sky.
 Keep your conduct as fine as barley flour.
 (Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, quoted in O'Hearn, 2014, para. 1)

He suggests one's purview should be unbiased, impartial, vast, and unlimited, open to all that can arise. All the while one's action should be precise, based on wisdom—the ethical discrimination of what is wholesome and what is not. To enable right action, one must take care not to lose the capacity to discern good and evil in the view of vastness, nor to lose awareness of the causes and conditions that make you *you* and cause you to get entangled in your neurosis and delusions. These distinct modes are complementary and have much in common with Farber's modes of the will and Poincaré's two modes of mind. Being radically open allows one to see reality and the implications of one's actions in clear detail. One acts accordingly: mindfully aware of all the momentary shifts in emotions, perceptions, self-states, energies, thoughts, and facts—all that can be perceived, free of entanglements. Buddhists refer to this as being aware of both absolute and relative realities. Absolute reality is the vast emptiness and interbeing of all things, while relative reality is ordinary material reality. In absolute reality there is no separate you. In relative reality you have an identity. Identity materializes and dematerializes, just like atomic particles and celestial bodies. Living with these aspects of reality in balance is known as the Middle Way.

Tsoknyi Rinpoche (b. 1966), the older brother of Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, elaborates on the nature of the unconscious mind that beholds absolute reality (Tsoknyi Rinpoche, 2003). He describes our usual mind as lost in dualities (such as me versus you, good versus bad). The usual mind manifests as attachment to preferences, aggression, greed, and closed-mindedness. We strain to hold on to what feels good and to push away what we don't like. But he directs us to become aware of another aspect of mind he calls "mind essence" (p. 116). Mind essence is three dimensional: empty, cognizant, and unconfined. The empty mind is completely open and accommodating of everything, including anger, attachment, closed-mindedness, pride, and jealousy, as well as wisdom and creativity. The cognizant aspect of mind is lucid awareness, a sense of being radically awake right now, knowing the difference between dualistic mind and basic wakefulness, unconfined in its capacity. Mind essence is the mind of surrender. Aware without clinging, aversion, or ignorance. Wide open in all directions without any barriers or anything to hold on to, such that emotions usually experienced as painful, simply are. This is so because one is free of the distinction between self and other, along with other binary distinctions such

as good and bad, painful and pleasurable. Without these distinctions, one no longer identifies with any given feeling state, nor with any value judgment about it. Paradoxically, this letting go of self enables you to become *more* authentically yourself. Timeless, egoless, effortless. These are the aspects of mind that Ghent, Farber, Mozart and Poincaré collage in this paper. It exerts itself without our awareness nor awareness of effort on our part. This essential mind is intelligent, non-defensive, non-egotistical, radically open and accepting. It totally reframes our concerns and obsessive suffering.

These artists and Buddhist philosophers have found extraordinary ways to access the deepest most trustworthy aspect of mind. Most of us are simply trying to live well. Buddhism, like psychoanalysis, directs us to attend to the habits of mind that bring us so much suffering. In Buddhism, our suffering, our obsessions, our pains can be seen as mile markers on the path to the end of suffering, where we find the peace of mind we long for, as our true and more wholesome selves.

A gentle example from the ordinary: While on retreat, troubling thoughts of a friendship that had gone bad continually arose. We had stopped talking. I was hurt and angry, telling myself over and over how I had been wronged. How could she be such a bad friend? I longed to let go, to stop thinking about the details of our falling out, but it would not stop. It was painfully repetitive. I strove to find a way out of the maze, this trap my mind and body were in. I forced myself to stop thinking and become aware of my breath, get a drink of water, take a walk, try and try, but it kept coming back in exactly the same manner—same words, same bodily manifestations of my anger, hurt, and frustration. Buddhism says that our most difficult people and feelings are our best friends, because they push us to come to find our way out. An inner goal from my unconscious was working on me. I wanted to be free of my agitation. For many days, this repetitive story of how she had hurt me came up over and over. Then, while walking outside, I went over to a statue of the Buddha and pled for help, and I really meant it. I cried. I surrendered. Suddenly I realized that I was not such a good friend either. Oddly, this did not upset me but freed me. Relief flooded over me. The story I had been telling myself did not bother me again. My anger disappeared. Compassion arose for both of us. Now I could decide what to do.

This example is an ordinary description of the difficulty and relief of surrendering to one's mind essence, to one's Unconscious will, to one's true self, to the naked truth of the cause of suffering. I didn't want to know about my own failures. I didn't even know that I didn't want to know! We humans have our grievances, self-esteem problems, fears and anxieties, unwholesome patterns of behavior, traumas we cannot face—all manners of

suffering. How do we open to—surrender to—the essential state of mind that offers us a way to accept the truth of our pain?

Let's take a look at the story of the Buddha's enlightenment.

