CHAPTER III

PRAJNA IN ZEN PHILOSOPHY: EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's proposal of a Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure for the discovery of a text's discourse touches on a controversial issue in contemporary theories on reading and interpretation. Since the "linguistic turn"[1], the dominant view among literary theorists is that each individual is inescapably trapped in his/her subjective, culturally and historically determined, use of language. Discussing the two main approaches to texts in the 1980s, phenomenological hermeneutics and poststructuralist Deconstruction, Manfred Frank (1989) notes that "the epistemological subject is no longer the lord of his being but acquires his 'self-understanding' in the semiotic context of a world into whose structure a certain interpretation of the meaning of being has entered". Thus, intersubjective understanding is held to be limited, especially in the context of reading.

Opinions differ as to the degree of the limitation. At one end of the spectrum are the Subjective Reader Response theorists (e.g. David Bleich) and Poststructuralist Deconstructionists (e.g. Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, & J. Hillis Miller), for whom the text is like a Rorschach inkblot, evoking in each reader an infinite range of subjective responses and possible meanings presumed to have nothing to do with what the author had in mind. At the other end of the spectrum are the phenomenological hermeneutists (e.g. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Wolfgang Iser), who argue that shared history, culture and language create a liminal space between the reader and the text. In this liminal space creative imagination, insight, and empathy come into play, enabling concretization and interpretation. But because subjectivity is inescapable, reading is "a dialectic of distanciation and appropriation" (Ricoeur 1976: 43); and the meaning produced by the reader "cannot be identical with the text or with the [reader's] concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two" (Iser 1978: 21). When I speak then of the Zen-based

Procedure as a procedure for the “discovery of discourse”, the questions that come to mind are: Whose discourse is being discovered? Is it the reader’s or the author’s? Is it something in between? Or are such questions irrelevant?

In Zen, too, these questions are asked in relation to the reading and understanding of Buddhist texts. What does the reader of *sutras* read and understand—the Buddha’s teachings, the reader’s own version of the teachings, or something in between? In other words, has the reader understood the teachings as the Buddha intended them to be understood? And how would the reader know? The difference is that in Zen, the problem presented by subjective readings and understandings of texts is not purely of theoretical interest to Zen philosophers. It is of practical and soteriological importance because it is held that unless one has understood the teachings as they are intended to be understood, one cannot achieve the same enlightenment as the Buddha’s. And without achieving the same enlightenment, one cannot guide others to enlightenment and bring a universal end to conflict, which is Zen’s sole purpose and ultimate aim.

The Zen solution to the problem of subjectivity is the development of *prajna* (“insight” or “wisdom”). The various Buddhist schools have their own approaches to the development of *prajna*, but the basic methodology is the same. It consists of three stages: first, reading and understanding of texts; second, contemplation or analysis of what one has understood of the texts; and third, meditation. One of the objectives of the present study is to derive from discourses on the first and second stages of this basic methodology the theoretical framework for the Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure. The purpose of this and the next chapter is therefore to explain why the development of *prajna* is fundamental to the concept and design of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. This chapter presents the epistemological foundations of *prajna* and the reasons for its centrality in Zen philosophy. The next chapter, Chapter IV, explores how the epistemological theory translates into Zen critical practice, with emphasis on how *prajna* is developed in and through the Zen approach to texts.

The discussion following this Introduction (3.1) is divided into four sections. Section 3.2 outlines the purpose, scope, and limits of Zen philosophy. Section 3.3 presents the Zen theory of cognition in order to establish that in Zen, the cognitive process itself is identified as the originating point of subjectivity and subjectivity-related factors leading to psychological and social conflicts. Section 3.4 explains the Zen strategy aimed at

intervening in the subjectivity-to-conflict trajectory of the basic cognitive process and reorienting the mind and its workings towards insight, wisdom, and the end of conflict. *Prajna* plays a vital role in this strategy for cognitive change and I shall discuss the concept of *prajna* in some detail because it is crucial to the design of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. Section 3.5 briefly discusses four Zen philosophical theories justifying the claim that cognitive habits can be changed in a radical way. These four theories are basic to Zen and have implications for the Zen approach to texts, which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

In the discussion that follows, the words "subject" and "object" are used to mean "perceiver/knower/thinker" and "that which is perceivable/knowable/thought" respectively. The word "subjectivity" is used to mean the perceiver's consciousness that he/she is the "I" who is "the perceiver of perceivables" etc; it is never used to mean the opposite of "objectivity", a word used generally to mean a state of mind "uncoloured by feelings or opinions" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). Likewise, the word "subjective" is used to describe perceptions, views, and thoughts marked by "subjectivity" as just defined; it is never used to mean the opposite of "objective" in the sense of "uncoloured by feelings and opinions".

3. 2 PURPOSE OF ZEN PHILOSOPHY: THE END OF CONFLICT

The teachings of Gautama Buddha[2] (ca. 563-483 B.C.E.) are based on three philosophical insights: that the phenomenal world is marked by impermanence (*anicca*); that the individual's inner life is marked by "no-self" (*anatta*) or absence of an essentially unchanging entity; and that human existence is marked by "suffering" or "dis-ease" (*duhkha*).[3] Fundamental to these three insights is the doctrine (or theory) of dependent-origination (*pratityasamutpada*), which states that the universe is not a static container, so to speak, of individually created, independently-existing and essentially unchanging things; but rather, a dynamically changing network of interrelated phenomena—thoughts, language, concepts, people, things, actions, and events—continually arising and fading as they are conditioned by, and in turn condition, the arising and fading of other phenomena. In this universe of perpetual flux, there is no "being"; there is only "becoming".

The principle of dependent-origination applied to the person is the doctrine of "no-self". Since the time of the Buddha, the term "no-self" has given rise to the misconception that he denied the existence of a self.[4] Like most Buddhist doctrines, this doctrine is not about ontology. The doctrine of dependent-origination, which is the essence of Buddhism's

"middle way", does not allow absolute affirmation or denial of the ontological existence of anything.[5] In Buddhism, the self is analysed into five "aggregates"—physical body, feelings, perception, predispositions, and consciousness—and these aggregates are changing from moment to moment, just like everything else in the dependently-originating universe. So while the existence of the self conceived as an essentially unchanging entity is denied, the self conceived as a stream of dynamically changing aggregates is not denied. The main idea in the doctrine of no-self is that the cause of the dis-ease, suffering and conflicts of the world is the discrepancy between our belief in our "self" as having an essentially unchanging nature and identity on the one hand, and on the other, the reality of our experience of ourselves as being subject to change. In other words, the doctrine of no-self is about the way we perceive and speak about ourselves and the world; and it is fundamentally linked to the doctrine of *duhkha*.

The doctrine of *duhkha* states that the belief in an essentially unchanging self has its roots in the cognitive process[6], and it leads to three psychological problems, which eventually become social problems. The first problem is a craving for permanence that can never be satisfied; the second is the feeling of superiority, enmity, or envy arising from the propensity to view the world in terms of a self-other or subject-object polarity; the third is the propensity to form concepts and views about the nature of the self and then to adhere dogmatically to them (Nanananda 1971: 10). The causal linking of social conflict back to the cognitive process defines the purpose and methodological content of Zen philosophy. The "goal of spiritual endeavour in Buddhism" (Nanananda 1971: 12) is to bring an end to conflict by eradicating subjectivity; and the method of eradicating subjectivity is by changing cognitive habits.[7] In short, the Buddha's aim was not to set up a competing religious, metaphysical, or political system; but to guide humanity to an understanding of how we can bring an end to human conflict by aligning the way we perceive and speak of ourselves and the world to the reality of empirical experience.

3.2.1 Scope and limits of Zen discourses

The Buddha's soteriological aim defines the scope and limits of his teachings. He explicitly proscribed the discussion of topics that are beyond conjecture[8], beyond the range of human sensory and mental perceptions and language[9], purely speculative[10], and disputatious[11]. His main concern was to guide his followers along the "middle way" path to an enlightened knowledge of reality for the sake of psychological health and social harmony.[12]

3.2.2 Zen concepts of reality and enlightenment

Since "enlightenment" and "knowledge of reality" are also objectives of philosophical inquiry and spiritual contemplation in other thought systems, I shall define what these terms mean in Zen. The Zen concept of reality is defined by the doctrines of impermanence and no-self. Since everything is changing from moment to moment, there is no permanent "reality" because the way things are right now is not what it was a nano-second ago, or what it will be in the next nano-second. Therefore, the only "real" is the way things are in all their unique particularity at this very moment. Kenneth K. Inada (1988: 263-264) explains:

> …the Buddha's message was a philosophy of the present or an understanding of the nature of the momentary nows in the quest for enlightenment. … The Buddha repeatedly emphasised that "the past should not be followed after, the future not desired" and, in turn, that one ought to concentrate on the present things, that is, present happenings. … The self … does not exist in this moment-to-moment continuum; if reference is made to it at all, then it would be in terms of what has already transpired. … [I]n the reality of pot-making there is neither the potter nor the pot, but only pottering.

In other words, even as I type these words, a number of realities (i.e. moments) have already arisen passed away.

The knowledge of these momentary realities "as they are" is *bodhi* ("awakening" or "awakeness") usually translated as "enlightenment"[13]. *Bodhi* is more than just an intellectual understanding of the concept of reality as a series of "momentary nows". It is a personal, direct, and immediate (i.e. unmediated by language or concepts) experience of the reality. This experience is attained only after one has accomplished the Perfections (i.e. generosity, virtue, patience, vigour, one-pointed concentration, and *prajna*)[14]; has totally eradicated delusion, greed, hate, and ego-consciousness; and has fully understood the nature of human suffering. The eradication of ego-consciousness means the eradication of the consciousness, "I am the perceiver"[15], so that all phenomena are experienced without the subject-object polarity. The world is realised as "void … of anything that is self or of anything that belongs to self" as well as all the linguistic notions that "are part and parcel of our phenomenal world of relative concepts" (Nanananda 1971: 64-5). The result is "*nirvana*", described by the Buddha as follows:

> … that sphere wherein there is neither earth nor water, no fire, no air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite-space, nor that of infinite consciousness, nor that of nothingness, nor that of neither-perception-nor-no-perception; wherein there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor moon and sun. There … is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away, no arising. It is not established; it continues not, it has no object. This, indeed, is the end of suffering. (*Udana 80*, Pali Canon; translated by Nanananda *ibid*: 63ff)

The Buddha is not describing *nirvana* in terms of a metaphysical sphere or a literal merging-into-one of the universe, but a concept- and language-free experience of the world we live in. If we place all the nominatives in the above excerpt within quotation marks, it will become clearer that *nirvana* is being described as the experience of things as they are, without a perceiver-consciousness aware of itself as perceiver. There is no "earth", "water", "moon", "sun", "this world", "a world beyond" and so on because there is no perceiver-consciousness to differentiate, discriminate, designate (i.e. use language to identify differences) and form concepts. And there is no "coming", "going", "stopping", "passing away" or "arising" because without a perceiver viewpoint to relativise phenomenal change, concepts denoting motion and time are meaningless. This passage, then, points indirectly to the impact of subjectivity and language-use on the way we construct our concepts of reality.

