

THE COMPLETE FULFILLMENT (*DZOGCHEN*) TRADITION AND EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION TO COMPLETE FULFILLMENT

The Complete Fulfillment, or *Dzogchen*, is a highly experiential and nondoctrinal school of Buddhism that originated in India around the eighth century and was brought to Tibet by masters such as Sri Simha, Vairochana, Vimalamitra, and Padmasambhava. In Tibet, the Complete Fulfillment school was integrated into the indigenous Bön tradition and became the capstone of the *Nyingma*, or Ancient school, in which it is the final component of their nine-career¹ system. The Complete Fulfillment tradition does not have to form a part of the career system, however, and in fact is being taught at present outside of this system and even outside of Buddhism altogether.

The aim of the Complete Fulfillment is to understand the ultimate nature of the mind and reality in a bare, unmediated awareness.² In Complete Fulfillment thought the ultimate nature of the mind³ is the primordial state of the individual. This primordial cognitiveness is unconditioned, changeless, and atemporal. As the 14th-century Nyingma master Longchenpa (n.d.) writes, the mind “has no temporal extension, no arising, ceasing or abiding, is colorless, has no shape and (therefore) does not have an identifiable nature” (p. 66). It transcends the functional mind which thinks, conceives, and conceptualizes. It is pure and unsullied and “does not need to be liberated since it has been enlightened from the very beginning” (Longchenpa, p. 64). Thus it is said to be naturally free. This is not the conditioned freedom that stands in contrast to some preordained and mechanical destiny. Rather it is freedom from the very need to be free.

All translations are by the author.

The functional mind,⁴ on the other hand, is conditioned by psychological, biological, cultural, and social factors. The main functions of this mind lie in its intentional and attentive capacities, which H. V. Guenther (1976) calls low-level ego acts (Vol. I, p. 26). With these capacities, “thereness (*snang-ba*) is turned into an object (*snang-ba'i yul*), an apprehendable something (*gzung*) to whose solicitation a response (*'dzin*) in the form of a subjective demand comes forth, first selectively, then discursively. This procedure marks our customary subject-object division, which is a way of acting that, because of its subject-object character, is necessarily an ego-activity” (Guenther, 1976, Vol. I., p. 170). From a psychotherapeutic angle, the mind weaves a maze of fictions that, in the absence of reference to the ultimate nature of the mind—that is, in the absence of bare awareness—constrict and bind a person. The functional mind goes astray in its own errors.⁵ It becomes confused and lost in its own opacity and dullness.⁶ At root, then, it is the dualistic viewpoint which discriminates that is the source of all human anguish and suffering.

The functional mind presupposes the ultimate nature of the mind. As Guenther (1976) writes: “Mind (*sems*) as a noetic-noematic complex, determining the ‘meaning’ of world, of being, of experience and of whatever it takes notice, is a coming-into-presence made possible through the open and projective presence of Mind-as-such (*sems-nyid*)” (Vol I, p. xxi).

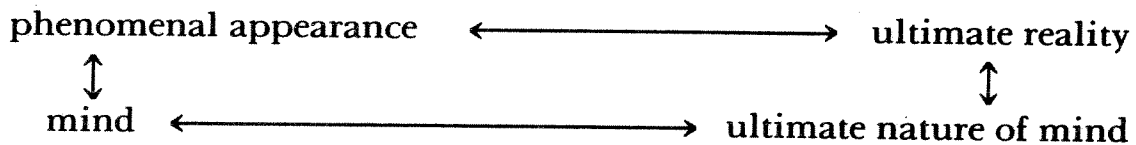
In just the same way that the mind is distinguished from the ultimate nature of the mind, the world of forms and appearances⁷ is distinguished from the ultimate nature of reality⁸ which, like the mind-in-itself, is formless, pure, and unconditioned.

The aim of Complete Fulfillment practice, then, is to realize and live in terms of one’s primordial nature. As Longchenpa indicates: “The error of egocentricity has arisen due to a loss of awareness and therefore as a remedy to this one cultivates the view (which apprehends) one’s real mode of being” (p. 61).⁹ At one level this view is not dissimilar to the aim of existential psychology, which is to enhance awareness of one’s Being. Knowing one’s Being, or *Dasein*,

means to become fully aware of what it means to be an “existing person.” *Dasein*, or literally “being there,” signifies that one is here, where and how one is. It refers to “the particular point *in time* as well as space of my existence at this given moment” (Reeves, 1977, p. 272). It is attention to the existential fact that one is existing as a particular person. In existential psychology, however, Being remains individuated. Thus, what is realized when I know my Being differs from what another knows when his or her Being is realized.

