

# Integration of Buddhist and Western Psychology For Overall Well-being

By Ming Lee

## ABSTRACT

*This paper will first clarify the claim that Buddhism is psychology. It will then address some similarities and differences between Buddhist and Western psychology. Several potential approaches will be suggested for integrating the two systems to make them complementary to each other. The suggested approaches for integration will include considerations from the perspectives of both theory and psychotherapeutic application. It is hoped that based on this thread of contemplation, some theoretical and practical models of a new integrated psychology may be developed for the purpose of advancing human wisdom and overall well-being.*

## Introduction

According to the *Lotus Sūtra*,<sup>1</sup> the purpose of the birth and life of Śākyamuni Buddha in this world is to educate people to understand what he was enlightened about so they may eventually become enlightened as well. The *Flower Ornament Sūtra*<sup>2</sup> states that if we want to thoroughly understand all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, we need to perceive all the phenomena existing in this world as a creation of our own mind. In the *Śūrangama Sūtra*,<sup>3</sup> it is also recorded that every cause and effect and even the tiniest elements of the world are formed from our mind. As written in this sūtra,<sup>4</sup> when Śākyamuni Buddha responded to the question raised by Ananda regarding where to find our mind, he pointed out that all the existing phenomena and their causal conditions, including our mind and our body, are all manifested out of our wonderful mind. All these sutras clearly state that everything existing in this world as we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch, and even our thoughts and emotions, is nothing but a manifestation of our mind.

The Yogacara, or Mind-Only, School of Buddhism, which emphasizes the psychological insights of the Buddha, goes further to develop a structural theory to explicate the abilities and outcomes of our consciousness. Scholars of this school describe, based on such writings as *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice (Yogācāra-bhūmi Śāstra)* and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, how human beings wrongfully use their impure mind to perceive and interpret the external world they live in and consequently produce faulty understandings and a distorted reality. To cease the accumulation of these mistakes, human beings need to transform their impure mind, a mind full of discrimination and attachment, to a mind of wisdom which is capable of functioning in a state of equilibrium. The Yogacara School's contributions to the analysis of consciousness and the description of the influence of consciousness in affections render itself to be generally considered as a school of Buddhist psychology.

In fact, the entire Buddha's teachings focus on the nature and functions of our inner state and ways to transform the human consciousness and behaviors to reach enlightenment. Given this character, we may say that Buddhism is psychology. This paper is therefore written based on this proposition and treats the entire teachings of

the Buddha and subsequently developed theories and concepts as the content of Buddhist psychology.

It is then obvious that Buddhist and Western psychology should share many commonalities. Western psychology, rooted in the ancient Western philosophy about the interaction of mind, body and soul and based on such philosophical thoughts as Rene Descartes' dualism or John Locke's empiricism, has developed into an independent field of science which applies scientific method to study the mental process and behavior of human beings. Buddhist psychology, on the other hand, is based on the Buddha's enlightened state which entails an intelligence far beyond human comprehension. As the Buddha's original purpose of spreading his teachings was to liberate human beings from all sufferings, Buddhist psychology also includes many practical applications that can be carried out in our daily life. Thus, the two systems of psychology also inevitably bear many differences. Understanding their similarities and differences and, furthermore, integrating the two systems is likely to help us expand our understanding of humanity and enhance an overall well-being for all mankind.

### **Similarities Between Buddhist and Western Psychology**

In general, Buddhist psychology and Western psychology, as mentioned above, are both interested in the study of our mental process and its interaction with the environment to understand our behavior.

Specifically speaking, Buddhist psychology differentiates the function of our mind into eight consciousnesses, for each of which there can be found some analogous concepts or theories in Western psychology. The first five of the Buddhist consciousnesses, namely the consciousnesses of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, are produced by the contact of our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body with the associated external phenomena including forms, sound, odor, taste, and touch. These five consciousnesses correspond to the basic sensory consciousnesses described in Western psychology.

The sixth consciousness, the "manovijñāna" or the "thought-consciousness," functions either together with or independent from the first five consciousnesses. The function of the sixth consciousness is to distinguish and investigate our internal and external worlds. The study of the function of this consciousness is also covered in Western psychology under such subjects as attention, cognition, learning, perception, recognition, conception, and imagination. Furthermore, the function of the sixth consciousness plays a role in the "ego" and "superego," two of the three mental entities in the theory of personality described by Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytic psychologists.