3.3 LINKING COGNITION, SUBJECTIVITY AND CONFLICT

According to the Buddha, we do not ordinarily experience reality in the "*nirvan*ic" way described above because when we become conscious of anything our minds are preconditioned to "manage" the information received through the physical sense-organs by discriminating, dividing, and describing the experiences. This information-management process is influenced by psychological factors such as co-natal predispositions (e.g. the instinct for survival), emotions, and memories. Our concepts of reality are not just linguistically but psycho-linguistically constructed. And it is through this psycho-linguistic process that we construct our concept of the self as subject.

3.3.1 Zen theory of cognition and the rise of subjectivity

To understand how this psycho-linguistic process gives rise to subjectivity, it is necessary to know the fundamentals of the Zen theory of cognition. For this discussion, I shall use the 6-

Consciousness model of Early Buddhism. In Zen, the mind is a sense organ; so the cognitive system is conceptualised as having six sense organs: the mind, and the five physical sense organs.[16] Each sense organ has its own consciousness and its own sense-object, as shown in Figure 3.1.

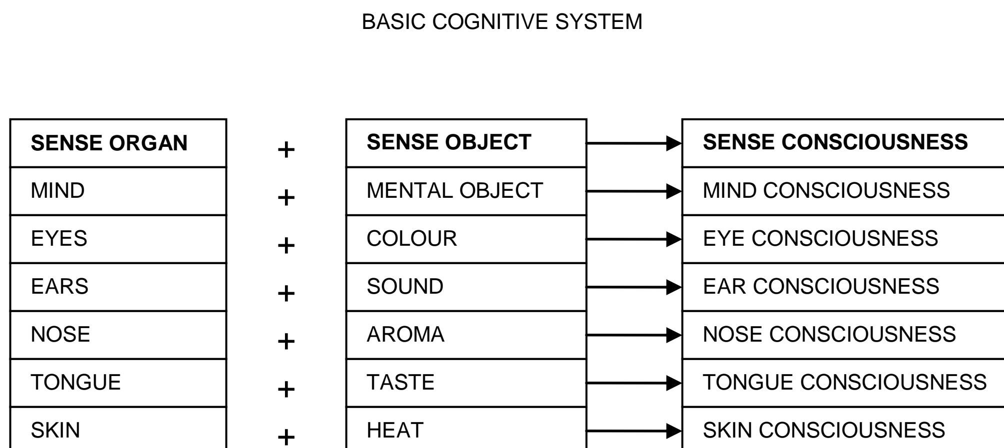

Figure 3.1 The arising of consciousness: 6-consciousness model

The basic tenet of Zen cognitive theory is that when a sense organ comes into contact with its sense object, consciousness arises; and the arising of consciousness sets off a complex series of psycho-linguistic events we call cognition[17], shown in Figure 3.2[18]. The figure shows only the sequence of a single thought. Time-scales are irrelevant because, according to the Pali Canon's *Abhidhamma* ("Higher Teachings") one unit of thought is "3,000,000,000,000 per the duration of a lightning flash" (Ranasinghe 1957: 94).

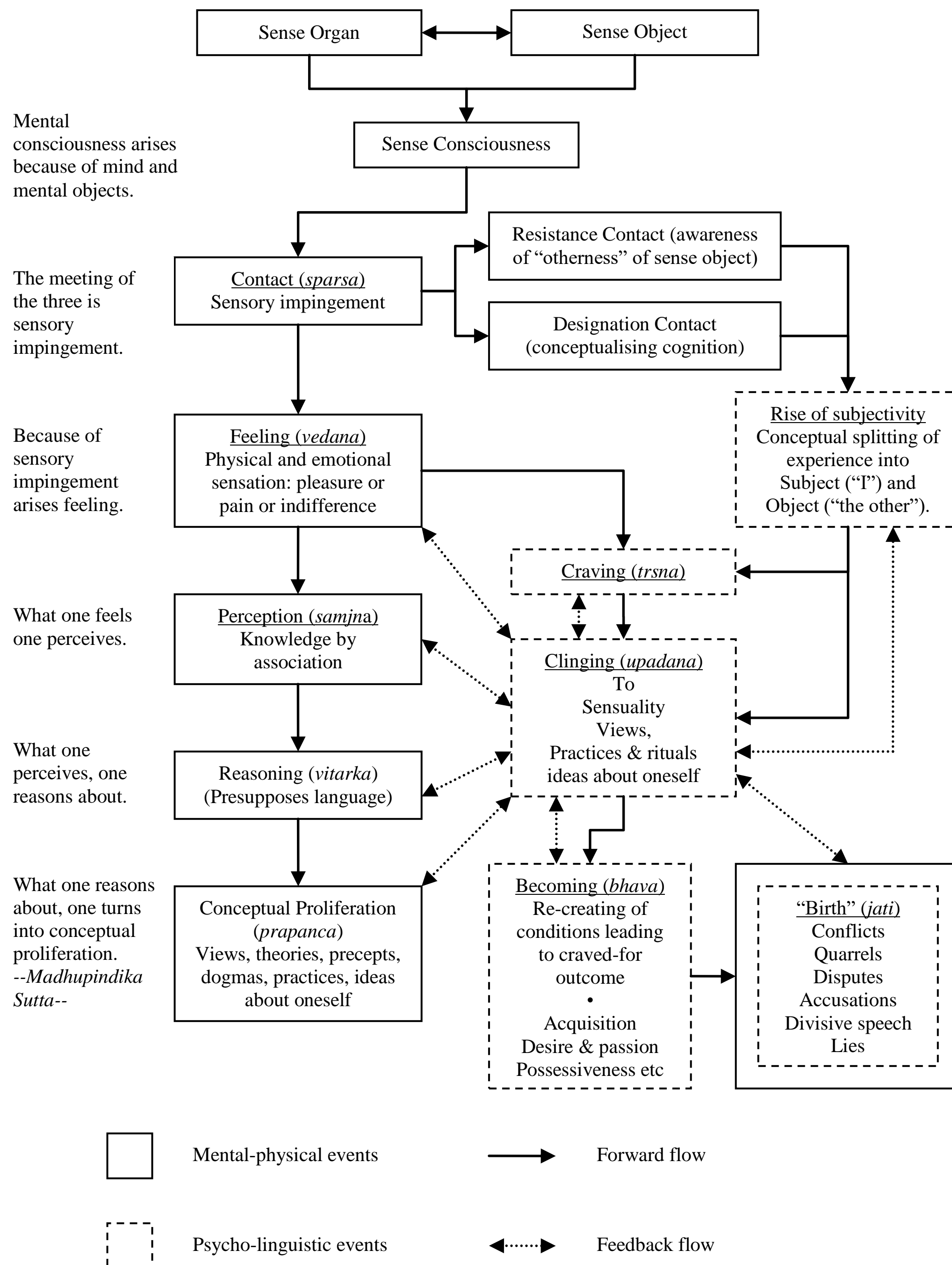

Figure 3.2 Cognitive process: origination of subjectivity and its problems

It will be seen from Figure 3.2 that subjectivity originates at an early stage in the cognitive process. At the point of "Contact", the sense-object is experienced as sensory impingement. The sensory impingement has two aspects: a Resistance-Contact which we may think of as the discriminatory awareness of the "otherness" of the sense object; and a Designation-Contact, which is the propensity to identify things by name or concept. It is

worth noting here that the Sanskrit for Resistance-Contact is *pratighasparsa*; and *pratigha* by itself means "anger". In other words, there is always an element of hostility implied in discrimination or cognition of otherness. The outcome of the tendency to discriminate and designate is the splitting of the total experience into a self-other, perceiver-perceived or subject-object polarity. Through discrimination and designation, the reality of the experience (e.g. "pottering") is conceptually split into a subject (e.g. "I, the potter") and an object (e.g. "the pot" or "my pot"). From this point on, perception[19] is influenced by subjectivity; and the cognitive process sets the "self" on a trajectory of potential conflict with the "not-self".

Since there is a parallel between this splitting of experience into a subject-object polarity and the convention in literary theory of splitting the act of reading into the reader-text polarity, it is necessary, for the purpose of this study, to identify exactly where in the cognitive process this conceptual splitting of experiences becomes problematic, and why.

3.3.2 From subjectivity to conflict: impact of *upadana* and *prapanca* on reasoning power

I shall outline first the basic subjectivity-influenced cognitive process, paying special attention to the key conflict-causing factors, namely *upadana* ("appropriation" or "clinging") and *prapanca* ("conceptual proliferation"), and then explain why they are problematic. Going back to Figure 3.2, "Feeling" refers primarily to physical sensations, and secondarily to their effect, psychological sensations. Thus the physical sensations of sweetness, bitterness, and blandness on the tongue give rise to psychological responses of pleasure, displeasure, and indifference. These psychological sensations then give rise to Craving—for more sweetness-pleasure, for example. Craving is potentially problematic because it implies discriminatory hate for the thing opposite to what it craves for, and this discrimination has an impact on perception and behaviour. When Craving for sweetness-pleasure (which implies dislike for bitterness or blandness) takes control of the individual, Craving has developed into the problem of Clinging (*upadana*)[20]. A simple example: a child, whose Craving for sweet drinks has developed into Clinging, may object strongly to drinking plain water, and this would bring him into conflict with his parents.

In Zen discourse, *upadana* is identified as the root problematic of human conflict; so the term has to be defined more precisely. *Upadana* is often translated as "clinging" or "appropriation". Both translations do not communicate its full implications, so I shall retain

the Sanskrit. *Upadana* is the aspect of consciousness that takes hold of a craving and keeps it going by providing sustenance for it. It has a symbiotic relationship with Craving. It depends on the existence of Craving for its own existence; therefore by sustaining Craving, it sustains itself. Figure 3.2 shows the crucial role played by *upadana* in the cognitive process. The dotted "feedback flow" arrows in the diagram indicate that it has a relationship of mutual reinforcement with nearly every step in the cognitive process. This is because it draws upon the world of physical and mental phenomena—form, feelings, perception, mental processes, passion, desire, and consciousness itself—to produce *prapanca* (conceptual proliferation) for Craving to feed on.[21]

Prapanca is usually translated as "conceptual proliferation" (Nanananda 1971: 5) or "mere play of concepts" (Katz 1981: 320). According to Nanananda (1971: 5-6*)*, the word is often used to denote "verbosity or circumlocution", but has more serious implications. *Prapanca* is proliferative and diffusive thought hinting at "the tendency of the worldling's imagination to break loose and run riot". It tends to "obscure the true state of affairs inasmuch as it is an unwarranted deviation giving rise to obsession". More seriously, it marks the cessation of cognition as a deliberative act, and the beginning of the cogniser's loss of control over his ability to know reality. Nanananda (*ibid*) explains:

> At this final stage of sense-perception, he who has hitherto been the subject now becomes the hapless object. … Like the legendary resurrected tiger which devoured the magician who restored it to life out of its skeletal bones, the concepts and linguistic conventions overwhelm the worldling who evolved them.