NONDUALITY IN COMPLETE FULFILLMENT

The foregoing distinctions between the unconditioned and conditioned mind and unconditioned and conditioned reality are dissolved within the field of bare awareness. The following diagram illustrates these nondualities:



We see that ultimately all four realities—the world of appearances, ultimate reality, the functional mind, and the ultimate nature of the mind—are identical.

The functional mind is indistinguishable from the ultimate nature of the mind in the sense that the presence or absence of thoughts and concepts is immaterial if the nature of mind has been realized. If cognitions rest in the ultimate nature of the mind, then thoughts are no longer a conditioning agent. They are free-flowing and traceless because they arise in the spacelike matrix of the mind itself. Even though one may be engaged in mental activity, one’s experience is undisturbed because it occurs within an awareness of the underlying nature of the mind. The power of thoughts to condition other thoughts, actions, or the mind in which they arise is removed since awareness is located in (in the sense that it originates in) the ultimate nature of the mind rather than some derivative level

of mental operation. In this sense, then, thoughts are unconditioned. Conditioned thoughts are not removed but rather are deconditioned by applying bare awareness, thus thoughts are liberated into the ultimate nature of the mind. Further thoughts are of the same nature as the ultimate nature of the mind, because they arise from and dissolve into the ultimate or absolute dimension of the mind. The fact that they can *become* the absolute dimension of one's mind means that they must be of the same nature.

Likewise, in Complete Fulfillment thought, the manifold world of phenomenal appearances is regarded as unoriginated and non-dual, by which is meant that the empirical reality is inseparable from the undifferentiated ground of reality within which appearances arise (Longchenpa, p. 62). Thus it is said that the instant phenomenal experience manifests, it is in the condition of being primordially unoriginated (*ibid.*, p. 62). As Longchenpa writes, when one goes beyond viewpoints, worldly phenomena arise as the absolute dimension of being (pp. 74-75). In other words, phenomena are no different from the spacelike and uniform ultimate dimension of reality. Therefore it is said that phenomenal experience does not differ from emptiness (*ibid.*, p. 62). The image is given of the indivisibility of reflections and a mirror. In more direct language, Longchenpa writes:

Although (the phenomenal world) appears to be located (in time and space, in fact) it is the nonabiding and unlocated absolute dimension of reality. The instant (a perceived thing) ceases it does not cease (since ultimately phenomena) cannot increase or decrease. (Things) appear in this way (of being located and in flux) yet this mode (of existence) cannot be established (p. 62).

Thus, in the Complete Fulfillment tradition, the two realities,¹⁰ the ultimate and the conventional, are not bifurcated as in other Buddhist traditions. This has significant advantages from the viewpoint of Buddhist practice, since meditation on realizing the two realities tends to be integrated from the very outset rather than involving two quite different sets of practices. Certain possibilities for extreme realizations are thereby avoided. This relates to the Com-

plete Fulfillment emphasis on “embodiment.” For example, in relation to the image of the mirror cited previously, it is significant that the only way to know a mirror is through its reflections. This emphasis on embodiment is not dissimilar to the framework of existential philosophy in which Being and world are one, in the sense that humans have their existence by being-in-the-world, and the world has its existence by virtue of a Being to disclose it. For Boss (cited in May, 1983, p. 148), “Transcendence and being-in-the-world are names for the identical structure of *Dasein*, which is the foundation for every kind of attitude and behavior.”

Furthermore, in Complete Fulfillment thought the ultimate reality does not differ from the ultimate nature of the mind. Both are spacelike, unconditioned, and unidentifiable. Thus ultimately there is no transcendental subjectivity in opposition to some transcendental object.

Finally, a quite intriguing aspect of the Complete Fulfillment is that the mind does not differ from phenomena, or more precisely, phenomena are neither mental projections nor external events that the mind accesses. The Complete Fulfillment rejects idealism and realism and says that the relationship between the mind and objects of perception cannot be specified.