The seventh consciousness, the "manas" or "mind," is rooted in the subjective aspect of the eighth consciousness and is the basis of an illusory concept of "I." This illusion of a subjective "I" is the source of all our attachments and psychological problems. The self-centered nature of the seventh consciousness functions in a similar way as the "id," the most primitive mental entity in the personality theory described by Freud and his followers.

The eighth consciousness, the "ālayavijñāna" or the "storehouse consciousness," is the repository of all activities of the other consciousness and also

the potential ground out of which the other seven consciousnesses emerge.<sup>5</sup> These potentials exist in the form of “seeds” (bīja).<sup>6</sup> The “seeds” not only produce all sorts of mental phenomena but are altered by conscious activities. They function mainly in a passive and unconscious way. The “seeds” carry all the information of our life and pass it on to our next life. This is what Buddhist psychology uses to explain how life exists in a continuous form and karmic effects, forces generated as a result of intentional deeds, work across the cycles of birth and death. Some Buddhist psychologists believe that our Buddha nature is stored in this consciousness. The function of the eighth consciousness in terms of the “seeds” producing and being altered by conscious activities can find its closest concept in Western psychology in the function of memory in terms of retrieving and storing information. Jung’s definition of archetypes is somewhat analogous to “seeds.” Moreover, his definitions of personal unconscious and collective unconscious also bear similarities with the concepts of individual karma and shared karma, respectively, buried in the “seeds” as described by Buddhist psychology. According to the personality theory depicted by psychoanalysts, the “super ego” functions in a somewhat similar way as the Buddha nature, with both guiding us to produce morally good deeds and acting mostly out of our conscious awareness.

In addition to the function of our consciousness, the Yogacara School of Buddhism also lays out a detailed description of our affections, including eleven positive and twenty-six negative affections (i.e., afflictions). This affective aspect is also studied by Western psychology, although it is not classified under an ethical framework and is not described in the same manner as Buddhist psychology. It is clear that Buddhist psychology and Western psychology share many similar interests and interpretations in their studies of human mental process and behavior.

### **Differences between Buddhist and Western Psychology**

Although Buddhist and Western psychology share some commonalities, they also have fundamental differences in their theories. These differences are discussed from the following perspectives.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of Buddhist psychology is to help people understand their mental process and function in order to liberate them from sufferings rooted in ignorance. Buddhist psychology therefore not only develops theories but also emphasizes practices based on those theories to attain the goal of living a carefree life and eventually being enlightened. Western psychology mainly emphasizes the development of theories to understand humankind. Although there are many applications of the theories to facilitating better social adjustment and therapeutic care for individuals with psychological disorders, these applications are mainly aimed at those disturbed or maladjusted people. The practices derived from Buddhist psychology, on the other hand, are aimed at normal, healthy individuals. Moreover, obtaining ultimate enlightenment is not a purpose of Western psychology.

#### **Scope**

Buddhist psychology builds its theories based on the ultimate truth enlightened by Śākyamuni Buddha, including a concept of cosmology that the universe is

unbounded in both space and time. According to Śākyamuni Buddha, the universe is both beginningless and endless, cycling through immensely long eons of evolution and involution. Sentient beings are born and reborn into one of six realms. There are also four realms of sages. Together there are ten so-called Dharma realms where beings exist in one form or another or in a no-form way. Other than the human and animal realms where human beings and animals exist in a three-dimensional space observable by human eyes, the other realms occupy spaces of multiple dimensions which is far beyond the human's ability to see, hear, or even contemplate. These boundless concepts of time and space present a very unique framework based on which Buddhist psychology develops its theories and practices. Western psychology, especially American psychology, strives to be accepted as a scientific field and thus limits its scope of investigation to the studies of human behaviors presented only in this life and within a three-dimensional space, a scope that is measurable by scientific instruments and understandable by scientific terms. The scope that Buddhist psychology covers is therefore enormously larger than that of Western psychology.

