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METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM THROUGH THE LENS OF THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF TIME KĀLACAKRA: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. JENSINE ANDRESEN

Modern dialogue between Western science and Buddhism raises an enormous range of cognitive issues that require interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. The idea of methodological pluralism (MP) arises here as an effective solution for such projects. Having immersed itself in the study of the background of its opponent, Western science touched the fairly old and specific way of reality cognition, which in certain aspects actually can be identified as a Tibetan-Buddhist version of the MP. In an interview with the professor from the United States, who for many decades has been engaged in research on the boundaries of various science disciplines, ethics, and religious studies, we tried to clarify the specifics of this so-called version of MP, which is set out in the Buddhist doctrine of time, Kālacakra. Texts of this doctrine are included in the corpus of Buddhist canonical literature and form the basis for two classical Buddhist sciences: the science of stars (which is actually “social astronomy”); and the science of healing (which looks like a certain version of “psycho-medicine”). During the interview, we went directly to the possibility of using the Buddhist version of MP at least within the dialogue “Buddhism-Science”, to the need to understand the specifics of such an implementation, and to the mandatory combination of MP with an integrated approach. The interview was intended to raise the question that deals with transgressing the abovementioned dialogue from the “consumer” level (when we are looking for something that could be useful to the Western neuro-cognitivist) to the philosophical one, in order to formulate a criterion for recognizing a different way of thinking, and finally, to move on toward the semantic discussion, without which the integration phase of any kind of MP is impossible.

Keywords: *Tibetan Buddhism, Kālacakra, Kalachakra, methodological pluralism, interdisciplinary research, multidisciplinary research, integrated approach, dialogue Buddhism-science.*

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Introduction

The current dialogue between Western science and Buddhism raises a wide range of Religious Studies and Philosophy issues. These issues, which involve interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, require specific, methodological approaches. Considering that Buddhist tools include not only religious and philosophical practices but also ten non-secular sciences, we have turned to the most systematic Buddhist doctrine of time, Kālacakra¹ (X-XI cen.), which is included in the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, to inform our discussion. This doctrine, which is formulated as a Buddhist tantra, is the basis of two classical Buddhist sciences — astronomy and medicine, which are traditionally called *skar rtsis*² and *gso ba rig pa*³, respectively.

Having explored Kālacakra, which belongs to Mantrayāna⁴, also referred to as Vajrayāna, we firstly confirm that this teaching rests on the key role of language in the search for true reality on three levels, Body, Speech, Mind — at first mastering Speech and then rejecting it. Perhaps that is why there are certain difficulties in finding a common standard for discourse in Western philosophy and Eastern *prajñā*⁵.

Nevertheless, since the 1980s, there has occurred active dialogue between Buddhism and science. Without turning a blind eye to the problem of terminological distinctions, we recognize that this issue of participating in a shared discourse has no simple solution — for it is not only an issue of translation, it also is an issue of exegesis. Accordingly, we must increase the dimensions of our discussion space to recognize new understandings, and we must go from linear thinking to an orthogonal coordinate system and, finally, to nonlinearity. But for this, we must solve the methodological problem of how we combine, or, at the least, juxtapose, scientific and religion-philosophy approaches in the context of a single study and/or research project. Interestingly, we then find that the Kālacakra tradition offers one such solution, which is based upon the Buddhist implementation of what we here refer to as “methodological Pluralism” (MP).

To understand the essence of the Buddhist implementation of MP and to inquire into how Western science can open to new methodological techniques, including those that incorporate the role of consciousness in reality and, accordingly, have the expanded breadth to incorporate qualitative data, we decided to talk with Dr. Jensine Andresen (USA). Most recently, she held the position of Officer of Research, Associate Research Scholar at Columbia University. Some years prior to that, she was an Assistant Professor of Theology at Boston University, where she taught in the Ph.D. Program in Science, Philosophy, and Religion. Dr. Andresen received her Ph.D. from Harvard University, where she studied Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and wrote her doctoral dissertation on the Kālacakra tradition. Her current

¹ Kālacakra (Sanskrit) = Dus kyi 'khor lo (Tibetan).

² the science of stars.

³ the science of healing.

⁴ Tib. sngags kyi theg pa.

⁵ Prajñā (Sanskrit) = shes rab ma (Tibetan) = σοφία (Greek) = wisdom (English).

focus is the academic and societal implications of extraterrestrial intelligence [Andresen, Chon Torres, forthcoming; Andresen, forthcoming a; forthcoming c], a topic on which she is collaborating with other scholars from around the world [e.g., Kalantarova, forthcoming]. Her past research focused on cognitive science and religious experience [e.g., Andresen, 2001a, 2001b]; meditation and behavioral medicine [Andresen, 2000]; and bioethics [Andresen, 1999b]. For many decades, Dr. Andresen has worked translating materials from the Kālacakra tradition from Sanskrit and Tibetan into English, and she plans to publish her translation of the third chapter on initiation of the *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarājā*, often referred to as the *Kālacakratantra*, and the corresponding third chapter of the foremost commentary on this text, the *Vimalaprabhāṅkā*, often referred to as the *Vimalaprabhā*.

Methodological flexibility and Nonlinearity

Olena KALANTAROVA: Dr. Andresen, thank you for agreeing to answer my questions. To begin, we are discussing methodology in the context of the Kālacakra tradition. As you know, the Sanskrit term “Kālacakra” has many possible translations into English. For example, I like “Wheel of Time.” Which do you prefer?