BARE AWARENESS¹¹

The foregoing dualities exist from the viewpoint of the derivative or conceptual mind and are dissolved by raising one’s level of bare awareness. This is a state that is characterized by luminosity and openness, in which there is no mental orientation such that reality is conceived to be an identifiable thing (Longchenpa, p. 68). Longchenpa says that “bare awareness is devoid of the duality of mundane existence and transcendental peace. It is a state of complete openness. (When) one understands the nature of one’s own being there is no such thing as basis, foundation, or thingness” (p. 62).

One’s level of presence or bare awareness determines whether one is more or less open to one’s real mode of being, which includes

both the particularities of one's conditionedness and one's unconditioned being. By and large people are in touch with neither of these. If one does not fully comprehend the specific and personalized nature of one's social and psychological conditioning, then one has not realized the starting point of the path of self-growth and cannot begin to transcend one's conditioning. The starting point is what one is. But one's real mode of being also includes one's unconditioned nature; without realizing this unconditioned nature one cannot transcend one's conditionality, because it is one's unconditioned being that releases or liberates one from circumstances and conditions.

An individual's level of presence may be of higher and lower intensity. As Guenther (1976) writes: "The proper functioning is termed 'pure awareness' (*rig-pa*), and its malfunctioning, 'cognate loss of pure awareness' (*lhan-cig-skyes-pa'i ma-rig-pa*) which still is cognizant, but in a dim, obscure, and faintly luminous manner and, for this reason, tends to 'go astray' into what it thinks about or intends Being to be" (Vol. I, p. 51). In the movement away from cognizance of one's real mode of being, one functions at the level of derivative mental operations and becomes engaged in ordinary perceptual processes predicated on judgment, discernment, and discrimination.

THE ROLE OF THEORY

In Complete Fulfillment thought, theoretical frameworks and interpretations are rejected because they preclude access to bare awareness. As Longchenpa writes:

If there are (theories and opinions) to be negated and established, and (things that need) to be rejected and accepted, then in the process of doing that one gets entangled in a network of dualistic fixations (which are based on) hope and fear. And having failed to arrive where one wants to go (i.e., an awareness of reality) one is thrown into a state of estrangement. (p. 68)

The tradition is oriented toward practice, not theory. Hanson-Barber (1984) notes: "As a practitioner, one could well complete the whole course of training without ever investigating the philosophical and structural aspects of the system" (p. 97). Although existential psychology falls short of a wholesale rejection of theories, it is clearly suspicious of psychological theories because, as Hall and Lindzey (1978) write, "Truth is not arrived at by an intellectual exercise; it is revealed or disclosed in the phenomena themselves. Moreover, theory, or any preconception, acts as a blinder for apprehending the revealed truth of experience. This truth can only be attained by a person who is completely open to the world" (p. 319).

THERAPEUTIC TECHNIQUE

In the final analysis, the Complete Fulfillment tradition rejects technique and mechanical intervention in the process of gaining awareness or presence, because these interfere with the natural and organic evolution of experience. Longchenpa writes: "One should not condition one's (bare awareness) by intellectualizations and should not manipulate and mechanize (one's experience)" (p. 68). This is because the application of techniques necessarily involves an element of intention, and intention is viewed as an artificial and, as noted, low-level ego activity. Thus, in the state of Complete Fulfillment there is no distinction between meditation and non-meditation. The meditative state is coextensive with stillness *and* action and is natural, free-flowing, and unstructured (*ibid.*, p. 69).

Longchenpa states this spurning of technique clearly and in detail when he writes:

Even though one (tries to understand) the meaning of the Tantra by engaging in the Action, Performance, Yoga and Unexcelled Yoga, and through the many contrived procedures of the "development" and "Fulfillment" (stages), still one does not even approach (an understanding) of the unconditioned, self-determined, spontaneously self-established and veritable (reality, because one is still) ensnared by the net of proliferating complexities and complications.