### **Content**

Given the differences in purpose and scope of their inquiries, Buddhist psychology and Western psychology are inevitably different in the content of their studies as well. Some examples are described below:

- **Functions of Consciousnesses:** As mentioned above, some functions of the eight consciousnesses proposed by Buddhist psychology can be found in their analogous concepts of Western psychology. There are, however, differences in the two systems. First of all, a detailed structure of human consciousness and a thorough analysis of its functions in Buddhist psychology is not observed in Western psychology. Specifically, the explanation of the roles of the sixth consciousness in the integration of the five sense consciousnesses, the seventh consciousness in the delusion of I-attachment, and the eighth consciousness in the cycle of birth and death is unique to Buddhist psychology. Western psychology, on the other hand, employs scientific instruments and methods to measure and examine human sensory organs and brain, and hence develops a detailed description of human physiological systems and their interaction with sensory consciousnesses and other psychological functions.
- **Methods for Practice:** As mentioned above, Buddhist psychology emphasizes not only theory development but also practicing techniques to improve and transcend human nature. There are so called eighty-four thousand practicing techniques for Buddhist devotees to choose from, and different lineages of Buddhism emphasize a different set of practices. For example, the ones who practice for Bodhisattvahood concentrate on the practice of six paramitas, the masters of the Tien Tai School teach ways for Samādhi contemplation, the Ch'an Buddhists exercise meditation and mindfulness, and the Pureland followers chant the name of Amitaba Buddha. Western psychology does not emphasize practice for the purpose of purifying our mind and attaining ultimate enlightenment.

- **The Concept of Emptiness:** The concept of emptiness based on the theory of dependent origination is unique to Buddhist psychology and hence no equivalent concept can be found in Western psychology. The concept is such a core issue in Buddhism that Śākyamuni Buddha, in his forty-five years of spreading his teachings, spent twenty-two years teaching this concept and its practice. The concept was taught by Shakyamuni Buddha as the basis for leading to cessation of all sufferings and transcendence from a worldly view to the ultimate truth. Western psychology with a focus on the present life and observable behavior pays less attention to transcendental thoughts and therefore develops no such philosophical concept as emptiness.
- **Karma:** As mentioned above, karmic effect is stored in the eighth consciousness and used by Buddhist psychologists to explain the cyclic phenomenon of birth and death. Karma as a law of cause and effect is therefore unique to Buddhist psychology and omitted entirely by Western psychology.

The above examples are only a few to illustrate the difference in content between Buddhist and Western psychology. These examples focus on some unique features in the content of Buddhist psychology. There are also particular areas that Western psychology specializes in, such as, as mentioned above, those physiological functions associated with sensory consciousnesses. These will be discussed later under the section on Potential Approaches for Integrating Buddhist and Western Psychology.

### **Methodology**

Buddhist psychology derives its theories from Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings about the ultimate truth that he was enlightened about. In their study and practice of the Buddha's teachings, Buddhists use their own comprehension and experience to verify the teachings. The methods used in Buddhist psychology, therefore, tend to be experiential and philosophical rather than scientific. Buddhist psychology "does not qualify, nor does it aspire to qualify, as science."<sup>7</sup>(p. 489) Although the debate is still going on among Western psychologists regarding whether psychology should be identified as a branch of science or also involve philosophy and art,<sup>8</sup> they have been utilizing scientific approaches to collect and analyze data in the studies of understanding internal and external human behaviors since the late nineteenth century. The battle to make psychology a scientific field is still fought vigorously among many Western psychologists.

In addition to the difference in the use of scientific methods in their inquiries, Buddhist and Western psychologists also employ different philosophies and approaches in the psychotherapeutic process. This difference may be discussed from the following three aspects:

- **Normal versus Abnormal:** Buddhist psychology not only differentiates an ordinary person's consciousness into eight categories but also points out ways for transcending these consciousnesses to four types of wisdom which will lead us to enlightenment. The psychotherapeutic approaches based on Buddhist psychological theories are therefore concerned with

change in the consciousness of normal or healthy people. Western psychotherapy, on the contrary, emphasizes change for neurotic or disturbed individuals.