Jensine ANDRESEN: My view is that this important Sanskrit term should be left untranslated into English, but we should explain what we think it may mean instead. The reason for this is because the term itself is so multivocal — intentionally so in Sanskrit. I think that any attempts to translate it, into English or into any language, are going to be reductionist and will inadvertently dilute the meaning of the term. As you know, one of the earliest translations of the term into English was “Wheel of Time,” which, as you have mentioned, is your preferred translation. My view is that “wheel” is much too reductionistic and mechanical for what is meant by Kālacakra. Even though scholars know that Sanskrit is a multivocal language and attempts to translate many Sanskrit words often result in significant reductionism, yet still we translate. But, in this case — i.e., the title of the text and the core term for the entire tradition — I think it is very important we don’t go that route. I think it is better to leave the term in Sanskrit and elaborate on what we mean by it in the target-language — here, English. So, while “kāla,” meaning “time,” is perhaps the easier side of the term linguistically, “cakra” can mean many things, including wheel, but also, more expansively, cycle, mechanism, possibly even the sense of a spiral, etc.

O.K.: It’s hard to disagree with you — after all, tantric narratives are textologically and methodologically complex, and the language of tantric texts *saṃdhi-bhāṣā* is a twilight language and requires special techniques of connotative hermeneutics. Therefore, before moving on to the question of how methodological pluralism is expressed in the KT, please tell us what exactly do you mean by the phrase “methodological pluralism”? [Andresen, Forman, 2000] Why is such an approach needed in modern research in academia?

J.A.: MP refers to the need to take the best methodologies available from all modern disciplinary specializations and to apply them to questions of all kinds, both academic and otherwise. What I mean here is that we must become methodo-

logically flexible. Often in academia but also in other contexts such as government and business, methodological inflexibility sets in, whereby people follow a rigid set of steps informed by a rigid mindset when approaching issues. This is not just an academic problem, or a humanities problem — it is a human problem — namely people approaching questions, issues, and challenges in a rigid manner. It does not lead to good outcomes, so we must be rigorous in overcoming such rigid mental patterns. In the academy, as in other arenas, rigid mindsets often reflect years of socialization in a particular field of research or in a particular line of work. This stifles intellectual creativity and results in rigid adherence to linear thinking instead of using innate, human, nonlinear thinking when approaching global and non-standard issues.

O.K.: Nonlinear thinking — what do you mean?

J.A.: If you look at the term in a straightforward way, pardon the counterintuitive pun, “nonlinear” refers to something that does not proceed in a straight line, nor does it proceed in a strictly sequential manner. It may appear to have linear aspects on the surface, but at a deeper level, there is a nonlinear — and, hence, much more direct — series of connections at play. I think human thinking inherently is nonlinear, but human beings nevertheless often cognitively frame their experience in linear terms. That occurs as an epiphenomenon of perception, though I do not believe it fully describes the reality of the situation.

As an adjective, the term “nonlinear” is applied in many areas. For example, people refer to “nonlinear systems” in science and mathematics, and in those contexts, they mean systems in which the change in output is not proportional to the change in input. In fact, essentially all complex systems are nonlinear. The term “nonlinear” also can have more specialized meanings, especially when conjoined as an adjective with other terms that are nouns, to result in terms such as “nonlinear functions” and “nonlinear regression”.

I like to apply the concept of nonlinearity to thinking, or to cognition more broadly. I do this to emphasize that a person or a group, or even a society or a species, can start from many different vantage points in order to address a certain issue or challenge — which is another way of invoking the idea of MP.

Some of this relates to the use of language. I like what you write in the introduction, namely that practitioners of the Kālacakra system at first master Speech and then reject it. I think that is quite an insightful comment, which is correct. I would push it a bit further, too, to say that at the deepest level, what any kind of tantric practice is doing, whether it be Buddhist tantra, Hindu tantra, or any type of tantra — one even may want to make the argument for yoga generally — is to completely reject the primacy of language in shaping one’s perceptions of reality — and, therefore, reality — itself. The reason for this, of course, is because language by its very nature fragments — it takes a reality that is whole and coherent and it divides it into fragments, which we call “words”. Then we parse reality into smaller and smaller bits, which we continue to label with more words, and in the process, many people lose sight of the underlying wholeness of reality and its incredible

coherence. Then sets in discontent and a sense of loss. What human beings have lost in those moments is their sense of connection to and immersion in the underlying coherence of the whole. That is why techniques such as yoga are so important in bringing us back into alignment. Taking a walk in nature is similar, or listening to a particularly coherent piece of classical music, where the continuity in the line is apparent and, often, exquisite. Of course, the most coherent force in all of reality is love.

O.K.: What is the history of your thinking about MP? What made you propose this approach?

J.A.: I rely upon my intuition during my own research and writing, and intuitively I felt strongly that the pictures we had of reality emanating from different disciplines in the academy were incomplete — not only were they incomplete, but sometimes they disagreed entirely. Clear examples of this are scientific and theological accounts of reality. So, historically, I was one of the people in the academy who was pushing for the development of interdisciplinary studies.

In this sense, MP was my intuitive response to what I was experiencing in the academy, namely that because people in different disciplines had only limited contact with one another, they were proposing views of reality that were often contradictory, and that by their very natures were incomplete and fragmented. I felt it was very important for people from different disciplines to come together to share their findings so we could form a more complete view of reality. At some level, this was direct intuition on my part.