(Some) say that the obliteration of the mind is the goal of view, meditation and action. Some try to suppress their drives and feelings. Some even try to transcend the temporal (world). (Others) claim that our (ordinary) immediate, empirical conscious-

ness is the open state. Others count the arisings and ceasings (i.e., inhalations and exhalations of the breath). They say these are the authentic aim (of practice, but here there are only) turbulent waves of proliferating conceptualization. (p. 63)

Longchenpa is not saying that these sorts of methods or fabricated techniques are misguided, but he is pointing out that the practices themselves are not the goal. He is warning against practitioners' getting caught up in techniques and becoming conditioned by them to the point that they actually inhibit the development of bare awareness and result in a loss of spontaneity and freedom. The very techniques that are meant to open one up to more fulfilling dimensions of existence can in fact have the opposite effect of constriction and limitation. Longchenpa is not negating these methods of "technical meditation" but warning that one should never lose sight of the fact that methods are for increasing awareness and not for conditioning oneself still further.

This rejection of therapeutic technique can also be found in existential psychology, in which there is a marked absence of practical methods and technical matters. As Rollo May (1983) writes:

Existential analysis is a way of understanding human existence rather than a system of "how tos." Its representatives believe that one of the chief (if not the chief) blocks to the understanding of human beings in Western culture is precisely the overemphasis on technique, an overemphasis that goes along with the tendency to see the human being as an object to be calculated, managed, "analyzed". . . . The central task and responsibility of the therapist is to seek to understand the patient as a being and as being in his world. All technical problems are subordinate to this understanding. (pp. 151-152)

Another reason for this wariness of defined therapeutic procedures and intervention strategies is that techniques can be used as a way of blocking presence in a therapeutic context (May, 1983, p. 162). That is to say, reliance on a set of learned strategies can serve to filter and distort a direct and naked encounter between a therapist and client. Moreover, technical facility can, as May (1983) notes, be a method for "structuralizing" a client's neurosis (p. 152). Existential therapists place an emphasis on creating and maintaining presence, on experiential immediacy, and on concrete grounding.

Specific therapeutic techniques are useful only to the extent that they promote these states of being. As James Bugental (1978) writes:

The therapist can never fulfill the task by participating in a standardized way; no amount of training in or loyalty to any system of psychotherapy can take the place of the human presence and potentiality of infinite adaptability of the person who is the therapist. . . . Only the most subtle and comprehensive of all instruments—an aware human receptivity—must be relied on to discover how this particular matching of therapist and client may most promisingly be brought into being. (p. 103)

Further, in existential psychology the goal of therapy is not to cure a client's neurotic symptoms, but rather to help the client experience her or his being (May, 1983, p. 164). The objective is for the client to become sensitive toward and skilled in the fulfillment of her or his own existence. As May (1983) writes: "The general idea of 'cure'—namely, to become as satisfactorily adjusted as possible—is itself a denial of *Dasein*, of this particular patient's being" (p. 164). The notion of "adjustment" is culturally defined and hence it involves conformity and rigidity in ways that block an individual's experience of his or her particular and unique existence. While "experience of one's being" will as a matter of course effect a removal of debilitating and growth-constricting neuroses, it does not remove anxiety and panic, since these are signals of potentialities and possibilities. As May (1983) notes, to believe that the success of "a cure" is measured by a reduction in anxiety is to assume a way of being "cured" that involves "giving up being, giving up existence, by constricting, hedging in existence" (p. 165). In a real sense there is no objective other than to appreciate and be present to whatever is immediately given, in the sense of not indulging in or granting meaning beyond what is already given.

Similarly, the notion of training is strictly inapplicable in both Complete Fulfillment and existential psychology. In the final analysis, the only training is not to retreat from our encounter with the paradox of being and nonbeing. This retreat from the existential encounter can happen in many ways. It occurs whenever a therapist or teacher offers explanations for a client's condition or promises

an outcome by implying that there is a solution. It also occurs whenever the therapist colludes with the client by supporting the belief that he or she has a problem.

We could say that within both these traditions competence cannot be learned. Rather, what is acquired is a sensitive capacity to correct our tendency either toward affirming our existence in the world or toward denying it through the sometimes seductive belief that we can disappear altogether.