- Isolation versus Socialization: In the process of studying Buddhism, serious practitioners usually will go through a period of choosing to be isolated from the crowd to contemplate the meaning of the Buddha's teachings or reflect upon self for deeper and wider inner self exploration. Buddhist psychotherapists sometimes encourage their clients to go through an isolation practice to be forced to come in touch with themselves.<sup>9</sup> Śākyamuni Buddha and many practitioners in his time chose to be isolated not only from people but from a civilized life in order to be enlightened. In modern days, the followers of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition are still choosing to live away from metropolitan areas or even choosing the deep forest to do their practices. To Western psychologists, isolation signals a problem for an individual and socializing with other people is believed to lead to a healthier and happier life.
- Selflessness versus Individualism: As mentioned above, the concept of emptiness is central and crucial in Buddhism. Under the law of dependent origination, nothing exists permanently, unchangeably, and absolutely, including the self. Buddhist psychotherapists use the concept of selflessness to train patients to cease the thought of duality between the self and others and between the self and nature. Through the practice of contemplating on selflessness, individuals are believed to be able to develop more harmonic relationships with others and with the environment in which they live. Western psychology, on the contrary, promotes the development of self-esteem and an independent self. The psychotherapeutic approaches developed according to Western psychological theories fortify the sense of the ego rather than dissolve it, and hence result in greater social maladjustment rather than an improved interpersonal relationship.<sup>10</sup>

It is therefore clear that although Buddhist and Western psychology share many commonalities in the study of human mind and behaviors, they still have somewhat or very different insights and approaches. How to integrate and fully utilize the wisdom of East and West should be the focus of the field for the twenty-first century.

### **Potential Approaches for Integrating Buddhist and Western Psychology**

As described above, Buddhist and Western psychology enjoy their own unique features and accomplishments. It would be contributive to the field of psychology if the two systems could be integrated to make the achievements of each system complementary to the other. In fact, there have been several instances which demonstrate the integration of Eastern and Western wisdom in psychology. For examples, since Zen, a Japanese Buddhist lineage, was introduced to the West in the early twentieth century, Zen meditation has been conceptualized in psychoanalytic terms.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Eastern perspectives on mental health and Buddhist meditative disciplines have been recognized as useful mechanisms in facilitating the

psychotherapeutic process in psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy.<sup>12</sup> These cases indicate that East and West can benefit each other from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The mutual benefits may be further expanded from the potential contributions each may bring to the other as described below.

### **Potential Contributions of Buddhist Psychology to Western Psychology**

As mentioned above, Buddhist psychology bases its theories on many unique Buddhist concepts which cannot be found in Western thoughts. These concepts, if adopted by Western psychology, may expand its scope of inquiry. Some examples of such concepts are described as follows:

- The concept of an endless life, hence an eternal timeframe, and a cyclic repetition of birth and death may stimulate Western psychologists to study the influence of previous life experiences on behaviors of the present life. There is evidence showing that through hypnosis a patient is capable of memorizing experiences of many previous lives, and those experiences affect interpersonal relationships and personality characteristics of the present life.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore possible that by expanding scientific inquiry into the investigation of previous life experiences our understanding of personality development, social interactions, as well as many interpersonal phenomena may be improved.
- The concept of boundless space from the Buddhist description of ten Dharma realms may stimulate Western scientists and psychologists to investigate the possibility of communicating with beings existing beyond the three-dimensional human world. This Buddhist concept may also provide an intellectual justification for the Western scholars in their study of extraterrestrial beings, and expedite progress in the attempt to communicate with them.
- The Buddha nature claimed by Buddhists to exist in everyone and the practice of transforming human consciousnesses to the wisdom of the enlightened may provide Western personality theorists a new horizon for studying and advancing personality development. In fact, positive psychology and transpersonal psychology have already adopted such Buddhist concepts as the Buddha nature and transcendental wisdom and started to emphasize the building and amplifying of human strengths and virtues. Integrating Buddhist psychological theories and practices with Western scientific methods of inquiry should further facilitate the understanding and realization of human potential.
- The ultimate truth that Śākyamuni Buddha was enlightened about and which Buddhist psychology was based upon for theory development may provide cognitive psychologists ideas for investigating the capacity of human imagination and abstract thinking. The phenomenon of nirvāṇa and the concept of emptiness, for examples, may expand cognitive psychologists' study, and may eventually lead to the development of a practicing model for eliciting the highest human cognitive potential.

- The concepts of loving kindness, compassion, and giving without thoughts of the giver, the recipient, and the gift should advance the stages of moral development proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg<sup>14</sup> to a higher level. The highest stage in Kohlberg's morality, the universal ethical principles, is still based on a dualistic system for making moral judgment. The Buddhist concepts used to describe Bodhisattva's achievement demonstrate a higher state for human beings to develop morally.

### **Potential Contributions of Western Psychology to Buddhist Psychology**

Although the frame of reference adopted by Western psychology and its content of study falls short when compared to Buddhist psychology, many accomplishments made by Western psychologists over the last century are of great value to Buddhist psychologists. Specifically, many research findings in Western psychology on human behavior and validated psychological theories based on these findings may enrich Buddhist psychology. Some achievements of Western psychologists are discussed below as examples.