When I was teaching courses in Boston University's Ph.D. Program in Science, Philosophy, and Religion, I found that there were no sources that explained to my satisfaction how to teach from an interdisciplinary point of view. Therefore I began to develop pedagogical methods as I went along. I started with triangulation of disciplinary approaches to a common problem. This came easily for me since my own education had encompassed the natural sciences and engineering, social sciences, and the humanities. Accordingly, I had been exposed deeply to many different types of methodologies during my education.

I actually taught using more of a multidisciplinary methodology rather than a strictly interdisciplinary one. I would introduce a topic, for example human cloning, which I would teach about from multiple vantage points. I am adding the word "multidisciplinary" here because it involves considering a topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives rather than actually integrating methodological approaches from different disciplinary perspectives. I did that for many topics, including stem cell research, intellectual property rights, medical ethics, etc. So that's how it started. I wanted to see the whole thing to the greatest extent possible, in the contexts of human developments and the issues that arose surrounding them.

Buddhist Doctrine of Time and its Methodological Pluralism

O.K.: You are now completing the translation of Chapter 3 of The Buddhist Doctrine of Time from the famous Sanskrit text of the Vajrayāna, or Diamond Path,

the *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarājā*, and the Sanskrit commentary on this text, the *Vimalaprabhā*. Please tell us a few words about this work.

J.A.: Yes, thank you for that question. I often abbreviate mention of these two very famous Sanskrit texts as KT-VP, and when I mean to refer to the third chapter, on initiation, I say KT-VP 3. The reason I use “KT” is because the *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarājā* often is referred to as “the *Kālacakratantra*”.

In its entirety, the KT-VP is divided into five chapters. As you know, Vesna Wallace has translated and published KT-VP 2 [Wallace, 2004] and KT-VP 4 [Wallace, 2010]. For his doctoral dissertation, John Newman [Newman, 1987] translated a portion of KT-VP 1.

Generally speaking, KT-VP 1 addresses Outer Kālacakra, including topics such as astronomy, astrology, etc. KT-VP 2 addresses Inner Kālacakra, including topics such as the understanding of human embodiment, alchemical and medicinal preparations, etc. KT-VP 3, 4, and 5, together, address Other/Alternative Kālacakra, including the initiation (3) and the practice of generation stage yoga and completion stage yoga (4 and 5, respectively).

I am translating KT-VP 3 from both Sanskrit and Tibetan redactions. I also am translating many annotations from Tibetan scholars (from Tibetan into English) [Andresen, forthcoming b].

O.K.: I support the idea that Buddhist tantra (here, I’m specifically referring to the KT-VP) is an attempt to overcome dialectic philosophizing (for example, the Buddhist Sūtra-tradition), the thinking of which inevitably leads us to detect the gap between Mind and Body. However, the non-duality of subject-object dichotomies is achieved by self-examining by cognition that apprehends the reality beyond words, beyond thoughts, beyond space, and beyond temporality. Is Western science capable of that step, in your opinion? And, is current Western philosophy ready to reflect this level of awareness (perhaps in a manner similar to *Coincidentia Oppositorum*)? Or perhaps we do not need an interdisciplinary but rather a transdisciplinary approach?

J.A.: I think that necessarily, knowledge systems will converge, be they what we now refer to as “scientific”, “theological”, “religious”, “philosophical”, etc. I do not know when that will occur, but on my view it is inevitable that it will occur. Is that what you mean by “transdisciplinary”?

O.K.: I think one has to be extremely scrupulous when borrowing methods from other disciplines and other traditions. My view is that a transdisciplinary approach will allow us not only to reveal the boundaries of disciplinary research and extract various methods from disciplinary contexts and integrate them into our research system, but it also will competently create a kind of common research space in which contexts will be preserved as much as possible, while not confusing, but instead complementing, one another. And it is the case that we will need our entire arsenal of pluralism (ontological, epistemological, axiological, ethical, and paradigmatic, at last) to really move to a new level of methodological research, in which the principle of pluralism is understood not as a vulgar plurality of methods or as a methodological arbitrariness, but as an opportunity to find points of contact and

establish the compatibility of different methods, and to generalize various approaches in order to create new ones — or finally, to determine that such a step is impossible. I assume that thinkers of the past have made numerous attempts to create such a space of cognitive theories and practices — and I think that KT is the prime applicant proving this fact. In this regard, I have the following question for you:

Does KT-VP really demonstrate a high instrumental level of application of MP? In what way it is shown in the texts?

J.A.: That is quite an interesting question. I would say “Yes”, because the very structure of the organization of the five chapters that comprise the KT-VP demonstrates that when inquiring into the nature of reality — which after all is one of the core undertakings in the practice of Kālacakra — that the nature of reality first must be understood intellectually from multiple vantage points but finally must be experienced as a gestalt, the full wholeness together — except when an individual can skip the first step and proceed directly to the direct, gestalt awareness. But when we are talking about the intellectual path, these multiple vantage points include macrocosmic ones dealing with the cosmos, as understood by means of astronomy, astrology, etc.; and also microcosmic ones dealing with human embodiment, as understood by means of anatomy, physiology, alchemical and medicinal preparations, etc. Finally, all of this must be operationalized, so to speak, by means of initiation and the practice of yoga. So, at the level of the organization of KT-VP texts themselves, we see that MP is already built into how the tradition unfolds.

There are deeper levels to the question, too, such as once a practitioner engages in the initiation, as described in KT-VP 3, then do we also see MP applied there?

Again, I would reply, “Yes”, though here my reply takes a different approach. For example, in KT-VP 3, one builds the Kālacakra mandala as part of the initiation process. Building the mandala is a very mathematical, geometrical, and even engineering endeavor. But, one does not leave the mandala there, as some sort of artistic and aesthetic form. One actually visualizes oneself moving in time through the mandala. So immediately, human embodiment comes into play.