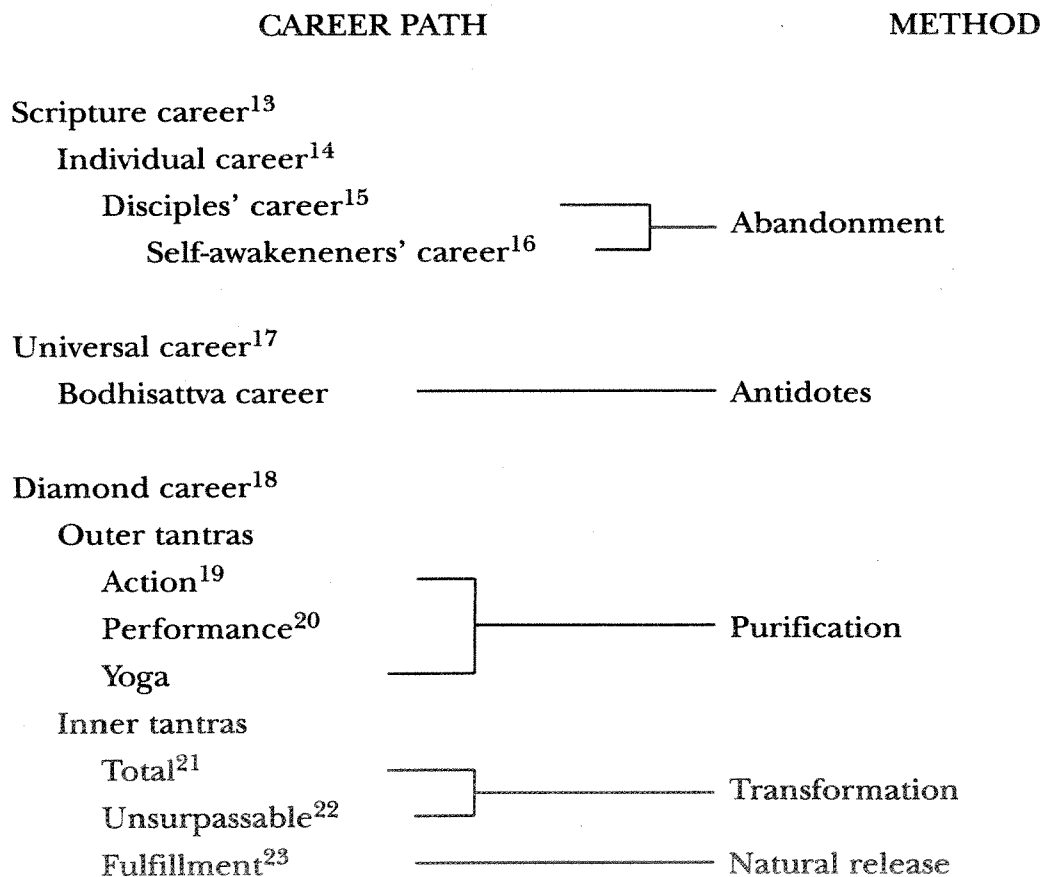
DISPENSABLE METHODS

Given that existential psychology and the Complete Fulfillment reject artificially contrived techniques of training and intervention, it should be noted that both traditions recognize and articulate practices that facilitate the development of authentic presence. In existential psychology the methods are implicit in the development of the observational tools that comprise existential training. That is to say, the training consists of adopting a set of cognitive distinctions within which to practice therapy and live one's life. Some of the key distinctions and polarities through which to observe and interact with clients are existence and nonexistence, life and death, anxiety and tranquilization, meaning and meaninglessness, freedom and destiny. For the most part, training as a therapist takes place in the same mode as therapy itself—that is, in conversations and interactions with competent practitioners. Though one can find programmatic approaches to existential training and therapy (van Deurzen-Smith, 1988), competence is generally acquired loosely and gradually through firsthand exposure to the work of experts, as well as from books that describe the distinctions both formally and through case studies (May, Angel, and Ellenberger, 1958; Yalom, 1980).

Within Tibetan Buddhism, the Complete Fulfillment is thorough in its specification of a training program that ultimately leads to a state of presence.¹² The Tibetan Nyingma lineage, in particular, links together an impressive battery of practices in a serially graded discipline that supports the development and con-

solidation of heightened presence. In specifying such practices the Complete Fulfillment tradition also acknowledges their dispensability and ultimate irrelevance to a state of authentic presence. Since these practices provide a framework that has some suggestive implications for psychotherapeutic practice generally, I will mention the distinguishing features of the practices as they are found in the Nyingma career system. This nine-level career system dates from earliest Nyingma literature (Hanson-Barber, 1984, pp. 106-108). I begin with a tabulation and then explain the distinctions.