In Buddhism, any kind of thinking or conceptualising implies the use of linguistic conventions, since it is impossible to think without some kind of language. So the phrase "concepts and linguistic conventions" would include views, theories, precepts, dogmas, practices, and one's ideas about oneself, as indicated in Figure. 3.2.

Let us now consider how *upadana* and *prapanca* work together to give rise to conflict. As has been explained, the dotted "feedback flow" arrows in Figure 3.2 show how *upadana* draws "raw material" from Feelings, Perception, etc and converts them into *prapanca*. The products of *prapanca* are then fed back into *upadana*, from where they re-enter the cognitive system. What this means is that the cognitive process becomes a closed circuit; the progress of cognition as an activity of creative reasoning is obstructed; and the

whole cognitive system is turned into a "food-factory" for Craving. The outcome, "Becoming", is reduced to the mere conceptual and material **re-creating** of the conditions that first gave rise to Craving. The process finally finds "Birth" in thoughts, speech and actions; and this is when Craving's inherent narcissism and discriminatory hate of the "other" is transferred from the psychological sphere to the sphere of language and discourse, giving rise to social conflict.

For example, in everyday discourse (and in reading), *upadana* causes us to respond to and use words in ways we are accustomed to and feel comfortable with. Misunderstandings with our interlocutors usually arise from our inability or unwillingness to distinguish between what words signify in general parlance (i.e. what they denote) and what they mean to us subjectively (i.e. what they connote). The word "rainforest", for example, is conventionally used to denote a type of forest that occurs naturally in areas lying along the equatorial belt. But it is likely to have very different connotations for the conservation-minded ecologist on the one hand, and the logging entrepreneur on the other. Conflict arises when each party is so attached to the connotation of his or her choice that the rainforest is no longer seen as it is: the logger cannot see the forest for the ("economically important") trees, and the conservationist cannot see the trees for the ("ecologically important") forest. To sustain their perceptions of the trees and forest, which may be coloured by their craving for self-validation in the form of peer-recognition, for instance, or dynastic wealth, *upadana* will evoke in each a desire to negate the validity of the other, and *prapanca* will cooperate by conceptualising an identity for his/her "self" and an opposing one for the "other". The conservationist may think of himself as a "saviour" and of the logger as a "destroyer" of world ecology; while the logging entrepreneur thinks of himself as a "provider of employment" or "server of market needs", and of the conservationist as an "idealistic troublemaker". *Upadana* will then cause them to adhere dogmatically to their self-perceptions, and *prapanca* will reinforce the dogmatic attitude with some form of ideological justification (e.g. "save the world" versus "market-driven economy"). Finally the process gives "birth" to public arguments and debates, which could go round in an unending circle until and unless something happens to make one or both parties change their minds.

At this juncture two distinctive aspects of the Zen approach to conflicts must be pointed out to explain why the development of *prajna* is so central to Zen philosophy, and therefore important for the present study. First, in a conflict situation like the one just described, an intelligent onlooker might suggest that the contending parties view the

situation from a different viewpoint or perspective. In contrast, Zen philosophers would require that they forget about viewpoints and perspectives altogether and focus on learning a new way of perceiving and speaking about themselves and the world. Second, the Zen philosophers' approach is not based on a moral, religious, or ontological system. It is based entirely on their investigation of perception and language as valid means of knowledge[22], and their conclusion that both are unreliable because they are open to defect, changeable, and quite remote from the reality they are supposed to perceive and describe.

3.3.3 The doctrine of "no-self" and the knowledge of reality

The most distinctive feature of the Zen concept of enlightenment (or the knowledge of reality "as it is") is the insistence that the I-consciousness be totally absent in the experience. This means that subjectivity in all its aspects must be rooted out. It is not just craving for things that must be eradicated, but even the craving to be free of craving (Nanananda 1971: 30). It is not just the adherence to views that must be eradicated, but also all "propensities" towards the formation of views and viewpoints (*ibid*: 40). As for the subject-object polarity, it is not enough merely to try and find a liminal space in between the "self" and "other"; the polarity itself must be seen through as a mental fiction and completely demolished.[23] In other words, the term "no-self" is a description of the enlightenment experience.[24] The analysis of the self into five ever-changing aggregates is not a theoretical deconstruction of the self; it is a training exercise to prepare the mind for the desired end-state at enlightenment, which is that there be "no notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life" (Lu K'uan Yu, trans. 1982 *Vajracchedika-prajna-paramita sutra*, p. 2 *et passim*). For at enlightenment, even the concept of the self as a stream of ever-changing aggregates has to be absent, because it is only a concept, and therefore as much a fiction or mental construct as any other concept of the self.

This thoroughgoing negation of any concept of the self (which implies the negation of any conceptual thinking and language-use) seems at first glance to be a far cry from Buddhism's acclaimed "middle way". Those who understand "no-self" to mean "selflessness" in the moral sense of altruism may consider it extreme to the point of self-annihilation. Those who understand "no-self" as an ontological position will judge it as nihilistic. But Zen is not an ontological system, as has been noted (3.2); nor is it primarily a moral system, as is stated in verse 337 of the *Vimukti Sangraha*, (quoted by W.F. Jayasuriya 1976: x):

> Tathagatas [i.e. 'Thus-come Ones', a title given to Buddhas] are not born to establish Moral Practice. … [*Anicca*, *Duhkha*, *Anatta*] are the cause of their appearance.

The implication of this verse is that in order to understand the negation of self in the way it is understood in Zen, it is necessary to examine it in the light of Zen doctrines. It will then be seen that the negation of self is the inevitable outcome of the systematic application of the logic of dependent-origination to the question of whether perception and language are valid means of knowledge[25]. The following is an overview of the main ideas resulting from this application of logic.

3.3.4 Zen critique of perception as a means of knowledge

To Zen philosophers, ordinary, everyday perception is defective as a means of knowledge. From Gautama Buddha onwards, Buddhist philosophers have held that perceptions arise out of the interdependent relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. As shown in the above discussion of Zen cognitive theory, knowledge of the phenomenal world is held to be the result of contact between the six sense organs (the mind is regarded as a sense-organ) and their sense objects. Since perception is a "body-and-mind" experience, it follows that the act of perceiving is conditioned by physical laws as well as by the perceiver's physical and mental state. Applying the logic of dependent-origination, the first assumption about perception is that by its very nature it must be capable of being defective.

In *Vigrahavyavartani* or "Averting Disputes" (Bhattacharya, trans. 1986: 124), Nagarjuna used logic to argue that the validity of perception as a means of knowledge is not "self-evident" because the only evidence we have is perception, and it is not logical to establish the validity of perception by perception itself. In the fifth century, Dignaga listed several causes of erroneous perceptions, including sense organs that are defective either from birth or due to old-age and ill health, mental illusions resulting from the belief that words (e.g. "blue") refer to actual, independently existing entities, misinterpretation of sense impressions (e.g. mistaking a mirage for water), preconceptions (e.g. the imposition of memories of past experiences on the present), and the simple failure to perceive due to inattentiveness or ignorance (Mookerjee 1980: 275).

A more revolutionary critique of perception as a valid means of knowledge was launched in the fourth century by Vasubandhu, who propounded the theory[26] that (even if a

person had none of the above conditions) perception is unreliable as a means of knowledge simply because of the way the mind receives and processes sense-data. Although the mind is regarded as a sense-organ, it is not a physical sense-organ and cannot perceive things directly, as the physical senses do. The mind's sense-objects are not things-in-themselves, but only impressions or reflections transmitted to it by the physical sense-consciousnesses which it then "translates" into concepts (Vasubandhu's theory of how this happens will be explained in the next chapter, 4.3). Applying the logic of dependent-origination and the doctrine of impermanence to the issue, Vasubandhu argued that the epistemological problem presented by the mind's indirect perception of things is compounded by the momentariness of all phenomena, mental and physical. Since nothing stays unchanged for even one nano-second, by the time the mind receives the percept, identifies it, and processes it into a psycho-linguistic unit, the concept formed would be only a record of a momentary phenomenon that no longer is. What is perceived by the mind is neither the thing-in-itself nor the thing-in-itself now. *Ergo*, perceptions have little to do with the reality of the material world.

3.3.5 Zen critique of language as a means of knowledge

The unreliability of perception as a means of knowing reality is complicated by the fact that in order to speak about the experience of perception, one has to form concepts; and to form concepts, one has to use language. And in Zen, language is even less reliable than perception as a means of knowledge because it has inherently nothing at all to do with reality. The Zen theory of language, expounded throughout various Mahayana *sutras* (e.g. the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, and the *Avatamsaka Sutra*), is that language is "an artificial creation" (*Lankavatara Sutra*, Suzuki, trans. 1978: 91) that "make[s] mutual conversations possible" (*ibid*, 134). Like everything else in the Zen universe, words come into being as a result of dependent-origination. Human utterances become associated with objects and ideas through social agreement and conventional usage and eventually become thought of as "words" and "meanings". The words do not however correspond to their referents in any way except by social convention; and these conventions can change over time and according to usage. This non-correspondent theory of language was later developed and formulated into a non-referential theory known as the "doctrine of *apoha*"[27], usually attributed to Dignaga. According to the doctrine, the word used to distinguish one object from another does not tell us what the object is; it merely indicates what the object is not. The word "apple", for instance, is used

to denote that it is “not-orange” or “not-tree”. It should not therefore be inferred that there is any metaphysical, grammatical, logical, or referential “appleness” in the word “apple”.

For the Zen philosopher, then, perception and language are so far removed from reality that every time we describe an experience of perception, we create fictions. These fictions are not considered as outright lies. They are like literary fiction: not real in an absolute sense, yet not entirely divorced from reality, because the words are used in conformity with social convention (see “two-truth” theory, 3.5.4). The fact that we create fictions every time we use language is not the problem. The problem is that to begin with, the fictions created are based on indirect impressions of events, which are not real because they are no longer present, as has been explained. Further, the way we use language to narrate experiences is always partial; partial in the sense of being incomplete as well as in the sense of being coloured by egocentric views and emotions. When we think or speak of an experience—e.g. “I see a brown cow chewing its cud under the *angsana* tree”—we have immediately “fictionalised”[28] the experience because the reality of the experience is a great deal more complex. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we would also have been peripherally seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting and thinking other things in that moment of seeing the cow. At the same time the fiction-making is deeply coloured by egocentricity. That our attention is focused on the cow is already an indication of our unspoken predilections and predispositions: e.g. “*I* think it’s a pretty sight”; “Cows make *me* nervous”; “What’s that cow doing in a place where, in *my* opinion, it shouldn’t be?”[29] The most serious problem for Zen philosophers, however, is that the conventional use of language reinforces the latent subjectivity, which from the moment of cognition has alienated the perceiver from the perceived. For implicit in the sentence are the concept of a perceiving subject (“I” in the sentence) and the concept of perceived objects (“cow” and “tree”). These, according to Zen, are mental constructs revealing humanity’s deeply ingrained, unconscious, unquestioning acceptance of yet another mental construct, the subject-object polarity, “as the very essence of cognition” (Nanananda 1971: 10).