Becoming something with one’s own body-mind is a different way of understanding MP. It means that MP becomes embodied. It is so much more than doing an external experiment in a scientific sense. This deep level of MP is a *becoming*, not merely a doing.

In this sense, I think we can differentiate two ways of understanding MP. The first one, which I described above, is from the outside in — i.e., by applying multiple disciplinary perspectives; and the second is from the inside out — i.e., which is the doing and the becoming, the unfolding of meaning and realization in one’s body-mind.

Physics, Metaphysics, and Integral Approach

O.K.: Actually, KT-VP picks up a huge range of philosophical problems. It takes the category of Time (in the certain ontological sense) and shows different levels of the cognitions of it: the Outer Kālacakra is also the social level of individual life, which is connected with the group-identification incorporated by calendric rhythm and common rituals; the Inner Kālacakra is the level of the self-identification,

which is undertaken by a person to control the flow of one's own mental energy by psycho- and medical technologies; and the Other Kālacakra opens the "hidden pattern" of reality which is free of social and individual conditions, and which is the essence of the authentic existence. The Other Kālacakra, so-called Alternative or Transforming Kālacakra, is the level of true reality cognition, according to KT.

Above, I intentionally am using the term "hidden pattern" from the patternist philosophy articulated by Ben Goertzel. My view is that MP from KT-VP actually comes close to questions of the philosophy of Artificial Intelligence (AI): the hidden may well be artificial. What do you think about this? Maybe the methodology of KT leads us towards a simulation of hyper reality that is beyond ethics as we conventionally understand it in humanitarian senses?

J.A.: My view is different than this. I do not understand MP from KT-VP as part of AI philosophy. On my view, the tradition is not discussing something artificial but, rather, it expands the conventional understanding of the potential of human embodiment. Buddhists state in many different texts that being born into the human realm is of great benefit to sentient beings because the human realm offers so much potential for development. Human embodiment offers so many opportunities for the unfolding of this potential. This conscious and self-reflective engagement with and intentional application of one's own human embodiment is very well-described, particularly in KT-VP 5, which describes completion stage practices. Those processes depend directly upon the aspects, features, and capacities of human embodiment.

Similarly, my view on reality is that ontologically, there is a continuum from conventional reality to ultimate reality. Therefore, I do not think of the Kālacakra tradition in terms of hyper reality. As I read the texts of this tradition, they are describing in fine-grained detail that which is very real and very immediate, i.e., a deep portrayal of the nature of reality itself.

O.K.: Your words give us hope that Western science will not get locked in the research on meditative practices exclusively "from the third person" and instead also will maintain the perspective of research "from the first person". Of course, the Buddhist tradition itself confirms your words: tantra is a search for the true nature of reality, purified of our emotional defilements and rigid concepts.

Western physicist D. Bohm and Indian thinker D. Krishnamurty in 1980s discussed the value of time research — they tried to find the common ground between science and ancient religious doctrines in their views on the limits of the cognitive capabilities of the human mind [Grover, 2005]. Do you think this polemic deserves attention, and, if so, why?

J.A.: I find Bohm's 1990 essay discussing the inseparability of mind and matter very helpful. I think it provides us with an understanding that it is unnecessary to distinguish physical from metaphysical. I personally do not tend to think in terms of distinctions between physical and metaphysical when discussing KT-VP, and I read the Kālacakra system as one that is very grounded, so to speak [Bohm, 1990].

What you may be pointing to, however, is an idea in Bohm's work that I find very interesting — which is implicate order. As you know, Bohm distinguishes im-

plicate order from explicate order, the latter being what we perceive in front of us and what most people think constitutes the entirety of reality. I think one of Bohm's significant contributions is to show that there is something more, i.e., implicate order. On the topic of time, I like this quote from Bohm, "In so far as meaning is telos, which we will now put in terms of time, it may be something deeper than that, beyond time. ... we could consider orders that are beyond time, from which the time order might emerge; an implicate order that is beyond time that would be possible to have a sub-order of time emerging from it" [Weber, 1987].

On the second point of human, cognitive, capacities, KT-VP certainly does incorporate the view from Madhyamika Buddhist philosophy that there are conventional and ultimate perspectives on reality. From the conventional point of view, spacetime exists and functions; but practitioners who have the ability to realize the ultimate point of view of emptiness experience reality in a manner that is beyond spatial and temporal distinctions. Importantly, however, KT-VP does not then jettison the conventional point of view. Instead, it advocates cultivating non-dual awareness that is both conventional and ultimate together, realized in a non-dual manner. Of course, another interesting question here is whether the explicate-implicate idea in Bohm is the same as the conventional reality-ultimate reality idea in Madhyamika Buddhist philosophy, or whether they are different from one another in any meaningful way. My initial thoughts on this are that there may be similarities and also differences between these two frameworks.

O.K.: When I say about the meta-aspect of the KC system, I think about it in the frame of the meaning of the Greek prefix "meta." I interpret Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT), which includes anuyogatantra (involving the Sanskrit prefix "anu-") as a reference to the meta-level of reality, that reveals itself as the background of conventional reality and that is found as the base of the whole world of phenomenon.

J.A.: Given your description of how it occurs to you, I can see why you like Bohm's thinking. In the sense that you mean the term "meta," Kālacakra most certainly has a "meta" aspect to it. I think the connotation of the term "metaphysical" as referring to theories that are considered so abstract that they have no basis in reality does not apply to KT-VP, however. But there is a "meta" aspect to KT-VP inasmuch as it is an embodied tradition that includes a "meta" understanding of the inseparability of implicate and explicate order in what Bohm refers to as "holomovement."