Over 2,500 years ago, as the story goes, Siddhartha Gautama, the man who became known as the Buddha, was sitting in meditation under a Bodhi tree when he was visited by the *māras*—projections of his own delusions, desires, and aversions in the form of sensual maidens, ferocious beasts, and furious demons, threatening him and demanding his attention. Without defending himself from the onslaught, he simply witnessed his difficult emotions, memories, desires, and worries. Throughout the clamoring, he had a slight smile on his face. The smile of inner collectedness, light-hearted levity, perhaps, some amusement about the things his ego-driven mind was dreaming up. He was calmly abiding, experiencing Four Noble Truths, bare, naked knowing. Thus, he was enlightened. Let us not forget that his enlightenment came after hours and years of sometimes frustrating efforts to find this state of mind.³

Compare this to a psychoanalytic session in which the patient has a direct, undefended re-experience of traumata after many hours, months and even years in which patient and analyst made efforts to find the sweet spot of full, bare knowing. In the Buddha's case there is no therapist, no religion, no God, and most definitely, no Buddha. What there *is* is trust in the mind's essence, in the safety of surrender to the spacious essence of mind. What can we learn from the Buddha about this enlightened state of mind that allows us to *know*, no matter how awesome or awful?

After Buddha's revelation of enlightenment, others saw and felt his change, and they asked how to follow in his footsteps. His response was the teaching that came to be known as the Four Noble Truths, which the Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor (2015) tells us is better translated as the *Fourfold Task*. These experience-near, practical directions facilitate surrender, inviting us to accept fully what is in our unconscious will and unconscious experience and to integrate that knowledge into action. The four interrelated tasks are as follows:

1. Fully comprehend suffering. This requires both effort and surrender.
2. Be aware of one's reactivity to the suffering and let it go. In other words, surrender to direct experience in body and mind, accepting whatever arises and passes. Although there are many kinds of meditation, the basic instructions for letting go suggest that each time you notice you are reacting, return to awareness of breathing, which grounds mind and body in being alive. Shifting your attention as many times as necessary to the sensations that arise as your body breathes naturally, thereby tapping into spaciousness. The effort of letting go evolves into a sense of being let go without effort.

3. Become aware of the cessation of the reactivity.
4. Once reactivity has stopped, act on the basis of the insight, wisdom, acceptance, and compassion gained by this process.

This Fourth task is further elucidated by the Buddha into the Eightfold Path, which delineates an ethical and clear-minded orientation to being, sensing, and acting in the world consisting of the principles of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Only by surrender to the truth of the moment, the truth of one's own being and the fully embodied comprehension of suffering, will your efforts, actions, and words embody vitality and be authentic and ethical. To my mind, this is a pure statement of the goals of psychoanalysis.

Trust in the more spacious aspect of mind, whether we call it the unconscious will, or mind essence, is trusting in the part of you that is wholesome, healing, and is the perfect parent, the ideal other. In the prologue to *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism* Jeremy finds himself feeling “young, soft, open and uncertain about everything” he thought he knew during an encounter with his Buddhist teacher (Safran, 2003, p. xii). Ghent (1990) says one may surrender in the presence of another, but not *to* another. Buddhist practices offer many ways to create space around our suffering, to disidentify with it, to see it in the wider context of the interconnectedness of all beings, to let go of all dualities, especially to let go of self and other, to bring compassion to your suffering, to ground your attention and awareness in breathing. In the Tibetan tradition you visualize idealized gods and goddesses who embody the ideal traits of wisdom, compassion and enlightenment and you (for the period of meditation) imagine becoming them, using these beings as transitional objects that allow you to try on and to cultivate the experience of being your best self. Buddhists believe that underneath all the pollution caused by our aversion, greed, and ignorance, we are all Buddhas. Believing this is not grandiosity and does not come easily. In fact, it is impossible to believe unless you have had some experience of it at some moment in your life—even if it is simply while experiencing the vastness of a starry night sky.

Fifteen hundred years ago, the third patriarch of Chen (Chinese Zen) wrote a poem translated as “Trust in Mind” (Soeng, 2004). He suggests you “stop talking and thinking and there is nothing you will not know” (p. 14). Once you *know* in this way, you can begin to think about what to do. The ultimate goal is to be an ethical authentic agent—in contact with your “true self,” you can begin to act rather than react.

The actual process of letting go of reactivity—of surrendering—can feel like a bad dream. Trapped in a very large and complicated maze, you don't know whether to turn right or left. You find yourself returning to the same part of the maze over and over. Alone in the maze, you are the only agent. The outcome is determined by your actions and yours alone. It starts to get dark. Panic arises. You make some impulsive moves. You calm yourself and try to think more rationally. You come up with what seems like a reasonable plan, but when it doesn't work, confusion and panic set in again. The moon comes out and for a moment you are less afraid, but then you think you are back at the beginning of the maze. You fear you will never find relief, never find the exit. Amid your panic, you remember to take a breath, and then another, and another; slowly you surrender to lostness and begin to find your way.