- **Defense Mechanisms:** Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, developed a theory of defense mechanisms to describe some unconscious reactions human beings developed in order to deal with negative experiences in life. Although Freud claimed that these defense mechanisms are not necessarily maladaptive and we cannot survive without them,<sup>15</sup> they function to deny or distort reality so as to make it less threatening. This distortion of reality, according to Buddhism, reinforces our ignorance, prevents us from personal and social growth, and destroys our opportunity to become enlightened. Understanding how these mechanisms function will increase our chance to bring these unconscious behaviors to the conscious level and to be able to control and eventually avoid using them.
- **Ego Identity Development:** Eric Erikson, a Freudian follower, elaborated on Freud's stages of development to establish a developmental theory emphasizing the social dimension with a special focus on the positive role of the ego. He believed that the ego is the part of the mind that functions to unify our experiences and leads us to consistent behavior and conduct. Among the eight psychosocial stages of development proposed by Erikson, the primary task during adolescence is to search for an ego identity that is "the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and a continuity of one's meaning for others".<sup>16</sup> He claimed that if adolescents fail to answer the question "Who am I?" satisfactorily, they will suffer role confusion. James Marcia conducted a series of research based on Erikson's theory and differentiated ego identity development into four stages: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. The search for our self nature is also considered a core task in our life by Buddhist psychologists. Buddhists, especially those following the Ch'an tradition, constantly use the question "Who am I?" as a tool for self-reflection and meditation practice. The theories

and research findings of Erikson and Marcia on ego identity development will help Buddhist practitioners better understand the process in the search for self and facilitate their finding of the ultimate true nature. The Buddhist concept of selflessness, on the other hand, should enrich the ego development theory by adding an even more advanced stage next to the identity achievement stage described by Erikson and Marcia.

- **Cognitive Development:** The cognitive development theory as proposed by Jean Piaget, a cognitive psychologist, should help us understand why the concept of emptiness is difficult to be grasped by some Buddhist practitioners and hence hinders them from reaching higher levels of enlightenment. The concept of emptiness entails an abstract thinking ability and cannot be fully understood by people before they reach the formal operational stage in Piaget's theory. Only between 40 to 60 percent of all adults from Western cultures were found to use formal operational thinking.<sup>17</sup> Some psychologists<sup>18</sup> extend Piaget's theory to propose a postformal operational reasoning which is characterized by such reasoning as relativism. The Buddhist concept of dependent origination, meaning that nothing has an independent existence of its own and hence no absolute phenomenon anywhere in the universe, represents a product of relativistic reasoning. Applying these theories of cognitive development to structure instructional materials and learning environments may help learners advance their cognitive development. Buddhist practitioners with advanced development in cognitive reasoning are better prepared for intellectual liberation from suffering. Buddhist concepts, such as dependent origination, on the other hand, also indicate the possibility of the development of a postformal operational reasoning.

In addition to the three examples described above, many other Western psychological theories, such as the development of personality, social influences on individual behavior, and development through life cycle, should all facilitate the understanding of self and others for Buddhist practitioners.

In fact, many Western psychologists, such as Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, and Karen Horney, have already tried to integrate the Eastern Buddhist and philosophical thoughts with their own psychological theories.<sup>19</sup> For example, Jung's concepts of personal and collective unconscious, as mentioned previously, are analogous to the concepts of individual and shared karma, respectively, in Buddhism and his definition of "self" is close to the Buddhist concept of Buddha nature. The developments of positive psychology and transpersonal psychology, following the humanistic view of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, have also underscored the possibility of integrating the wisdom of East and West. The emphases of these relatively recent developments in Western psychology on subjective experiences of well-being and flow along life circumstances and a higher mode of consciousness that transcends the ordinary self and existing phenomena can all be found their commonalities in Buddhist psychology. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Buddhist concepts of unconditioned loving kindness and compassion, selflessness, and dependent origination may provide important insights for Western psychological theories of moral development, ego

development, and cognitive development. These theories, in return, may also help Buddhist practitioners develop a deeper understanding of themselves and facilitate furthering their self growth. It is therefore possible to not only integrate the Buddhist and Western psychology but enrich each other through the process of integration.