O.K.: In this sense, I do not think there is any opposition between the meta-level and non-dual awareness.

J.A.: I definitely agree with that. I do not think they are the same thing, but I also do not think that they are contradictory. In fact, you could say that non-dual awareness is the simultaneous awareness of implicate and explicate orders.

O.K.: In the third chapter of the KT-VP, how is the turn from individual practice to non-conceptual cognition carried out? What does the text tell us about the nondual background of the phenomenal world?

J.A.: I think that KT-VP 1 and KT-VP 2 discuss the manner in which the cosmos and individual, respectively, manifest. This leads nicely to KT-VP 3, in which

the practitioner utilizes ritual actions and mandala construction and practice in order to start to move towards and prepare for the deep generation stage and completion stage practices of KT-VP 4, and KT-VP 5, respectively.

To the point of your question, however, what I have always found interesting about KT-VP 3 is the experience of movement — the text really moves. One is doing a lot of things, e.g., performing ritual actions, constructing the mandala, practicing with a partner, etc. There is a lot of movement and a lot of doing. It is a chapter that focuses on using one's human embodiment *to do*.

Now, is “non-conceptual cognition” the goal of this practice as an individual and, in certain circumstances, with a partner? Not precisely, on my view. I think the emphasis is on cultivating non-dual awareness, not moving towards non-conceptual cognition. Nothing is thrown out of the picture, since everything is integrated with the practitioner's own body-mind.

O.K.: I want to return again to the issue of methodology. Let's say there are three tools in front of us — a hammer, a knife, and scissors. And we have a task to cut the paper. In this case, we can really, without prejudice to the solution of the problem, assume that a hammer is just a hammer, a knife is just a knife and scissors are just scissors. And then, empirically, we may check which tool will really help us cope with our task more quickly and more efficiently. But in the case of KT, we do not have a ready-made instrument before us: we only have a description, an instruction, according to which we only have to create a tool (moreover, a mental one). And in this case, in order to correctly interpret the instruction, the meaning of all words and terms from the text, we have to plunge into the background of the text and the extensive tradition of its comments, so that later by means of our own practice (perhaps by trial and error) we read this text based on the meanings that were put into it by its authors instead of on the basis of our personal preconceptions and possibly even fantasies.

J.A.: As a quick comment, I do not think the tools in KT-VP are only mental. Again, I would say they are embodied fully, both mental and physical at the same time, which harkens back to Bohm's beautiful description of the inseparability of mind and matter. So, to put it as directly as possible, the practitioner's own body-mind is the tool, and it is the only tool. Even text in the KT-VP tradition has an interesting sense to it, inasmuch as practitioners are trained to become text, so that even the demarcation between the body-mind and text falls away. In that sense, it's just the body-mind, it's just text, it's just reality—it's just true. When I say “It's just text,” and I follow this closely with “It's just reality,” what I mean is that all aspects of the ultimate nature of reality are already contained within conventional reality, and vice versa. Bohm might express this by saying that every aspect of reality contains the whole.

O.K.: When one says that text is just text, it seems to me like a very succinct guide to mastering The Natural Mind from the *atiyoga* — teaching of rDzogs chen⁶. However, at the same time, *atiyoga* says: a text is not the Great Perfection itself, but

⁶ rDzogs chen — from Tib.: Great Perfection.

it is only the description of the path to it. That is why any text needs to be interpreted. And all translation and understanding really depend on the language. On this point, I absolutely agree with you.

J.A.: This is an interesting point. I think while Great Perfection texts do tend to teach that, I think it is because in that context, Great Perfection texts very much are pointing to something beyond text. But in the KT-VP tradition, the text is meant to be embodied. One *becomes* the text, as I've mentioned above, and the text becomes living in the sense that one *lives* the text — the text and the practitioner become one. So, there is less pointing and more becoming. In fact, in the tradition of HYTs, there is a recognition that practitioners come to embody the tantras themselves, such that one can say that “text” is seen to be a living, breathing reality—it *is* the practitioner herself or himself in the sense that it is one's own body-mind. If we understand what is meant by the language in this manner, then “text” is much more than the conventional understanding of that term as lines of words on a page. Further, all of the clarity that you rightly refer to as being described extensively in Great Perfection teachings is already in front of us — in ourselves, in the text, in everything, in fact. It's all right here.

So, you are very quick to see that transition I made from HYT to Great Perfection teachings. But of course, the traditions are connected, too. In relation to your earlier question relating to “meta” — while at one level we can use the term “meta” — and I do use it sometimes in my writings as a helpful, analytical way of describing things — at the same time, it does not really “exist” as some separate level. It's all just reality. Reality is a whole, as Bohm observes.

O.K.: That's an interesting point, and it brings me to the discussion of your integral approach, in which I have been very interested. At the outset, however, it seems mysterious to me, since any integration presupposes the presence of differentiation and therefore does not stop the duality of approaches. Moreover, such integration seems to zero out the cultural and historical background of a text. Indeed, in this way, we can become free of many clichés and prejudices, but in this process it is important not to “throw away the baby with the bathwater.”

And here you bring into the discourse the body-mind, and then I have the following question for you: how are you going to avoid reducing reality to only physical or physiological phenomena? Does KT provide a clue?