3.3.6 Zen critique of the subject-object polarity as the “essence of cognition”

In Zen, the fundamental problem presented by subjectivity is that it is so deeply entrenched in the human psyche. Viewed in the light of dependent-origination, it is both the cause and the effect of the failure to see (a) that perception involves not only the mind but the totality of aggregates—mental, emotional, physical, intentional, mnemonic and verbal—constituting

what we call “a person”; (b) that this totality of changing aggregates involved in the act of perceiving is not separate from but continuous with whatever is being perceived; and (c) that both perceiver and perceived are not self-existent “beings” but interdependently, mutually constituted “becomings” involved in a change-process, where every “momentary now” offers opportunities for self-renewal and a new way of perceiving things.

It is in the context of dependent-origination that the doctrine of no-self has to be understood. In this framework, no-one and nothing has self-identity except in relation to other people and things. Nagarjuna explains it thus in *Sunyatasaptati-karika* or *The Septuagint on Emptiness* (Chr. Lindtner, trans. 1987: 61):

> Since consciousness … arises dependent on a discernible object…, the discernible does not exist [in itself]. Since [the conscious subject] does not exist without the discernible [object] and consciousness, therefore the conscious subject does not exist [by himself].

If “self” does not come into existence without an “other”, terms like “self” or “subject” and “other” or “object”, as well as the oppositional relationship conceived between them, are “convenient fiction[s] of thought or a short-hand device” (Nananada 1971: 10). They are useful for describing and communicating particular experiences in particular contexts (e.g. the reader-text relationship). However, to mistake them for “givens” or “things-in-themselves” endowed with independent existence, unchanging essence, and distinct identity is to allow our perceptions to be controlled by our descriptions, like magicians who conjure up illusions with magical chants and then falling victim to their own magic, or fiction writers who believe in the substantiality of their fictional worlds.

3.3.7 The soteriological importance of cognitive change

For the Zen philosopher, the states of delusion just described have more than just a clinical interest[30]; they are a matter of world importance, because it is held that whatever one thinks will ultimately be made manifest through one’s speech and actions. The *Maha-Prajnaparamita Sastra* (Ramanan, trans. 1978: 71) states:

> The world around us is a reflection of the condition of our mind; we do deeds that build the world for us exactly in the way we interpret to ourselves the reality of things.

The perception that there is a direct causal relationship between mental constructs of reality and the physical construction (and possible destruction) of the world explains why *prajna* is so important in Zen. If ordinary, psycho-linguistically charged perception is unreliable as a means of knowing reality as it is, then cognitive habits must be changed. Figure 3.3 is a simple schematic of the Zen three-pronged strategy for changing cognitive habits.

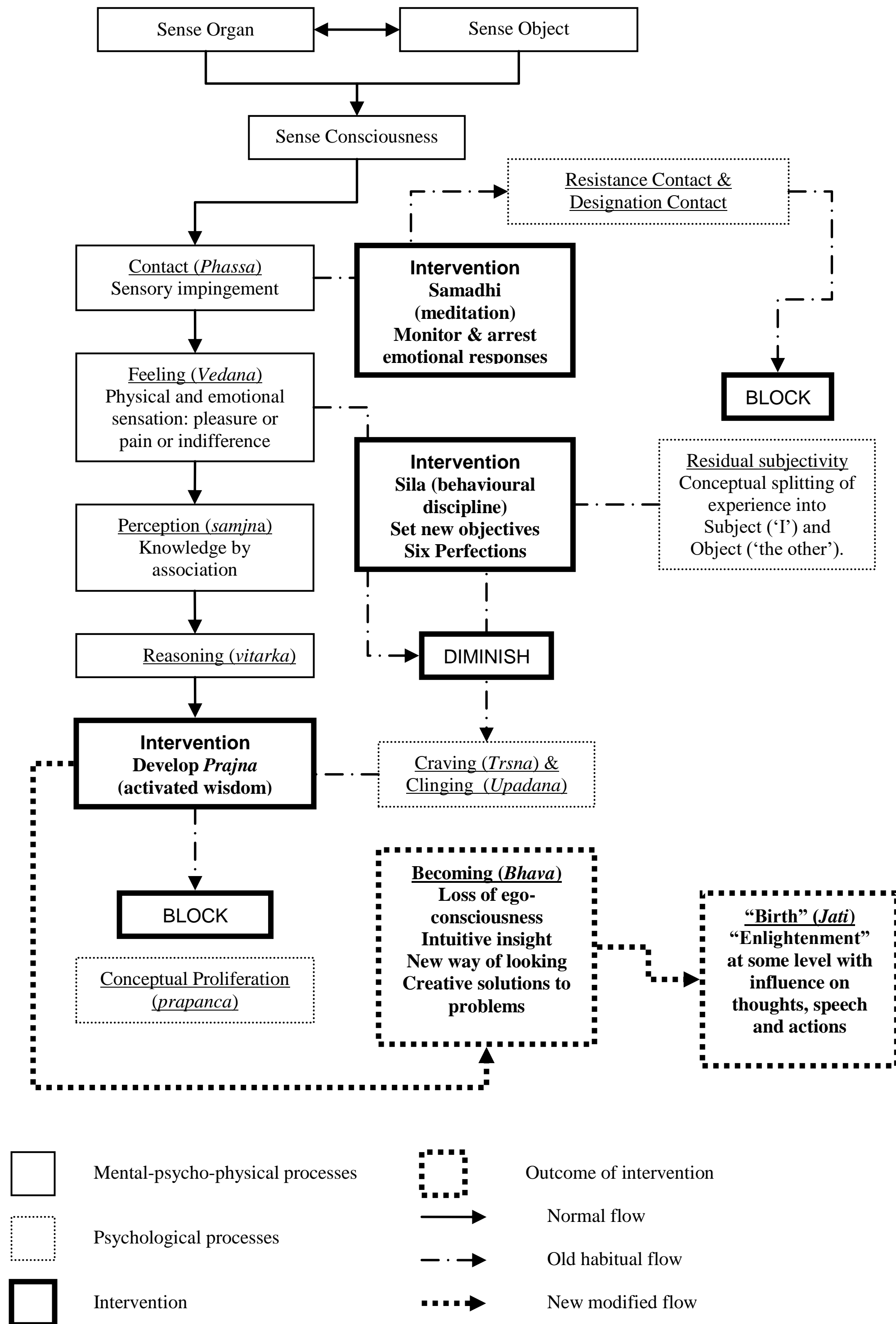

Figure 3.3 Zen three-pronged strategy for changing cognitive habits

The three-pronged strategy for changing cognitive habits is the basis of Zen practice. It consists of *sila* (behavioural discipline), *samadhi* (meditation), and *prajna*. One way to explain how this strategy works is with a medical analogy. If egocentricity (or subjectivity)

is the disease, then *samadhi* stops its advance by monitoring and arresting egocentric responses to experiences, *sila* consists of the lifestyle changes required to resist and fight the disease, and *prajna* is the team that examines, diagnoses, and performs the surgery, cutting away the diseased parts and finally extricating its root, which is the unthinking acceptance of and adherence to the subject-object polarity. In praxis, the three aspects (*sila*, *samadhi*, and *prajna*) work synergistically and overlap. But as this analogy suggests, *prajna* is the key player in the overcoming of subjectivity.

3.4 *PRAJNA* (WISDOM): AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE

Prajna is of crucial importance in Zen philosophy because enlightenment cannot be achieved without it. There are countless stories in Zen literature of people who have been virtuous all their lives without becoming enlightened; and total villains who through *prajna*'s penetrating insight are enlightened in an instant, and go on to become Buddhas. But what exactly is *prajna*?

English-language literature on *prajna* offers a confusing number of definitions. *Prajna* has been translated as "wisdom", "insight", "cognitive acuity", "know-how", "understanding", "discernment", "intelligence", "common sense", "intuition" and "ingenuity". Sometimes, the descriptions seem to contradict one another. D.T. Suzuki (1964: 88) describes it as an "intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding". Dan Lusthaus (2002: 116), on the other hand, includes as aspects of *prajna* precisely the kind of mental activity that requires "intellectual and logical understanding"; for example, "analytic scrutiny" and "establishing, validating and using 'valid means of knowledge' [according to] the rules of logic and proof". My research shows that *prajna* can mean all the above, depending on the context. In this section and the next, I shall attempt to define *prajna* and how it works by placing its different aspects in their contexts.

3.4.1 Defining *prajna*

Prajna is a cognitive faculty. Etymologically (Low 1998), the word *prajna* means literally "pure, non-reflected awareness" (*jna*) that is "aroused" (*pra*). It is also wisdom. According to Hui Neng (7th century), the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen school, *jnana* (wisdom) is the "quintessence" of *prajna*, and *prajna* is the "activity" of *jnana*; "they are inseparably united

and are not two entities".[31] The *Maha-Prajnaparamita Sastra*[32] (Ramanan, trans. 1978: 116-117) distinguishes between two ways of understanding *prajna*—in terms of ultimate reality (i.e. without a perceiver perspective) and in terms of relative reality (i.e. with a perceiver perspective). In terms of ultimate reality, *prajna* is wisdom, that is, non-discriminating, non-rationalising, non-conceptualising knowing, where "there cannot be found (even the distinction of) ignorance and knowledge" (*ibid:* 116). It is "the permanent principle of knowledge", and it is the "eternal light in the heart of man" (*ibid*: 116). In terms of relative reality, *prajna* is the functional act of knowing in each individual, and it is conceptualised as being the opposite of ignorance. Thus it is said in the *Maha-Prajnaparamita Sastra* (*ibid*): "functional *prajna* can put an end to the darkness of ignorance and can fetch the true (eternal) *prajna*."

According to Alex Wayman (in Elder, ed. 1984: 209) *prajna* is inborn, and in its native state, it is called *sahaja prajna*. This "native insight" is possessed by the "intelligent man"; it enables the differentiation of things and is therefore "present in every rational act of thinking" (*ibid*). I infer from this that *sahaja prajna* is the "common sense" to which the Buddha refers when advising commonfolk how to discern between good and bad religious teachers in the *Kalama Sutta* (Soma Thera, trans. 1982: 4):

> Do not go upon report, tradition, hearsay, correspondence to scripture, cogitation, logic, specious reasoning, approval of a thought-over notion, a person's seeming ability, or the thought, "The ascetic is our teacher". … [*W*]*hen you yourselves know*: "These things are bad; these things are blameable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill", abandon them. (Italics mine)

However, Wayman (in Elder, *ibid*, 210*fn*) also tells us that "the irrational person may lack or be deficient in this native insight", and that Asanga attributes this lack or deficiency to craving, which he compares to smoke hurting "the eye of insight". This is why *sahaja prajna* has to be "perfected" together with generosity, virtue, patience, vigour, and one-pointed concentration, until it becomes wisdom.