### **Comparison of Psychotherapeutic Applications of Buddhist and Western Psychology**

Buddhism, as perceived by some Buddhist scholars and followers,<sup>20</sup> is entirely a psychotherapy. The Buddha is described as the “unsurpassable physician” and also the “unsurpassable trainer of persons.” These titles, translated in modern language, may be rendered as the “super psychotherapist (or psychiatrist)” and the “super personality trainer.” The teachings of the Buddha are therefore considered full of psychotherapeutic concepts and techniques. Buddhist practices provide solutions to the basic problems of existence, that is, the sufferings of various kinds that underlie our daily life.

According to the Buddha, there are two extreme modes of living to be avoided. One extreme is the pursuit of sensual pleasure or avoiding sensual pain, and the other extreme is self exhaustion through self-denial and asceticism. To avoid these two extremes, the Buddha taught an intermediate mode of living, the Middle-Way, which consists of an awareness of reality and is accompanied by thinking, speaking, and acting in harmony with it. This teaching of the Buddha on the development of mental health can be found close concepts in the Freudian theories. According to Freud’s structure of personality, it is the activity of the id that pursues sensual pleasure and the activity of the super ego that represses the id through self denial. It is the activity of the ego that tries to compromise the demands of the id and the moral standard of the super ego by replacing the pleasure principle with the reality principle. A mature personality which is dominated by the ego’s reality principle, from a Freudian standpoint, and a harmonic life which aligns one’s thinking and living with reality by following the Middle-Way, from a Buddhist standpoint, are both generally accepted by all modern psychotherapists as demonstrations of mental health.

It should be pointed out that the concept and function of the ego in Freudian theories, however, is not accepted by Buddhists as a form of health. The ego, according to Freud, employs defense mechanisms, especially repression, to keep the impulses of the id out of conscious awareness and to reduce feelings of anxiety. As mentioned previously, the function of these defense mechanisms results in ignorance as they distort reality and block clarity of mind. Furthermore, Buddhists seek not only a harmonic worldly life by following the Middle-Way but also an ultimate liberation of all sufferings via the development of a sense of selflessness and emptiness. According to Buddhism, therefore, the ultimate state of mental health is achieved through losing the experience of self.

Buddhist psychotherapists, unlike Western psychotherapists who play more or less a role of a doctor in their therapeutic practice, function as a teacher whose technique of therapy is a process of education. Through such approaches as Dharma teaching, sitting meditation, mindfulness practice, insight development, Buddhist psychotherapists train their patients to become conscious of mind and its mechanisms, be aware of their thoughts and emotions, and see things as they are without judgment or intervention. Buddhist psychotherapy, therefore, is a type of cognitive therapy,

promotes mindfulness of the present rather than the distant past, uses more direct teaching than the client-centered approach adopted by humanistic psychologists, and focuses mainly on our inner problems of thinking and feeling than external behaviors as emphasized by behavior therapists. As mentioned above, the most fundamental difference between Buddhist and Western psychotherapy is the target audience, with the former focusing on bringing change to the consciousness of normal or healthy people whereas the latter emphasizing change for neurotic or disturbed individuals.

Many different approaches of Buddhist practices have been introduced to the Western world since the 1960s and 1970s due to the efforts of several Zen and Tibetan Buddhist masters. Integrating the Buddhist psychotherapeutic philosophy and practices with those of the West may redefine the goal of the Western therapeutic success to a higher level of mental health. With the help of Buddhist practices, the patients are likely to develop more insightful understanding of their thinking and feeling, obtain a closer contact with their inner self, and cultivate wisdom to solve their conflicts and rid of the fundamental ignorance. As concluded by Ven. Bhante Punnaji (p.3),<sup>21</sup> Buddhist psychotherapy “is not only relevant in the modern world but also a constructive contribution to modern psychotherapeutic thought.”