J.A.: Beginning with your comments on the integral approach, when one thinks analytically, it does seem that the idea or concept of integration seems to presuppose a difference or series of elements that then must be integrated. Your articulation of this reminds me of the understanding of dialectical reason, we have A, and B, which often if not always in a dialectical model are opposed to one another, and they must be integrated, or resolved, in C.

I'm going back to the body, though, to move away from the purely analytical in this discussion of an integral method. What I mean to emphasize is the manner in which all conceptual understanding must be “integrated” into one's *body-mind*. That is a central point. I agree with you that this does zero out a cultural and historical

viewpoint. Here, I think the zeroing out is positive since we're trying to get to a deeper level of understanding than explicate order distinctions.

You also raise a concern that we may be reductionist and that this approach may reduce to the physical side. That certainly is not what I mean to communicate. Even in my past academic work in cognitive science, I always try to steer people away from a reductionist model, according to which, for example, the mind is seen as an epiphenomenon of the brain. I am trying to articulate something that is much more profound.

I'm not sure how this translates, but in English, the adjective "integral" derives from the same root as the verb "to integrate". The adjectival form has various meanings, one of which is related to a sense of completeness. We can say, for example, "It was an integral part of her class" with reference to an aspect of the instruction that was a core element of the academic course. We even have a noun, "integral," in mathematics.

Nevertheless, I am using the term "integral" in its adjectival sense of centrality, or completeness, etc., in the sense that "It is an integral part of her/him", i.e., something integral to a complete understanding. What I am suggesting is that to have a complete understanding, one's complete *body-mind* must be involved — it is integral to oneself at that level — one is immersed in it, and it is immersed in oneself. Even mere descriptively, the two are interpenetrative.

What I'm suggesting is that according to the Kālacakra tradition, one's instrument, or "tool" to harken back to the metaphor you used earlier, in this reality is one's body-mind. That is the methodological instrument of instruments, or tool of tools, since the human body-mind is so sophisticated, and because it literally possesses the capacity to immerse itself via intentionality, and to be immersed, by means of the nature of the operating of reality itself, in the entirety of all that is. Because of the whole nature of reality, there is nothing that is beyond the reach of the body-mind, since the whole is present in each aspect of reality.

Criterion of Methodological Pluralism

O.K.: Let's return to our MP-topic. Having discovered such a level of KT-problematic, can you formulate certain criteria by which you assess one or another research method for its correspondence with your ideas of MP?

J.A.: That's an interesting question. To be very truthful about my thinking in this area, my interest in MP really arose around two decades ago, which corresponds to when I wrote a chapter in the edited volume on that topic [Andresen, Forman, 2000]. It emanated from my observation that if the academics in different disciplines were using different methodologies to approach reality, then we had to take a look at these different methodologies together rather than becoming lost in particular disciplinary specializations, or we simply were not going to see certain important things about the nature of reality and how it functioned as a coherent whole. Furthermore, without clear understanding of the whole, our views of the parts would be incomplete and, therefore, incorrect. So, my call to MP was a call

to move beyond the confines of one's own department at the university and to go visit other departments, to listen to how one's colleagues across the university approached things, and to share methodological approaches and insights.

Recently, however, I have been thinking more about the nature of the so-called scientific method and its core methodological features, such as the reproducibility of experimental results, etc. However, some real things may manifest in a manner that traditional scientific experiments find difficult if not impossible to replicate, and we nevertheless should find a way to understand such manifestations to the best of our abilities. In fact, one could observe that only the most conventional aspects of reality can be reproduced by means of traditional scientific methodology that is focused upon, or, in many cases, restricted to measurement.

Science as a discipline historically has tried to contend that because it is “objective” rather than “subjective”, it somehow has a better view of reality. But of course, any dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity is false, and so science must embrace the subjective and learn ways to bring subjective and qualitative aspects of the description of reality into its methodological understanding. Consciousness is clearly an aspect of everything, including how scientists themselves think and how they decide to set up experiments, so it simply is artificial to separate subjectivity and objectivity.

O.K.: But still, what characteristic features of KT could you list that demonstrate MP?

J.A.: As I mentioned above, an important aspect of KT-VP is that this tantra is structured into five chapters that clearly demonstrate MP. The KT-VP texts incorporate knowledge and research from many arenas, such as astronomy, anatomy, etc., in a manner that was encyclopedic for its time. However, there is another way of looking at this, too, not in terms of subject matter per se, but in terms of *what one does*. So, for example, in KT — let's take chapter 3 — one does so many things: one creates hearths based on geometrical shapes; performs the eight ritual actions; recites mantras; and performs visualizations, etc. We could say that this is a form of embodied MP. As a concept, methodology can be extended beyond the sense of an analytical prescription regarding how to proceed to encompass what one does and one's method of doing things.

In addition, I think there is an interesting analogy between two processes. On one hand, we can consider the analytical integration and MP that one sees in the KT and the transition from KT, or HYT in general, to Great Perfection — and on the other hand, one can consider what science must do to bring objective, quantitative methods together with subjective, qualitative ones to arrive at something that is integrated. There is an analogy between these two processes. The human body-mind is adept in its innate ability to perceive and to become aware, and, therefore, to transition between types of processing — seen either in the KT to Great Perfection transition, or in the proposed transition in science from a strictly objective outlook to one that also incorporates subjectivity. Translating this from direct awareness and body-mind proprioception to the more restricted context of speech and language presents challenges.