The Tibetan monk, Khentin Tai Situ Rinpoche explains that *prajna* is traditionally divided into three types and levels of acts of knowing or cognitive acuity.[33] The first ("mundane") enables us to see into the heart of things, to know how things work, and to

solve problems. The second ("lesser transcendent") enables us to see the fictional nature of our concepts of reality, so that we know the way things are, but still within a subject-object framework. The third ("highest transcendent") enables us to know reality without the subject-object polarity. According to Chen-Chi Chang (1957: 340), in essence and principle they all work in the same way:

> … Zen enlightenment [Ch. *Wu*] varies greatly, from the shallow glimpse of the mind-essence of the beginners to full Buddhahood as realized by the Buddha and a few advanced Zen masters. However, *these experiences are different in degree of profundity, not in essence or in basic principle.* (Italics mine)

It would appear that *prajna* is conceptualised in Zen as the beginning, the means, and the end of the quest for enlightenment. As the ultimate principle of knowledge or wisdom, it is the beginning; as functional *prajna* involved in the act of knowing in individuals, it is the means; and as the wisdom that it becomes in the consciousness of the individual at the moment of enlightenment, it is the end. This explains D. T. Suzuki's statement (1994: 17):

> *Satori* [or *prajna*] is … the whole of Zen. Zen starts with it and ends with it. When there is no *satori*, there is no Zen.

3.4.2 How functional *prajna* works

In this section I shall address the issue of whether functional *prajna* works "in contradiction to intellectual and logical understanding", as D.T. Suzuki maintains, or whether it in fact works through "analytic scrutiny" and according to "the rules of logic and proof", as Lusthaus explains it (see 3.4.1). Again, research shows that *prajna* works in both ways; it depends on which particular type of knowing activity one is engaged in and which stage of *prajna* development one is referring to.

Generally, the programme for *prajna* development consists of three stages: acquisition of knowledge (e.g. the reading of a particular *sutra*), reflection on knowledge acquired (e.g. analysis of what one has understood of the text), and meditation, which has been described as a "cognitive laboratory, a set of conditions in which cognitive activities can be viewed, altered, understood, focused, and modified" (Lusthaus 2002: 124).[34] The

development of *prajna* thus involves three kinds of knowing: "analysis", "criticism" and "comprehension" (Ramanan 1978: 117), and in all three, logic or reasoning[35] plays an important part. In the *Maha-Prajnaparamita Sastra* (*ibid*: 169), it is stated:

> If one does not pursue one's enquiry in accordance with reason one cannot understand anything; but by pursuing the enquiry of things in accordance with reason, there is not anything that one cannot know.

Zen "analysis" (or analytic scrutiny) involves breaking a phenomenon or concept down to its components, and tracing the causes or conditions for each component's origination (e.g. the chain of events used to explain the cognitive process in Figure 3.2). The basic aim of analytic scrutiny is to destabilise three kinds of faulty assumptions about the phenomenal world (Ramanan *ibid*: 91). The first is the assumption that a complex entity (e.g. a tree) has real and independent existence. The second is the assumption that the relations among the constituent parts of the entity (e.g. the roots, trunk, branches, leaves etc of a tree) have real and independent existence. The third is the assumption that the conceptual principles (e.g. elements, time, and atoms) perceived as underlying the phenomenal world have real and independent existence.

Zen "criticism" means critical dialectics or the use of logic to investigate the validity of inferences, views, opinions, and theories, all of which, from the Zen perspective, are fictions or language-mediated constructions of the mind. The aim is to emancipate the mind from the constraints of inherited knowledge so that personal conflicts and social disputes can be brought to an end.[36] I shall briefly describe four kinds of use of logic in Zen critical dialectics. The first is the tetralemma or *catuskoti* (lit. four limits or extremes), which allows one to say "*A* exists", "*A* does not exist", "*A* both exists and does not exist" and "*A* neither exists nor does not exist".[37] This type of logic frees the mind from the dialectical, polemical and epistemological restrictions imposed by the dilemma ("two-limbed argument"), which allows one to say only either "*A* exists" or "*A* does not exist". The second kind of Zen use of logic is called *prasangika*, applied in the critique of views. It proceeds by assuming that a particular view is right, following the natural consequences of the view to its conclusion, and then allowing the soundness or the absurdity of the conclusion to reveal whether the view is valid.[38] The third kind of use of logic is through regressive investigation, applied in the critique of truth claims, with emphasis on determining the validity of the means of knowledge on which the claim is based, for example: subjective experience; an external

authority in the form of a person, tradition, or the scriptures; and various types of reasoning like inductive and "self-evident" reasoning.[39] The aim is to show that since no opinion or view can be grounded on certainty, the only way to avoid inner and interpersonal conflicts is to avoid the mistake of confusing views and opinions with truth. The fourth kind of use of logic is the syllogistic inclusion of "universal concomitance" to validate inferences (e.g. I infer there is a fire in the mountains because I see smoke rising from the trees there and I know from personal experience of all kinds of wood fires that there is a universal concomitance between smoke and fire). The Indian Buddhist syllogistic method of validating inferences is not of immediate relevance for the present study.

"Comprehension" refers to the "right understanding"[40] of the nature of ultimate reality, which is that all things are dependently-originated and that their "underlying unity" is *sunyata* or "emptiness" (Ramanan 1978: 141). The word "emptiness" does not mean an absolute "non-existence" or a static vacuity. It means rather "non-closure-ability" (Lusthaus 2002, *passim*) or "non-specificity", with connotations of having the potential to become something specific (Loy 1992: 233). What transforms non-specificity into specificity is the perceiver-consciousness, which creates its own concepts of what it perceives from its subjective and therefore relative perspective. The insight into "emptiness" is the culminating point of the above analytical and critical procedures, aimed at the total eradication of all conceptual harbourages of the mind. Even the term "emptiness" has to be understood as "empty" because it is only a convenient concept or label. The desired outcome is the realisation that there is absolutely no basis for conflict because ultimately, there is absolutely no basis for any psycho-linguistically constructed concept, view or theory to be clung to as truth.

The question now is: how does one get from the analysis of phenomena and the criticism of views to the comprehension or "insight" of *sunyata*? Chr. Lindtner (1987: 269-70) explains how it works:

> …to Nagarjuna *prajna* is at the outset a critical faculty constantly engaged in analysing the more or less common-sense notions presented to it by tradition or experience. The more it penetrates them and 'loosens them up' the more their apparent nature vanishes and in the final analysis their true nature turns out to be 'empty', i.e. devoid of substance, or simply illusory as it cannot really be determined as A or, for that matter, non-A. *At this stage prajna has also brought its own raison*

> *d'etre to an end: by analysing its objects away it has also deprived itself of an objective support….*
>
> At this moment the analytical understanding suddenly shifts into an intuitive *jnana* which has *sunyata* as its 'object', i.e. which has no object. *The culmination of prajna, then, is jnana, or intuitive insight into reality (tattva) beyond the duality of asti ("is" or "existing") and nasti ("is not" or "not existing").* (Italics mine)

The salient point in this passage is that *prajna* as a critical faculty relentlessly deconstructs and exposes the fictional nature of inherited notions. Once the "emptiness" of these notions is perceived, *prajna* loses its "object" and therefore its function as a critical faculty, and becomes non-discriminating, non-rationalising, non-conceptualising wisdom or "intuitive insight".

In Zen meditation practice, this "intuitive insight" is the *prajna* described by D. T. Suzuki (1964, p. 88) as "the acquiring of a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of things" and "the awakening of a new sense which will review the old things from a hitherto undreamed-of angle of observation" (*ibid*: 96). According to Chen-Chi Chang (1957: 336) this type of *prajna* manifests itself when the mind gives up all clinging:

> … Zen masters always drive us to the absolute dead-end state, where we have nothing to grasp, cling to, or escape from. It is right here, at this point of desperation, that we must give up our habitual clinging for the Great Release, and it is right here that we must withdraw from the last ditch of our thought-tracks and surrender with both hands naked, with nothing for them to hold on to, and jump into the unknown abyss of Buddhahood.

From what has been discussed so far on *prajna* and how it works, it appears that *prajna* generates new knowledge and fresh approaches to problems through a process involving first, rigorous analysis and critical reasoning, then a period of quiet reflection (or meditation), and finally a letting go of the thought, "I am the thinker". Due to its capability of bringing intuitive knowledge by simultaneously cutting through to the heart of the problem before us and to the heart of the problem within us (i.e. our most cherished illusions about ourselves) *prajna* has been described as a two-edged sword (Lief 2002).[41]

At this point, a comparison can be made between the Zen experience of *prajna* described by Lindtner, Suzuki and Chang on the one hand, and on the other, the experience of what H.J. Eysenck (1995) in *Genius: The natural history of creativity* calls the "intuitive insight"[42] described by "countless mathematicians, scientists, writers, artists and composers", and which he summarises as follows (p. 175):

> There is the preliminary labour, the incubation period, the sudden integration, owing its existence to inspiration rather than conscious logical thought, and finally the verification or proof, perfectly conscious. There is the description of the conditions under which incubation and inspiration occur; quiet, low cortical arousal conditions, not occupied with mental work, or any conscious consideration of the problem whose solution is sought.

One can draw a parallel between Zen's relentless application of analysis and critical dialectics prior to meditation with Eysenck's "preliminary labour", Zen's meditation with Eysenck's "quiet, low cortical arousal conditions", Zen's withdrawal "from the last ditch of our thought-tracks" to Eysenck's absence of "any conscious consideration of the problem whose solution is sought", and Zen's experience of *prajna-insight* with Eysenck's "sudden integration, owing to inspiration rather than conscious logical thought". It is also important to point out the parallel between the Zen practitioner's repetitions of the analysis-criticism-meditation cycle with Eysenck's "verification or proof, perfectly conscious". For in Zen, the *prajna*-insights are regarded as inferences, which have to be validated by logical means.[43]

3.4.3 Significance of research findings for the Zen-based Reading Procedure

For the purpose of the present study I want to draw a parallel between the above descriptions of intuition and insight and our everyday experience of what we sometimes call a "brainwave", the sudden, inexplicable, and supra-logical knowing of how to solve a problem that was totally baffling a second ago. In my experience[44], these "brainwaves" usually occur when I am doing something that has nothing to do with the problem I am trying to solve (Archimedes' "eureka" moment while taking a bath is axiomatic of this experience). The solution usually involves a new approach to the problem based on previously unthought-of connections between ideas related to the problem, or the sudden occurrence in my mind of knowledge that I had forgotten I knew but which suddenly "offers itself" as relevant to the problem. Subsequent review or research of the "brainwave" often

shows that it is either the right solution or the most viable one; and it is the "rightness" of the solution that makes this type of "brainwave" a genuine Archimedean "eureka" moment and not a mere guess or a product of *prapanca*. In retracing my thinking steps to find out why the solution eluded me for so long, I have often found that it is because of an egotistical clinging to the soundness of *my* logic, experience, expertise or—even more often—simply to the idea that "I" can or must find a solution to the problem. Viewed in the light of Zen epistemology, the sudden, unbidden occurrence of the solution when I am not thinking about the problem can be explained by the fact that at that moment, the thought "I must find a solution" is absent from my mind.

The point I am making here is that one does not have to be a Zen practitioner or a genius in order to experience *prajna* or intuitive insights. My hypothesis is that it is a common occurrence in human experience, as is evident in the fact that one is often given the "common sense" advice to "let go and let God" when faced with knotty problems. This point is important for the present study because the design of the reading strategy in the Zen-based Reading Procedure is based on the hypothesis that rigorous and sustained logical investigation of aspects of a work of literary fiction can lead anyone to new insights and the discovery of discourses "hidden" in the narrative techniques and structures.