### Conclusion

From the above discussion of the similarities and differences between Buddhist and Western psychology and the possibilities of integrating the theories and practices derived from the two systems, it is clear that the integration of the two will provide a broader perspective for understanding humanity and increasing psychotherapeutic power to reduce human suffering. The implications of integrating the two systems for the field of psychology may be summarized as follows:

- Buddhist psychology can expand the scope of the Western explanation of human mental process and behavior so to result in a more thorough and accurate understanding of humanity.
- The scientific approaches employed by Western psychology may facilitate the verification of Buddhist psychological concepts and expedite their acceptance by the Western world.
- In addition to the traditional quantitative research methodology, some qualitative approaches, such as ethnographic interviews and case study, may bear a special appeal for investigating psychological phenomena based on an integrated psychological theory of East and West.
- In the field of psychotherapy, the introduction of Buddhist practices and concepts may expand the scope of the traditional Western psychotherapy to both normal and abnormal people, increase the alternatives for therapeutic approaches, and redefine the goal of therapeutic success to a higher level of mental health.
- The Buddhist metaphysical concepts, such as selflessness and emptiness, may create a revolution in the traditional theory and practice of Western psychology which emphasizes ego development and self achievement.
- The integration of Buddhist and Western psychology and psychotherapeutic practices should not only enrich the fields but bring an overall well-being to humanity.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *The Lotus Sutra*, Chapter 1. (The Chinese text is: 「諸佛世尊唯以一大事因緣故，出現於世。...諸佛世尊，欲令眾生開佛知見使得清淨故，出現於世。欲示眾生佛之知見故，出現於世。欲令眾生悟佛知見故，出現於世。欲令眾生入佛知見故，出現於世。」)
- <sup>2</sup> *The Flower Ornament Sutra*, Chapter 19. (The Chinese text is: 「若人欲了知，三世一切佛，應觀法界性，一切為唯心造。」)
- <sup>3</sup> *The Shurangama Sutra*, Chapter 1. (The Chinese text is: 「如來常說，諸法所生，唯心所現。一切因果，世界微塵，因心成體。」)
- <sup>4</sup> *The Shurangama Sutra*, Chapter 2. (The Chinese text is: 「色心諸緣，及心所使，諸所緣法，唯心所現。汝身汝心，皆是妙明真精妙心中所現物。」)
- <sup>5</sup> Engler, A. (2003). *Personality theories: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- <sup>6</sup> Epstein, R. (1985). The transformation of consciousness into wisdom: The path of the bodhisattva according to the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun. *Vajra Bodhi Sea*, 15, 176: 22-23; 177: 15-17; 178: 14-15.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Shurangama Sutra*, Chapter 2. (The Chinese text is: 「色心諸緣，及心所使，諸所緣法，唯心所現。汝身汝心，皆是妙明真精妙心中所現物。」)
- <sup>8</sup> *The Shurangama Sutra*, Chapter 2. (The Chinese text is: 「色心諸緣，及心所使，諸所緣法，唯心所現。汝身汝心，皆是妙明真精妙心中所現物。」)
- <sup>9</sup> Ryhmer, B. (1988). *Morita-Psychotherapie und Zen-Buddhismus*. Zurich, Switzerland: Volkerkundemuseum der Universitat Zurich. Cited in A. Engler, *Personality theories: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003, p. 488.
- <sup>10</sup> Engler, A. (2003). *Personality theories: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- <sup>11</sup> Leone, G. (1995). Zen meditation: A psychoanalytic conceptualization. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27, 87-94.
- <sup>12</sup> Epstein, R. (1995). *Thoughts without a thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective*. New York: Basic Books.
- Metzger, R. (1996). The Buddhist six-words model of consciousness and reality. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 28: 155-166.
- Bobrow, J. (2000). Reverie in Zen and psychoanalysis: Harvesting the ordinary. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 32: 165-175.
- <sup>13</sup> Weiss, B. (1988). *Many lives, many masters*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- <sup>14</sup> Kohlberg, L. (1987). The development of moral judgment and moral education. In L. Kohlberg (Ed.), *Child development and childhood education: A cognitive-developmental view*. New York: Longman, 259-329.
- <sup>15</sup> Engler, A. (2003). *Personality theories: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- <sup>16</sup> Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Norton.
- <sup>17</sup> Neimark, E.D. (1982). Adolescent thought: Transition to formal operations. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Handbook of human development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 486-503.
- <sup>18</sup> Rybash, J. M., Roodin, P. A., & Hoyer, W. J. (1995). *Adult development and aging*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark.
- <sup>19</sup> Engler, A. (2003). *Personality theories: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- <sup>20</sup> Punjabi, B. (1998-1999). Buddhism as a psychotherapy. *Wisdom*, 5, 1: 1-4; 2: 1-3.
- <sup>21</sup> Punjabi, B. (1998-1999). Buddhism as a psychotherapy. *Wisdom*, 5, 1: 1-4; 2: 1-3.