The Nyingma Career Path System



The Scripture career is common to all traditions of Buddhism. On the Individual career, or Hinayana, which is divided into the Disciples' and Self-awakeners' careers, practitioners achieve spirit-

ual development primarily through eliminating their negative emotions²⁴ by abandoning them. This is the method of renunciation in which affective changes are made by adopting a particular lifestyle, such as that of a monk or nun, and introducing changes into the environment, such as avoiding drugs, sexual relationships, and so on. The methods on this career are largely behavioral as opposed to cognitive.

In the Bodhisattva career of Mahayana Buddhism, spiritual evolution is effected by applying psychological antidotes to negative emotions. For example, one meditates on love and compassion to remove hatred and anger, or contemplates the repulsiveness of desirable objects to remove desire, or meditates on rejoicing in the positive qualities of others as an antidote to envy, and so forth.

In the Diamond career, or Vajrayana, practitioners achieve development primarily through purification and transformation. Thus anger is transformed into transcendental wrathfulness through visualization techniques that directly engage feelings and unconscious symbolic images, utilizing mantra, gestures, and worldview transformations and commitments. The energy of different emotions is transformed so that it operates in a nonegocentric fashion. Negative emotions are blended with experiences of bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality, which renders them as different aspects of transcendental wisdom. The inner tantras effect transformation by direct manipulation and control of the metaphysiological system of channels, energies, and essences.

NATURAL RELEASE²⁵

Finally, in the Complete Fulfillment tradition one uses the method of natural release or the self-liberation of disturbing emotions and thoughts. Describing this method, Namkhai Norbu (1984b) writes:

When we speak of the path of self-liberation, there is neither a concept of renunciation, because if it is always my energy manifesting, then it can manifest in many different ways; nor is there a concept of transformation, because the principle here is that I find

myself in a state of pure presence, of contemplation. If I find myself for an instant in a state of contemplation, then from that point of view, wrath and compassion are one and the same. Good and evil are one and same. In that condition there is nothing to do; one liberates oneself, because one finds oneself in one's own dimension of energy without escaping and without renouncing anything. This is the principle of self-liberation. (p. 30)

Self-liberation, or the natural release of emotional problems and constrictions, is achieved by cultivating the nonacceptance and non-rejection of whatever one experiences. That is to say, one opens oneself *unconditionally* to life's experiences and meets whatever comes one's way—the pleasurable and the painful—without acceptance or rejection. This unconditional exposing of oneself differs from a conditional exposure, which is selective, manipulative, and strategizing. Unconditional self-exposure to reality expands and deepens one's experience. The panic and anxiety this method can entail are viewed as indications that one is opening one's heart.

This view implies that one does not intervene or meddle in one's experience. As Longchenpa writes: "There is no need to discard (some experiences) and cultivate (others). (Whether one's experiences) are dynamic or stable one should let them go wherever they want to go" (p. 68). Furthermore, he writes: "Do not try to contrive and condition (one's mind) by suppressing (one's experiences) or (applying) remedies (to uncomfortable mental states), but let (the mind) rest naturally in whatever (condition one finds it)" (p. 67). Noncontrivance is achieved by being totally nonjudgmental and nonevaluative with respect to one's experience. In the Complete Fulfillment one does not assume any particular orientation to one's experience or engage in deliberate attentiveness²⁶ or intentionality,²⁷ since these condition and distort one's experience (ibid., p. 65). Nor is there any need to refute or establish anything (ibid., p. 64). In this way one becomes free from the duality of cognitions and a cognizer, remaining in a free state of nonappraisal. Longchenpa writes: "One must not (judge some mental processes) to be spacious and (others) constrained, or some as sublime and (others) as profane" (p. 67). And similarly: "When the mind is in a diffusing or dynamic state

one should not be discouraged, and when it is calm and stable one should stop any desire (for it to continue in that state)" (ibid., p. 69). Thus one should not make more out of one's experience than what is immediately given, and one should not devalue, trivialize, or suppress one's experience. In other words, one should neither build it up nor dilute it, neither charge it up nor block it. Rather it should be natural, unaffected, unmanipulated, and free from all contrivance. This practice is called "leaving what appears just as it is."