3.5 ZEN THEORETICAL BASES OF COGNITIVE CHANGE

I shall now briefly review four doctrines or theories that Zen philosophers have used to explain why it is possible to change cognitive habits. The theories are "dependent-origination", the "four ways of knowing reality", the "store-consciousness" and the "two truths". These theories are basic to Zen and have implications not only for the Zen approach to texts but also for the Zen-based Reading Procedure.

3.5.1 Dependent-origination

The theory of dependent-origination (*pratityasamutpada*) was described at the beginning of this chapter (3.2). It is so basic to Zen thought that it is said that when one understands dependent-origination, one understands the Buddha's teachings, and vice versa. The theory states that all phenomena, from things to thoughts, arise out of the dynamically changing interaction of a multiplicity of conditioning factors, which are themselves conditioned by other factors. Existence is thus marked by impermanence; there is no "being" or "essence",

there is only "becoming". From this theory, we have the Zen perception of reality as the "momentary now", too complex in its fullness and "non-closure-ability" to be communicated through language. However, particular phenomena can be examined and analysed (after the fact) to reveal the conditional factors leading to their arising. A common method of analysis is the "links-in-a-chain" method, which has been used in this chapter to explain the cognitive process. This method depicts the primary condition that must be present for something to happen. For example, for Clinging to arise, there must be a Craving; not otherwise. But to understand a particular case of Clinging, one has to examine all the relevant conditions and relationships.[45]

In the context of the possibility of changing cognitive habits, the significant aspect of the theory is expressed with the formula, "this being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises; this not becoming, that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases" (5 *Majjhima Nikaya*, 2.32; *Samyutta Nikaya*, 2:28). The implication is that if we can identify the conditioning factors giving rise to certain phenomena, we can change the effect by changing the conditions. Zen is not predicated on determinism, but on the possibility of bringing about change. The idea of impermanence or change means that none of the factors involved, in cognition for example, is categorically "good" or "bad". Every factor can lead to both the problem of conflict and to the attainment of insight and wisdom. Feelings, for instance, are the equipment we are born with to ensure our survival. It is natural for us to find feelings of extreme heat or cold unpleasant and to "crave" for a sensation less threatening. "Craving" can be a "virtuous craving for the religious life" (Wayman in Elder 1984: 185) and, virtue is one of the six Perfections (see 3.2.2) to be accomplished on the path to enlightenment. Even *upadana* is not unconditionally bad.[46] In Zen, only four kinds of *upadana* are identified as unequivocally problematic. They relate to the obsessive attachment to (1) the five physical senses, (2) views and theories, (3) rites and rituals, and (3) concepts of a permanent self. These correspond to the human being's need to find self-validation in terms of physical, intellectual, moral, and metaphysical existence. Attachment to these forms of self-validation is harmful because it easily becomes obsessions with one's sensual needs, fixed views, dogmatism, and thoughts of immortality or nihilism. All these ideas have a bearing on our analysis of Lee Kok Liang's Zen-influenced novel, *Flowers in the sky* (Chapter VII).

3.5.2 Four ways of knowing reality

The second theory justifying the possibility of changing cognitive habits is known as the "four ways of knowing reality". The phenomenological nature of Zen cognitive theory means that it is accepted that different people interpret the world (or "know reality") in different ways. Four basic ways of knowing reality are identified.[47] The first is the ordinary way, i.e. by discerning the differences between things with conventionally accepted words and concepts. This ability to discern differences is an important aspect of knowledge, as was discussed with reference to *sahaja prajna* (3.4.1); but this way of knowing reality becomes flawed when the knower assumes that words and concepts refer to things that have permanent and essential existence. The second way of knowing reality is through logic, i.e. according to reasoned investigation and logical proof. This way of knowing is an important aspect of knowing reality, as was discussed with reference to the way *prajna* works (3.4.2); but it becomes flawed when the knower clings to either his/her own ratiocinative power or on rules of logic set by those regarded as authorities (i.e. Aristotelian binary logic). The third way of knowing reality is the virtuous way, i.e. without lust, anger, and delusion. This way of knowing is superior to the first two ways because the knower has understood the theory of dependent-origination. But it is only a "middling" knowledge because the self-other polarity has not been totally demolished, as a result of which the knower tends to desire *nirvana* for him/herself alone. The fourth way of knowing is through wisdom. It is the "ultimate" way of knowing reality in Zen because the self-other polarity is demolished and replaced by non-discriminating wisdom.

This theory is an affirmation that cognitive change is possible because we already have the right faculties and inclinations, namely discernment, reasoning, and virtue. We just have to learn not to cling to any one way, so that they do not become habits of perception.[48] An insight into the importance of not clinging is useful in understanding Zen-influenced works of fiction, such as *Flowers in the sky*.

3.5.3 Store-consciousness

The third theory justifying the possibility of changing cognitive habits is the theory of the store-consciousness. In Mahayana *sutras*, the cognitive system is divided into 8 consciousnesses as a pedagogical device to explain subconscious cognitive-psychological activities. To the 6 consciousnesses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin, and mind—are now added

manas, sometimes referred to as the ego-, clinging-, or appropriative-consciousness, and the *alayavijnana* or store-consciousness. From the alternative names of *manas*, it is clear that the concept has been constructed to communicate the inseparability of subjectivity and *upadana.* Since I shall be presenting the epistemological aspect of this 8-consciousness model in the next chapter (4.3) when I discuss Vasubandhu's theory of consciousness and perception, I shall confine the present discussion to the implications of the store-consciousness for the Zen proposition that cognitive habits can be changed.

The store-consciousness is so called because it is conceived as a depot that incessantly and indiscriminatingly receives and stores all experiential impressions, good and bad, from the other consciousnesses, and then sends them out when required by the mind-consciousness (e.g. when we remember, imagine, or dream). The store-consciousness is thus "a reservoir of things good and bad, pure and defiled" (Suzuki 1978: xxvi). Due to this nature, the store-consciousness is known as the Womb of Buddhahood (*Tathagatagarbha*); because without its non-discriminating storing of all the impressions of both good and bad experiences, "no sentient being would ever be a Buddha, no enlightenment would be experienced by any human beings" (*ibid*). During full enlightenment the store-consciousness is replaced by *jnana* (wisdom). With this theory of the store-consciousness, the possibility of changing cognitive habits is given a dimension of universal attainability because it states that the non-discriminating nature of the Buddhas is already within every individual and has only to be made manifest through the development of *prajna*. Historically, this theory has had a tremendous impact on the development of Zen. It explains why so much of Zen discourse is not only about realising our "true mind" and our "Buddha nature"; but also about understanding that we are all *bodhisattvas* or Buddhas in the making, whether we know it or not.

3.5.4 "Two truths"

The fourth theory justifying the possibility of changing cognitive habits is the two-truth theory.[49] The two "truths" of this theory are ultimate truth and relative truth.[50] They do not refer to two types or levels of truth, but to two ways of understanding the nature of reality. One way is through the subjectivity- and concept-free experience of reality (see 3.2.2), which is the apprehension of its ultimate truth as *sunya*, non-closurable and "empty" of specificities. The other way is intellectually, through the medium of language, when it is relative truth. Relative truth is always a narrative after the fact; and therefore an abstraction

and a construct or fiction (see 3.3.6). The basic idea is that because Buddhas have to use conventional language to teach about ultimate truth, they have to rely on relative truth. However, because the teachings are relative truth, they can only point the way to ultimate truth. Therefore those who do not understand the difference between the two truths will not understand the teachings, and will neither know ultimate truth nor reach *nirvana*. The theory of dependent-origination, for example, is the relative truth of the ultimate truth of reality. In the relative reality of the mundane world, it is useful to know that things arise and fade away depending on conditions. But in terms of the ultimate reality (or "thusness") of the momentary now, "arising", "fading", "causal conditions" and "effects" are meaningless concepts. Therefore the theory of dependent-origination should not be clung to as absolute truth in the ultimate sense.

Where the present discussion is concerned, one may say that the existence of Buddhas and their teachings holds the assurance that cognitive habits can be changed through the reading and understanding of texts. The two-truth theory therefore affirms the importance and value of language and discourse—despite their constructed nature—in the quest for enlightenment. What this means is that control over language and its use is placed firmly in the hands of the intelligent being. As Ramanan (1978: 133) explains:

> Words, concepts, are in themselves pure; what makes the difference is the way in which we use them. Views constructed of concepts need not all be false; there is the right view as well as the wrong view.

With the two-truth theory and its affirmation of human control over language, we can begin to speak of a Zen literary theory in terms of literary production (how we write) and in terms of literary understanding (how we read).

At the same time, however, the two-truth theory's affirmation that relative truth can be used for soteriological and pedagogical purposes raises its own set of issues, issues that have implications for the present study as a whole. First, that there are teachings at all implies that in Zen, intersubjective understanding through the reading of texts is held to be possible. This raises the question: how is this intersubjective understanding epistemologically explained? Second, since relative truth can only point the way to ultimate truth, why is the reading of the "relatively truthful" teachings in the *sutras* so important in the development of *prajna*? These are the issues I shall explore in the next chapter.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter I began by establishing that in Zen, as in the west, subjectivity and the subjective use of language are viewed as obstacles to intersubjective understanding. Zen locates the origination of subjectivity in the psycho-linguistic way we interpret the world and construct our concepts of reality. Subjectivity gives rise to two cognitive impulses, the ego- and craving-driven *upadana* ("clinging" or "appropriation"), and *prapanca* ("conceptual proliferation"), which obstruct the mind's reasoning power and tend it towards egocentric, conflict-ridden relations with oneself and with others. The Zen solution to the problem is a three-pronged strategy to change cognitive habits, with the ultimate aim of changing the whole cognitive system from one that is infused with subjectivity to one infused with wisdom. The strategy involves ethical behaviour, meditation, and the development of *prajna*. *Prajna* plays a key role in this strategy because, as the function of non-discriminating wisdom, it has the ability to cut through illusions and enable new ways of looking at oneself in relation to the world. Its interest for this study lies in the fact that the first two stages of *prajna* development involve the reading and analysis of texts.

My discussion on *prajna* focused on defining it as a concept in Zen discourses and on explaining how it works as a means to intuitive insights. Comparisons were then made between the accounts of the experience of *prajna* insight by Zen practitioners, the account given by H. J. Eysenck based on his research on the occurrence of insight in geniuses, and my account of my personal experiences of insight in solving practical problems. The aim of the comparison was to show that one does not have to be either a Zen practitioner or a genius to experience insight, and that there is a basic similarity in the thinking process leading up to the experience of insight. I conclude my inquiry into the nature of *prajna* and how it works with the hypothesis that aspects of the thinking process leading to insight can be incorporated into the design of the Zen-based Reading Procedure to enable more insightful reading of contemporary texts, and the discovery of the texts' discourses. I also reviewed four Zen theories that affirm the possibility of changing cognitive habits. The theories are dependent-origination, the four ways of knowing reality, the storehouse-consciousness, and the "two truths". All these theories have a bearing on the role of *prajna* in the Zen approach to texts, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[1] The term "linguistic turn" refers to the view expressed by R. Rorty (1967) in *The Linguistic Turn*, p. 3: "… philosophical problems are problems which may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use".