NOTES

1. **Sara L. Weber, PhD**, is a clinical psychologist-psychoanalyst in private practice in Brooklyn, NY. She is Adjunct Assistant Professor and Clinical Consultant at the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, and faculty of the William Alanson White Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Training Program. In 2006 she founded the Contemplative Studies Project of New York in which she teaches, leads meditation groups, and serves as the Chair.
2. Robert Langan wonders about encountering beauty and quotes Epstein (1998), who recounts "Freud's frustration when, during one of those summer strolls through the Alps, he realized how his two companions were so isolated in their thoughts that they were unable to appreciate the fleeting **beauty** of a summer flower. They would not allow themselves to feel beauty, lest they also feel loss. And, according to Epstein, Freud lacked a method to breach their isolation.. ... But from my point of view, Freud did have a method. It is as if during his mountain walks, he stumbled across a chasm at the edge of what is known. ... The Buddha, too, came across the void but instead of backing away, realized the paradoxical un-understanding ... 'Emptiness itself is form; form itself is emptiness'" (Langan, 1999, p. 91).
3. David Nichol (2006) sums up Buddha's story and the long process of his enlightenment this way: "What we know about the Buddha's life is shrouded in the mythology that is commonly combined with historical fact in the biographies of saints in early centuries. His life story was relayed verbally for some 600 years before it was written down, but these are the essentials of his life and teachings, as I have gleaned from various teachers and books: He was born with the name Siddhartha Gotama around 623 BC, the son of a wealthy head of state in northern India, in the town of Lumbini. His father hoped to raise him to be his heir and, also, wanted to isolate him from the suffering of the world, as is the tendency of many parents. For whatever reasons, the boy was confined to stay within the walls of his hometown, and as a teen he married and had a son. Naturally he developed an urge to explore outside his town, and when he did he was shocked to find people who were poverty-stricken, ill or dying, unhappy, or suffering to a degree he had not encountered in his sheltered life. He had an overpowering urge to explore more of the world and

understand more about suffering, he became more distressed himself, and he sought some relief and some answers to the great questions of the meaning of life. He met and joined with some wandering Hindu monks, who taught him practices of meditation and espoused the benefits of a life of poverty and simplicity. He practiced with great ardor for seven or eight years but was ultimately frustrated in his attempts to find relief from his own and others' unhappiness. Finally, at about the age of 30, he made a great vow to himself, to meditate and fast until he had solved the problem of suffering or until he died, which ever came first. He became starved and emaciated after six days, and his resolve took him close to death. One day a young woman saw him and was horrified and brought him a bowl of food. He ate it and had a great awakening. He was thereafter known as the Buddha, which means "awakened one." He realized that asceticism was not the way, that a "middle path" of moderation in life set a more likely path for realization, and he had a series of insights that developed into the Four Noble Truths" (Nichol, 2006, p.159-160).

REFERENCES

- Batchelor, S. (2015). *After Buddhism: Rethinking the dharma for a secular age*. Yale University Press.
- Epstein, M. (1998). Chapter 3. Meditation. In *Going to pieces without falling apart. A Buddhist perspective on wholeness*. (pp. 51–72). New York: Broadway Publications.
- Farber, L. G. (1966). *The ways of the will: Essays toward a psychology and psychopathology of will*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ghent, E. (1990). Masochism, submission, surrender: Masochism as a perversion of surrender. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 26, 108–136.
- Ghiselin, B. (1952). *The creative process: A symposium*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1985.
- Gendun Rinpoche, Venerable Lama (n.d.). Prologue – Free and easy: A spontaneous Vajra song. In *Natural great perfection: Dzogchen teachings and Vajra songs*. N. Khenpo Rinpoche. Lama Surya Das (Trans.). (pp. 11–12). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications. 1995.
- Khenpo Rinpoche, N. (1995). *Natural great perfection: Dzogchen teachings and Vajra songs*. Lama Surya Das (Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Langan, R. (1999). What on closer examination disappears. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 59, 87–96.
- Mingyur Rinpoche, Y. (2019). *In love with the world: A monk's journey through the bardos of living and dying*. With H. Twerkov. London: Bluebird Books. 2021.
- Nichol, D. (2006). Buddhism and psychoanalysis: A personal reflection. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 66, 157–172.
- O'Hearn, B. (2014). View and conduct. *The conscious process*. May 6. [Web Site] <https://theconsciousprocess.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/view-and-conduct/>
- Safran, J. (Ed.). (2003). *Buddhism and psychoanalysis: An unfolding dialogue*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Soeng, M. (2004). *Trust in mind: The rebellion of Chinese Zen*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Tsoknyi, Rinpoche (2003). *Fearless simplicity: The Dzogchen way of living freely in a complex world*. E. P. Kunsang & M. B. Schmit (Compiled & Trans.). K. Moran

(Ed.). Forward by Sogyal Rinpoche. Boudhanath, Hong Kong & Esby: Rangjung Yeshe Publications.

Weber, S. L. (2003). An analyst's surrender. In *Buddhism and psychoanalysis: An unfolding dialogue*. J. Safran (Ed.). (pp. 169–188). Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.