Of course, it also is important to recognize that MP is only Step 1. It must be followed by Step 2, which I call the integral approach — otherwise all we end up with from interdisciplinary inquiry is a kind of chaos of thinking. This is a fundamental point — what is behind the curtain of our MP is disciplinary pluralism, i.e., — a plurality of academic disciplines. But, we must ask ourselves, at what point does pluralism become chaos? Because, it could be argued that this proliferation of disciplines and sub-disciplines and sub-sub-sub-disciplines in the academy is not really helping us — we're just fragmenting reality to the point that we lose the forest for the trees and our pluralism descends into chaos.

Buddhist Features of the Implementation of Methodological Pluralism

O.K.: Since KT is a vivid example of MP-implementation, in your opinion, let's talk in more detail about its recipe: in your opinion, what does KT propose to bring subjectivity together with objectivity in its methodology? How does KT itself resolve this issue?

J.A.: This is a deep series of questions that immediately lead to the general, Buddhist philosophical viewpoint on the conventional nature of human identity and also the relationship between Buddhist tantra and Buddhist philosophical discourse, in particular that which is articulated by adherents of Madhyamika school philosophy. According to the two levels mentioned in Buddhist hermeneutics — conventional and ultimate — while people have conventional identities in the sense that they experience a subjectivity continuum that they associated with themselves, as so-called selves, at a deeper level, Buddhist philosophy deconstructs the notion of individual identity altogether. From this ultimate viewpoint, everything is related to everything else in an interdependent network of causes and conditions that is described as karma. Now, the KT-VP tradition, which is a later, tantric tradition, firmly builds upon a Madhyamika philosophical perspective and operationalizes it by showing how body-mind practices can accelerate and hasten one's realization of an interdependent reality that is beyond, or deeper than, the conventional, subjective view. In this sense, KT-VP teaches that philosophically, there is no distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, as we have been discussing.

But your question asks, how is this so? How does the KT-VP tradition operationalize this philosophical understanding in a body-mind realization? Here, two contemporary conceptions illustrate my perspective. First, I think we can look at the idea of “immediacy”. There is something “immediate” about the felt presence of engaging in tantric practice. The immediacy is so immediate, if you will pardon this play on words, that there really is no “time” — a critical aspect of KT, since it is a tantra that looks at the nature of time — to have one's self-image form and become reified into a concrete sense of “self”. There simply is no time for that, as one experiences in the immediacy of the mantra recitations, mandala visualizations, and *mudrā* practices of the KT-VP system. One is in the flow of the always present, present moment, and that always present, present moment is devoid of demarcations, such as that between subjectivity and objectivity, and, similarly, between

oneself and everything else. So, that doing-level of engagement levels out time at the same time — again, pardon the pun — that dichotomies also are leveled out.

There is a deeper level of response to your question, also, which involves the stacking of the drops in one's central channel during the practice of the six-limbed yoga that is part of the KT-VP system. Whereas previously I used the temporal metaphor of "immediacy", here I will rely upon a spatial metaphor of "centrality". Summarizing a very complex understanding of the physiology of the subtle body described in the KT-VP system — which postulates that there are levels of embodiment from the coarse to the subtle to the very subtle — KT-VP texts describe three primary channels (among many others) — the right, left, and central channels. Gradually by means of yogic practice, each practitioner coalesces the wind-energies of her/his body-mind into her/his central channel. One is "centralizing" one's outlook, so to speak. Here, right and left — a dichotomous, spatial understanding — is resolved in the centrality of the central channel. This is more esoteric. To have a clear sense of it, one has to do the practices and experience the feeling of this drawing back from the periphery of one's energy into the central channel. This most definitely results in a non-dual realization, at multiple levels.

O.K.: I want to clarify for myself how deeply you suggest a modern Western scholar should penetrate the Buddhist worldview. Let's brush up on the system described by KT. In the Outer Kālacakra (KT-VP 1), we come to know the rhythm of outer movements (there we read stories about the utopian country of Sambhala, which is pronounced Shambhala, the historic chronology of kings, the six classes of beings, etc.), then in the Inner Kālacakra (KT-VP 2), we come to know inner movements (we find out the map of the circulation of primary elements according to our individual rhythm of life, etc.). But Other Kālacakra (KT-VP 3, 4, and 5) takes our attention to the central instrument of such a system — a deity (iṣṭadevatā, yid kyi dam tshig). Surprisingly, the yid dam is the symbol of the mind protected sound-formulas (mantra). Where should we stop?

J.A.: My view is that the KT-VP is a single instance of MP, that's all, nothing more, nothing less. One way of looking at it is to say that the five-chapter structure of the texts is an example of MP. Another, perhaps more precise way of looking at it is to say that chapters 1 and 2 in KT-VP are an example of MP, whereas chapters 3-5 in KT-VP are an example of the integral approach.

Firstly, we look at the world like observational scientists, observing the planetary bodies, etc. (chapter 1). Secondly, we look also a bit like scientists at the realm of the body and medicines, etc. (chapter 2). Thirdly, we then start acting a bit more like religionists and we participate in a lot of rituals by constructing the hearths and mandala, performing the eight ritual actions, etc. (chapter 3). Fourthly and fifthly — and here we depart a bit from MP as applied to modern academic disciplines, since the academy does not have this next aspect — we integrate everything by means of yoga, because that's the only way we can integrate it — we cannot do so cognitively alone, or by means of analysis alone. So, it is in Other/Alternative Kālacakra that we move from MP to an integral approach.

O.K.: Does that mean that if we want to learn what in a certain sense is a unique KT-approach, then we must accept it totally, without even employing humanist, skeptical, or agnostic filters? Let this remain a rhetorical question for now.