In the Complete Fulfillment tradition, therefore, it is in no way necessary that one remove thoughts or emotions in order to achieve freedom. What is required is that one no longer be conditioned by thoughts and emotions. As Namkhai Norbu (1984a) writes:

One's passions only grow powerful because one is ignorant of the state of pure presence, and so consequently one follows after one's passions. But when one finds oneself in the state of the pure presence of the passions, one is not dominated by them nor does one have to suppress them because they are like the ornaments of one's primordial state. Thus one's passions are self-liberated into their own condition whenever they arise. (p. 30)

When bare awareness has been activated, thoughts and emotions are no longer conditioning agents. Even though one may engage in thinking and be subject to emotional responses, one's thoughts and emotions no longer cause or condition one's present and future mental states. Thoughts and feelings arise but are freed in the sense that they are merely a presence or happening occurring within the real dimension of one's being. Mental events are experienced as the ornaments of one's authentic being.

Since the natural release of painful experiences is dependent on the application of bare awareness, the only discipline in Complete Fulfillment practice is to stay in a state of bare awareness or presence, and this is achieved by avoiding the opposing states of drowsiness and elation. One avoids falling under the influence of either depressed or excited states of mind. Behaviorally this means avoiding actions and environments that stimulate depression, boredom, lethargy, excitement, agitation, and so on.

SOME DIFFERENCES

By way of completing this essay I will point out some of the differences between the Complete Fulfillment tradition and existential psychology. I offer these observations provisionally, because the Complete Fulfillment, strictly speaking, does not stand in contrast to anything. To point out differences—or similarities, for that matter—is to set the Complete Fulfillment up as a system with a framework and orientation.

The main difference between the traditions lies in their relationship to the paradoxes that life presents. The two traditions emphasize similar themes—existence and nonexistence, freedom and determinism, meaning and meaninglessness. Existential psychology, however, while recognizing the paradoxical nature of life, tries to escape the paradox by cultivating a movement from meaninglessness toward meaning, from determinism toward free will, and from nonexistence toward existence. Existential psychology seems to get stuck in these paradoxes by viewing them as predicaments that we need to resolve in favor of a life-affirming will. The sense of uneasiness and forbearance in the face of existential conflict that characterized the Continental tradition of existential philosophy still pervades the approach of existential psychology today. Although anxiety is taken on some level as a given, the literature reveals a pervasive reluctance to embrace and use anxiety wholeheartedly.

The Complete Fulfillment tradition, however, attempts no such escape. Instead it aims at expanding to embrace or, more accurately, transcend both poles of these existential dilemmas. Complete Fulfillment texts recurrently use the device of the double negation to express the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of the poles of these dualities. Longchenpa, for example, writes that “the true nature of being is without boundaries and is non-dual. It cannot be synthesized or analyzed; it neither endures nor decays, and neither comes nor goes” (p. 61).

In summary, we could say that the two traditions produce different moods for living and working. Some examples illustrate these

differences. According to both traditions the most immediate and fundamental dilemma confronting humans is the opposition and conflict between being and nonbeing. Although both traditions acknowledge this conflict as basic, existentialists and Complete Fulfillment practitioners seek to resolve it differently. Norcross (1987) articulates the problem for existential psychologists:

Being implies nonbeing or nothingness. If people are to grasp what it means to exist, they must confront the fact that at any given moment they may cease to exist. . . . Anxiety, pain, and guilt are the components of the tragic triad which are responses to our impending nothingness. An omnipresent conflict exists between the awareness of the inevitability of death and the wish to continue to exist. Only out of the pain in life and the dread of nothingness can humans begin to fashion their unique selves. (p. 46)

The solution to this threat is to expand and heighten our appreciation of our existence by confronting the ever-present possibility that we may not exist in the next moment. Here we see that being is contrasted in a mutually excluding way with nonbeing. We are either existing or not existing. If we are alive we are not dead and if we are dead we are not alive. The dilemma ultimately approaches resolution through the affirmation of our existence and aliveness. We develop our aliveness precisely by appreciating its opposite—namely, our death and nonexistence. As May (1983) writes, “The aim in therapy is that the patient experience his existence as real” (p. 163).