[2] His name was Siddhartha Gautama. The word "Buddha" is a title, not a name. It means "one who is awakened or enlightened". Siddhartha is held to be one of many Buddhas past, present, and future.

[3] Historically, these insights directly contradicted ideas then being taught in India by Brahmin priests and Upanishadic seers, namely: that everything is eternal, orderly, and unchanging in the realm of The Real (*Sat*) inhabited by gods and men; that phenomenal change in the world is only an illusion (Organ 1974, pp. 76 & 143); that in each person is an undying, unchanging soul (*atman*), the "miniature of the Universal Soul" (*Atman*) (*ibid*: p. 112); and that the true essence of both *atman* and *Atman* is bliss (*ananda*) (*ibid*: p. 123).

[4] For an example of a modern problematisation of the doctrine of no-self, see Organ, 1974, p. 144. For an example during the time of the Buddha, see the *Ananda Sutta.* Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1994: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn44/sn44.010.than.html [3 July 2000].

[5] The Buddhist "middle way" is expressed in *Samyutta Nikaya* II.12 (quoted in Nanananda, 1971, p. 77): "'Everything exists'—this is one extreme. 'Nothing exists'—this is the other extreme. Not approaching either of those extremes, the [Buddha] teaches the Doctrine by the middle-way: 'Conditioned by ignorance [or any other factor] volitional activities [or the corresponding effect] come to pass …."

[6] The following excerpt from the *Maha Nidana* (Great Causes) *Sutta*, *Digha Nikaya* 15 describes a causal chain linking cognition ("feeling", "ascertainment"), the arising of the consciousness of a self-identity ("defensiveness"), and social conflict.

> Now, craving is dependent on feeling, seeking is dependent on craving, acquisition is dependent on seeking, ascertainment is dependent on acquisition, desire and passion is dependent on ascertainment, attachment is dependent on desire and passion, possessiveness is dependent on attachment, stinginess is dependent on possessiveness, defensiveness is dependent on stinginess, and because of defensiveness, dependent on defensiveness, various evil, unskillful phenomena come into play: the taking up of sticks and knives; conflicts, quarrels, and disputes; accusations, divisive speech, and lies.

After this verse, the Buddha goes on to link "defensiveness" to the initial moment of cognition when one becomes aware of the "other" as "object", distinct and separate from oneself, the "subject".
Maha-nidana sutta. Trans. Thanissaro, B. 1997.
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html [16 March 2000].

[7] In the *Madhupindika* ("Ball of Honey") *sutta*, when asked by a member of the public what his doctrine is, the Buddha replies with an explanation of his goal:

> The sort of doctrine, friend, where one does not keep quarreling with anyone in the cosmos with its devas, Maras, and Brahmas, with its contemplatives and priests, its royalty and commonfolk; the sort [of doctrine] where perceptions no longer obsess the brahman who remains dissociated from sensual pleasures, free from perplexity, his uncertainty cut away, devoid of craving for becoming and non-[becoming]. Such is my doctrine, such is what I proclaim.

Later in the same *sutra*, when asked by one of his monks for further clarification, he replies with an explanation of his method, which is to change cognitive habits:

> If, monk, with regard to the cause whereby the perceptions and categories of complication assail a person, there is nothing there to relish, welcome, or remain fastened to, then that is the end of the obsessions of passion, the obsessions of resistance, the obsessions of views, the obsessions of uncertainty, the obsessions of conceit, the obsessions of passion for becoming, and the obsessions of ignorance. That is the end of taking up rods and bladed weapons, of arguments, quarrels, disputes, accusations, divisive tale-bearing, and false speech. That is where these evil, unskillful things cease without remainder.

Madhupindika sutta. Trans. Thanissaro, B. 1999. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.018.than.html [16 March 2000]

[8] In the *Acintita* ("Unconjecturable"*)sSutta, Anguttara Nikaya* IV: 77 the Buddha identifies four topics that are beyond the range of conjecture: 1. the range of powers developed by Buddhas; 2. the range of powers obtained by a person in meditation; 3. the precise working out of the results of karma; and 4. the origins of the world. *Acintita sutta.* Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu. 1997. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.077.than.html [16 March 2000].

[9] The proscription of discourse about things beyond the range of human perception and language is expressed in the *Sabba* ("The All") *sutta*, *Samyutta Nikaya* XXXV 23: "What is the All? Simply the eye and forms, ear and sounds, nose and odors, tongue and flavours, body and tactile sensations, intellect and ideas. This, monks, is termed the All. Anyone who would say, 'Repudiating this All, I will describe another', if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his statement, would be unable to explain, and furthermore, would be put to grief? Why? Because it lies beyond range." *Sabba sutta*. Trans. Thanissaro, B. 2001. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.023.than.html [10 March 2002].

[10] In the *Brahmajala* ("Brahma's Net") s*utta*, the Buddha delineates sixty ways in which seekers of knowledge and truth speculate and theorise about imponderables such as whether the soul and the world are eternal, whether the cosmos is finite or infinite, whether the soul and the world arise with or without a cause, and whether or not the soul is conscious or decays after death; and concludes: "For whosoever, brethren, whether recluses or Brahmans, are thus reconstructors of the past or arrangers of the future, or who are both, whose speculations are concerned with both, who put forward various propositions with regard to the past and to the future, they, all of them, are entrapped in the net of these sixty modes; this way and that they plunge about, but they are in it; this way and that way they may flounder, but they are included in it, caught in it." *Brahmajala* s*utta* Trans. Rhys Davies, T. W. 1899. http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/1Digha-Nikaya/Digha1/01-brahmajala-e.html#q-001 [16 March 2002]

[11] See endnote 7 above.

[12] The major philosophers of the Mahayana schools have remained faithful to this soteriological aim. The philosophical school founded by Nagarjuna (ca. 2nd century), acknowledged to have laid the foundations of the Mahayana, is the Madhyamika or "Middle Way"; and two of Nagarjuna's major works are the *Mula Madhyamaka karika* ("Verses on the Fundamentals of the Middle Way" and *Vigrahavyavartani* ("Averting Disputes").

[13] One does not have to be a follower of Gautama to be enlightened. Those who attain enlightenment and *nirvana* on their own without the help of other Buddhas are called *Pratyekabuddhas*. Humphreys, 1994. *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 152.

[14] This list of Six Perfections is according to the Mahayana or Zen tradition. The Sanskrit equivalents are *dana* (generosity), *sila* (virtue), *ksanti* (patience), *virya* (vigour), *dhyana* (one-pointed concentration), and *prajna* (wisdom or insight). At the higher stages of development, four other Perfections are included: *upaya* (skill-in-means), *pranidhana* (fulfillment of the Bodhisattva vow to guide others to enlightenment), *bala* (spiritual power), and *jnana* (direct knowledge).

[15] When asked how a monk might realise *nirvana*, the Buddha answered, "Let him completely cut off the root of concepts tinged with the prolific tendency, namely, the notion, 'I am the thinker'. …What ever inward cravings there be, let him train himself to subdue them being always mindful." *Tuvataka Sutta* (quoted in Nanananda, 1971, p. 31).

[16] This analytic structure serves only to show that consciousness is a function of the senses; not that the consciousnesses are resident in the physical organs, or that the mind is somehow opposed to the physical body, like "the ghost in the machine". (The term, "the ghost in the machine" was used by Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*, 1949, to refer to and critique Descartes' doctrine of the mind-body duality.) For discussion of the Buddhist view of consciousness as a mind-body experience, see Suwands H. J. S. 1995. "The whole body, not heart, as 'seat of consciousness': the Buddha's view". *PEW* 45 (3): 409-430.

[17] For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to simplify the Buddhist conceptualisation of the cognitive process, which is extremely detailed and complex. For fuller discussions of the Theravada theory of the mind and its workings, see C. P. Ranasinghe, *The Buddha's explanation of the universe* (1957) or W. F. Jayasuriya, *The psychology and philosophy of Buddhism: an introduction to the Abhidhamma* (1976).

[18] Figure 3.2 is constructed by combining two *sutras* from the Pali Canon, the *Madhupindika* ("Ball of Honey") and the *Maha Nidana* ("Great Links"). The latter *sutra* is usually treated as a moral discourse on rebirth, but I have treated it as a phenomenological discourse on the dependent origination of subjectivity. My reading is based on close analysis and contemplation of the *sutra*'s disquisition on Resistance Contact and Designation Contact as components of Contact or Sensory Impingement (*sparsa)*, for which I have not been able to find an explicit commentary by scholars. I conclude that my interpretation makes sense in the light of the point made by S. Mookerjee (1980, p. 282) about instinctive discrimination and preverbal designation and conceptualisation: "Even the knowledge of the baby born on the very day is not free from ideation, as the baby, too, recognises the mother's breast and ceases crying when its mouth is applied to it." But ultimately, as A. Wayman (in Elder, 1984, p. 165) puts it: "Since Dependent Origination is not a real thing, seeing it one way does not prevent anyone from seeing it another way."

[19] "Perception" here stands for *samjna*, which means literally "the knowing (*jna*) that puts together (*sam*)" or "knowing by association" (Lusthaus, 2000: 47). There are two other words also rendered as "perception" in many English-language translations and commentaries: *pratyaksa* which means "direct evidence" or cognition that is "free from conceptual constructions" (Mookerjee, 1980: 275); and *vijnapti*, which means "that which is known or presents itself within consciousness" (Lin, 1991). In Zen, *pratyaksa*-perception is allowed as a subdivision of valid knowledge, but *samjna*-perception is not because of its susceptibility to errors (see 3.3.4). *Vijnapti*-perception is used with specific reference to the philosophy of Vasubandhu (4th century), to be discussed more fully in Ch. IV, 4.3. In this chapter I use the word "perception" to mean *"samjna*-knowing by association".

[20] For a detailed discussion of *upadana* and its relationship to craving, see Lusthaus, 2002, pp. 65-6.

[21] The aspects of experience that evoke *upadana* are listed in the *Upadana Sutta*: The Blessed One said, "And what, monks, are clingable phenomena? What is clinging?
"Form is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.
"Feeling is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.
"Perception is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.
"Fabrications [i.e. concepts] are clingable phenomena. Any desire-passion related to them, is clinging related to them.
"Consciousness is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.
"These are called clingable phenomena. This is clinging." *Upadana sutta* (Clinging). Thanissaro, B. Trans. 1997. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.121.than.html (16 March 2000).

[22] According to Lusthaus (2002, p. 6), in the Indian philosophical system, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, all inquiries began with epistemology or the establishment of criteria for valid means of knowledge. It was accepted that if one relied on invalid means of knowledge, then "whatever one proposed or accepted consequently would be invalid as well".