We know that, the KT-VP texts belong to the teachings of Mantrayana and that the Buddhist tradition classifies Kālacakra as the system of mind transformation practices. I am looking forward to hearing your opinion on Buddhist speech praxis (*mantra* looks like special “speech acts”), i.e., how to work with phrases, words, syllables in the process of comprehending the deep essence of the present moment, and how they are important for one’s breathing and states of mind. I find it interesting that we come to this question of the use of the mantra in Buddhism after we have established some mutual, terminological understanding during the course of this conversation since each of our worldviews includes some previous philosophical assumptions (continental, analytic, or otherwise).

J.A.: Here is something quite interesting — in the integral phase of KT-VP, in which practitioners utilized *mudrā*, mantra, and mandala⁷ in their practice — on this center term, mantra — practitioners are not reciting prayers in the sense of using full words. They are using phonemes. That is quite different from the prayers that one recites in other religious traditions in which full words are used. I think that is because KT-VP is saying, essentially, sound is the bridge between outer and inner, macrocosm and microcosm — sound, not words, since words already must be defined by cognition and thinking. This uttering of pure sound is taking us to a more fundamental level of immersion in, or interpenetration with, reality before one’s analytical mind has parsed reality and before we have described the pieces we have created by means of individual words.

Visions of Integrating the Experience of Methodological Pluralism

O.K.: But to what extent can academics who are not in religious studies accept a KT-informed method?

J.A.: It is true that we have a challenge with respect to the incorporation of methodologies, because for the insights from the KT-VP to help direct the course of contemporary scholarship, you have to ask the contemporary scholars — many if not the majority of whom are probably not Buddhists or yogic practitioners — actually *to do* something. You have to ask them not just to think about or measure the world. They have to immerse themselves in it at this deeper, energetic level, whether or not they self-identify as Buddhists, and whether or not they study the Kālacakra tradition or not. One way or another — i.e., by means of some practice tradition or route, or some other means — they have to have a tangible experience of the insight and intuition one finds, for example, by means of KT-VP practices.

⁷ One does not italicize the second two in this triad because they have entered the English-language lexicon.

Then, as transformed individuals, their scientific research and how they ask questions and examine reality immediately also will transform.

O.K.: Here, your answer anticipated my subsequent question. It was amazing! To elaborate on this aspect of the inquiry, are you saying that to truly master MP, including the methodology of Kālacakra, we need to fundamentally change our approach to scientific research? Did I understand you correctly? If so, then would we claim that we need some kind of new scientific paradigm (it's the Thomas Kuhn-style inference), or do we need to develop some idea of "paradigmatic pluralism" (a rather sorry post-modern-style conclusion)? If not, then will MP "come to us" another way?

J.A.: You are right on the path with me, it's great! What I am saying here is that MP is Step 1 on our path. Step 2 must be something beyond MP, what I am calling an integral approach. Not only does the scientific method have to be rethought, so also do methodologies in theology, the study of religion, and all the other academic disciplines. I do not think it takes us to more pluralism, however, Kuhnian or otherwise. Many years ago, I wrote an article on how Kuhn developed his ideas on paradigmatic change in science. Interestingly, the events that Kuhn experienced in his own life played a major role in his thinking about science [Andresen, 1999a].

What I meant to communicate is that we can only progress so far by means of MP. It can help us consider on a re- search question or societal issue, or anything, for that matter, from multiple vantage points — but it cannot help us chart the way after we have done so. For that, we need to integrate our understanding, and we can only do that *experientially*. At this juncture, for example, the KT-VP tradition focuses on yoga. So, do we ask that all scientists, theologians, and other academics, government workers, and even businesspeople, start doing yoga? What an intriguing world that would create! But yes, maybe there is something to that — though of course it need not be yoga precisely as it was practiced in India at the time of the tantras. It does need to be some sort of deep-seated (pardon the pun), experiential way of integrating understanding gleaned from pluralistic routes, however. Otherwise, there is something fundamental that is missing, and it is a very big piece that is missing, one could even say one of the most important issues of all, namely the bridging from what one learns about the world to how one acts in it.

Conclusion

O.K.: Allow me to summarize some of the results of our discussion. Greater dialogue between science and Buddhism shows us how we can begin to solve the problem of the "gap" between body and mind.

So, one of the conclusions we have reached is that in order to face the challenges of the modern world and not to lose connection with reality, thinkers in their scientific research and cultural communications should engage an interdisciplinary approach that relies upon at least some degree of methodological pluralism (MP). However, in order not to fall simultaneously into ontological-epistemological chaos, one must implement an integral approach to the experiential realization of those

insights gained by means of such MP. The task is not easy and has not yet been solved in the West. And as an example of a ready-made solution, we schematically examined the teachings of the Buddhist Kālacakra tradition, which manages to overcome barriers caused by stereotypical thinking and reductionism. And most importantly, the KT-VP demonstrates the unique potentials of the body-mind. I also would emphasize that I did not choose the Kālacakra tradition randomly for the purposes of this discussion. According to the Buddhist account, it is precisely “time” that opens up for us the possibility of matching internal and external, individual-psychological and socio-historical flows of changes in “space”, because of course, time and space are not separate. Therefore, the philosophy of time can star in the development of research into MP and the integral approach. Hence, interesting discoveries await us.

J.A.: I think that when we really delve into it, the concept of “integration” has tremendous potential. We must integrate all of our experience, since excessive fragmentation in our thinking and actions leads to chaos in the world.

O.K.: Dr. Andresen, thank you very much for such an interesting discussion.

J.A.: Dr. Kalantarova, thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity, it has been most enjoyable!

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