In contrast, the Complete Fulfillment views the self as neither real nor unreal. The distinction between life and death is considered deceptive. Rather than directly addressing the dilemma of being wedged between the limiting extremes of existing and not existing, the Complete Fulfillment tradition aims to move practitioners to a plane beyond the concerns of either living or dying. Ultimately it speaks of a way of being that transcends the *need* to be alive or dead. En route to this awareness, practitioners come to appreciate not only how we are enlivened by an awareness of our death, but also how a preoccupation and concern for living deadens us. They appreciate how the drive to be alive in fact kills us.

In existential psychology one seeks to displace meaninglessness by bringing forth meaning into the otherwise adventitious or purely mechanical movements of the universe. Therapists see themselves as widening the horizons of meaning for their clients. According to Norcross (1987), the "creation of meaning—intentionality—is the basis of identity and that which distinguishes humans from animals. People must negate an easy identity with the objective mass and subjectively affirm who they are" (p. 47). This theme is particularly pronounced in movements like Logotherapy (Frankl, 1967). In contrast, both meaninglessness *and* meaning are deconstructed in the Complete Fulfillment; there is no intrinsic meaning to life. Certainly we can create meaning, but there is no ultimate reason or purpose for doing this.

Similarly, in existential psychology one seeks to overcome the primitive experience of isolation and separation from the world by developing its opposite. Loneliness is corrected through appreciating that our being is always a being with others (*Mit-anderen-Sein*). In the Complete Fulfillment we are viewed as being neither the same as nor different from others. Further, to the extent that we experience isolation, it is experienced as an *expression* of our connectedness, since the very privacy of our experience produces an intense and immediate appreciation of all that we are not.

With respect to the tension between determinism and free will, existential psychology promotes freedom over destiny. The purpose of existential therapy "is to assist individuals in loosening their deterministic shackles and to choose freedom" (Norcross, 1987, p. 48). More specifically, therapy aims to give clients "an increased sense of mastery through the realization that they have the power to determine their attitudes toward external circumstances, however adverse they may be" (Norcross, 1987, p. 47). The Complete Fulfillment, on the other hand, seeks to harmonize choice and destiny by moving practitioners to an experience wherein they are *neither bound nor free*. Thus the Complete Fulfillment regards freedom as a myth. Ultimately we are not free to choose the future, nor are we victims of a mechanistic interpretation of the universe.

A final difference between the two traditions concerns the role of the professional who helps others toward a less defensive and contracted experience of both their potential and their vulnerability. Even though existential psychology rejects the notion of “fixing” the client, practitioners of this therapy typically use postures and approaches that are designed to cultivate empathy and lubricate the practitioner-client relationship. Therefore existential therapy is often wedded to the practices of humanistic psychology.

In contrast, masters of the Complete Fulfillment do not try to help the student. They express instead a middle path that avoids hindering or helping those with whom they interact. The Complete Fulfillment emphasizes resonating awareness²⁸ rather than compassion, which is central to Mahayana Buddhism. Resonating awareness is simply the capacity for presence to activate itself environmentally through the play of authentic, open, and honest communication. Thus Complete Fulfillment masters operate outside of the identity of being “helpers” and view no one as being in need of their help. Nonetheless, they stimulate the development of authentic presence in others through the certainty of their insight that everyone already spontaneously and perfectly expresses his or her intrinsic nature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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NOTES

1. Sanskrit: yana
2. Tibetan: rig pa
3. Tib.: sems nyid
4. All references to Longchenpa are to his text, *Rang grol skor gsum*, which is undated and cited in full in the References.
5. Tib.: sems
6. Tib.: 'khrul pa

7. Tib.: gti mug
8. Tib.: snang ba
9. Tib.: chos nyid
10. Tib.: gnas lugs
11. Skrt.: dravya satya
12. Tib.: rig pa
13. Tib.: rig pap
14. Skrt.: sutrayana
15. Skrt.: hinayana
16. Skrt.: sharvakayana
17. Skrt.: pratyekabuddhayana
18. Skrt.: mahayana
19. Skrt.: vajrayana
20. Skrt.: kriya
21. Skrt.: charya
22. Skrt.: maha
23. Skrt.: anu
24. Skrt.: ati
25. Skrt.: klesha
26. Tib.: rang grol
27. Tib.: ched du dmigs pa
28. Tib.: gtad med
29. Tib.: thugs rje

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