[23] The destruction of the subject-object polarity and all other polarities is a major theme running through all the Mahayana *sutras* and *shastras*. The most thoroughgoing destruction of polarities is found in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* and the writings of Nagarjuna, especially his *Mulamadhyamaka-karika*. In Ch. IV, 4.5.3, we shall encounter the "Three Natures" critical procedure, developed by Vasubandhu to deconstruct perceptions and the subject-object polarity.

[24] In this regard, I go further than Nathan Katz (in Katz, ed. 1981, p. 317) who suggests that the term "no-self" is a device in a "corrective language game" played by the Buddha to destabilise the belief in an unchanging self, which is "deeply rooted in our desire that there be a self" (*ibid*, p.323); as well as a reminder that the word "self" is a "convenient designation" and while it "may be *used*, we should not get carried away with philosophies about essences and the like" (*ibid*, p. 311).

[25] The traditional, non-Buddhist view in India was that there are four reliable means of knowledge: perception, inference, testimony, and comparison (P. D. Santina, 1997, pp. 141-148).

[26] Vasubandhu's theory is called *vijnapti-matra* or "perception-only". It will be discussed more fully in Ch. IV, 4.3).

[27] The doctrine of *apoha* distinguishes the Buddhist theory of language from all other Indian theories of language. Its similarity to Saussurian linguistics is so striking that it has been suggested (Mishra, 1999, p. 138) that de Saussure might have come across the doctrine while he was a Sanskrit student. For Saussurian linguistics, see excerpt from Saussure, *Course in general linguistics* (1915) in Rice, P. and Waugh, P. (eds.) 1997. *Modern literary theory: a reader.* London: Arnold, pp. 8-15. For a detailed discussion of *apoha*, see Mookerjee, 1980, pp. 107-138 and D. Sharma, 1968, "Buddhist theory of meaning (*Apoha*) and negative statement", *PEW* 18:3-10

[28] Compare this definition of "fictionalizing" in Iser, 1993, p. 6: "Selection, then, is an act of fictionalizing, insofar as it marks off from each other the referential fields of the text both by spotlighting and by overstepping their respective limits."

[29] It is because there is always something *upadan*ic or egocentrically appropriative about the way we perceive things, that the Sanskrit terms for "perceiver" and "perceived" are "grasper" (*grahaka*) and "graspable" (*grahya*). See Kochumuttom, 1999, p. 3, and Lusthaus, 2002, p. 66.

[30] Modern western studies often write of Buddhism as a form of psycho-therapy, e.g. S. Anacker's "The Meditational Therapy of the *Madhyantavibhagabhasya*" in Kiyota, M. ed. 1991. *Mahayana Buddhist meditation: theory and practice.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 83-113.

[31] *On the high seat of "the treasure of the law": the platform sutra of the 6th patriarch, Hui Neng*. Trans. Price, *A*. F. and Wong, Mou-Lam. 1985. Boston: Shambala Publications http://www.angelfire.com/realm/bodhisattva/platform-sutra.html. [1 April 2004]

[32] The *Maha-prajnaparamita sastra* is attributed to Nagarjuna. The earliest known version of it is extant only in Chinese translation.

[33] Khentin Tai Situ Rinpoche. (No date). "The six paramitas-*phar-phyin-drug*". http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/paramitas.htm [1 March 2006]. See also Ramanan, 1978, p. 118.

[34] The three stages of *prajna* development do not follow one another in chronological periods like the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. Rather, they follow one another in a single session; in other words, the reading and analysis of *sutras* are preparation for meditation. Zen practice is the repetition of these sessions so that *prajna* gets more refined over time, in the same way that one's brain-muscle coordination gets "refined" in athletics or musical training.

[35] The discursive use of logic and reasoning to investigate phenomena and understand the true nature of reality is called *vitarka-vicara* or "applied and sustained thoughts", to distinguish it from *prapanca*, the kind of "discursive thought" that seeks to confirm the mind's desired version of reality (Nanananda, 1971, pp. 23-25). But ultimately, even *vitarka-vicara* must be abandoned to make way for *prajna*-insight.

[36] Nagarjuna is regarded by past and modern scholars as Buddhism's most brilliant exponent of critical dialectics, using logic relentlessly to demolish the grounds for attachment to views so that disputes may be averted. He compares his approach to that of a prisoner who, not content to escape by digging a hole in the wall, "shatters his manacles and fetters, slays the prison guards and then goes forth at his pleasure". "The prison break analogy". In *More selections from Nagarjuna's exegesis on the great perfection of wisdom sutra*, translated by Dharmamitra, Bhikshu. No date. In *Kalavinka Dharma World*, www.kalavinka.org. [2 September 2001]

[37] The result of the tetralemma is an open-ended, indeterminate, silent state, akin to the ontological "emptiness" of reality. It is the hallmark of the Madhyamika or "middle way". The tetralemma has various uses (Wayman, in Katz, ed. 1981, pp. 450-72). For example, in the *Brahmajala sutta*, Gautama Buddha uses it to define the propositional limits of the futile speculations of the "reconstructors of the past" and "arrangers of the future". And in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika*, Nagarjuna uses it to critique four philosophical positions that falsely ascribe the coming into existence of a given phenomenon (e.g. fire) to itself, another, itself and another, or by chance.

[38] The *prasanga* procedure is sometimes compared to *reductio ad absurdum*, the European method of argumentation using a similar procedure. But Mookerjee (1980, p. 401) points out an important difference. The European method is "…requisitioned to prove the justice or correctness of a particular syllogistic argument by showing the contradictory supposition to be false". Nagarjuna's method neither begins nor concludes with a proposition that must be accepted simply because the opposition has been disproved. In accordance with his "middle way" philosophy, he "thinks that his duty consists in showing contradiction in the adversary's position and not in proving any particular thesis of his own" (*ibid*: 403). Nagarjuna's aim is to discourage any kind of clinging to views by exposing the absurdities and self-contradictions of all views.

[39] In the *Vigrahavyavartani* or "*Averting disputes*" (Bhattacharya, trans. 1986, *The dialectical method of Nagarjuna*, p. 115*ff*), Nagarjuna points out that such means of knowledge are themselves in need of validation. Rejecting the argument that the truth of some views is "self-evident", he points out that it merely begs the question why all other views should not also be regarded as self-evidently true. He rejects the practice of basing truth claims on authority because it leads to the problem of infinite regress (i.e. who or what is the authority of "the authority"?). In the same way, he critiques the claim that perception is a valid means of knowledge by arguing that perception cannot be validated by perception itself (3.3.4).

[40] Right understanding or right view is the first fold in the Eightfold Noble Path. The other 7 are right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right mindfulness, right effort, and right concentration. Right view and intention are part of *prajna* development; right speech, action and livelihood are part of *sila* or behavioural change, and right mindfulness, effort and concentration are part of meditation or cognitive change. (Kenneth K. S. Chen, 1968: 33)

[41] Another metaphor used is the diamond, which, with its adamantine and multi-edged quality, suggests the capability of cutting through all illusions in one go. One of the most well-known of the *Prajnaparamita sutras* is the *Vajracchedika* ("Diamond") s*utra*. The title of Thich Nhat Hanh's translation and commentary on the *sutra* is *The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion* (1992).

[42] "Intuition is defined by the dictionary as 'knowledge or perception not gained by reasoning and intelligence; instinctive knowledge or insight'" (Eysenck, 1995, p. 175).

[43] The use of logic and reasoning has been an important part of Buddhist discourses since the time of Gautama Buddha. In the fifth century, Dignaga produced a treatise on the principles of logic called the *Pramana samuccaya.* An important part of the treatise is the refinement of a syllogistic system to validate inferences. For an overview of logic as discussed in the school of Dignaga, and how it differs from the logical systems of other Indian as well as European philosophical schools, see Mookerjee, 1980, chapters 22, 23, and 24.

[44] This description of the experience of "brainwaves" and my reflections on it are based on my personal experiences in solving marketing and advertising problems, as well as a writer of fiction. There are however many accounts of similar experiences given by mathematicians, scientists, writers, artists, and composers. For the account given by the mathematician, Henri Poincare, of his personal experience of intuitive "flashes", see H. J. Eysenck, 1995, p. 170-201.

[45] The Theravada tradition identifies 24 such relational conditions for examination (Jayasuriya, 1976, pp. 128-32)

[46]Although at some point *upadana* and *prapanca* must be abandoned if one is to achieve enlightenment, there are situations when they can be used for therapeutic ends. The survival of an abused child, or the rehabilitation of a drug addict, may depend on a craving for a better life, sustained by the clinging (*upadana*) to and conceptual proliferation (*prapanca*) of the desired end. Here is an example of the Buddha's use of *upadana* and *prapanca* for therapeutic ends: A woman, mad with grief over the death of her child, asks the Buddha to bring the child back to life. The Buddha tells her she must first bring him (the Buddha) a mustard seed from a household where death has never occurred. He thus uses her *upadan*ic grief and her *prapanca* about his powers to motivate her to go on a quest that provides opportunities for her to learn that every family has experienced death, as well as time to come to terms with her loss.

[47] My summary of the four ways of knowing reality is based on J. Willis' (1982, pp. 149-175) "running translation", i.e. translation without commentary, of the chapter on knowing reality in Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhumi*, a Mahayana-Yogacara text. Willis' interpretation and commentary of the doctrine are found on pp. 42-43 and 69-145. The Theravada equivalent of the doctrine of four ways of knowing reality is found in the *Mulapariyaya sutta*, discussed in Nanananda, 1971, pp. 45-51, and, from another perspective, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (1998) in the introduction to his translation of the *sutta* http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.001.than.html [16 March 2000].

[48] My understanding of the doctrine differs from the interpretations given by Willis, Nanananda, and Thanissaro (see previous endnote) in one respect. They discuss the ways of knowing reality in terms of types of people; I discuss them as habits of perception. In my view, the discussion of people as types suggests an essentialism or "permanence" that would be in contradiction with the theory of dependent-origination and the doctrine of reality as the momentary now. The essence of the doctrine of dependent-origination is that all that we have (e.g. mental faculties, language), which are the causes of suffering, are also the means to the end of suffering. This is taught in many *sutras*. An example is the *Rohitassa sutta* (*Anguttara nikaya* IV 45), where the Buddha states: "I tell you, friend, that it is not possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one does not take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear. But at the same time, I tell you that there is no making an end of suffering & stress without reaching the end of the cosmos. Yet *it is just within this fathom-long body, with its perception & 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*." (Italics mine.) *Rohitassa sutta* ("To Rohitassa"). Trans. Thanissaro B. 1997. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.045.than.html. [16 March 2000].

[49] The two-truth theory, as articulated by Nagarjuna in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* Chapter 24, verses 8-9, is (Inada, 1993, p. 146):

> The teaching of the *dharma* by the various Buddhas is based on the two truths; namely the relative (worldly) truth and the absolute (supreme) truth.
>
> Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching.

[50] There have been different interpretations of the two-truth theory throughout the history of Buddhism. For a discussion of the modern scholarly debates over interpretations, see Lusthaus, 2002, pp. 219-225. For a history of debates in China, see Shih, Chang-Qing (2004) *The Two Truths in Chinese Buddhism*.