The Fertility of Delusion: Exploring the Potential for Collective Liberation Through Overlapping Frameworks of Transformation Found in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (IV c.) and *Emergent Strategy* (2017)

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Abstract

Efforts toward positive change and liberation expressed in terms of transformation span the domains of religious and political systems, spirit and matter. This study follows in the footsteps of contemporary scholars, spiritual practitioners, and activists engaged in discourse that unites the wisdom of ancient scriptures with current efforts to address modern crises. As such, it seeks to engage questions such as: *What can ancient Buddhist texts and practices offer contemporary efforts toward liberation centered on justice? How can their frameworks be combined to enrich our understanding of what is present and what is possible? How can we approach liberating transformation in ourselves, with each other, and in relation to the planet?*

These questions are guided by a conviction that Buddhism and its ancient textual traditions can be important resources for approaching modernity. In attempt to answer, I draw from converging frameworks of liberating transformation presented in Maitreya's *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (4th century) and adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy* (2017), two authors and works separated by time, space, language and cultural contexts, yet united in intent—to transform ourselves and the world in the direction of liberation. This study thus centers around a goal of *collective* liberation, here defined as an intent, process, and result of actualizing liberation from oppressive systems altogether and all together.

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Abbreviations

(c.) - Century

(DDV) - *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*

(DTC) - Dharmachakra Translation Committee

(ES) - *Emergent Strategy*

(Skt.) - Sanskrit Term

(Tib.) - Tibetan Term

Introduction

Within a Buddhist context, transformation pertains to liberation from the dualistic structures of perception (confusion) that condition experiences and cause suffering. The concept of transformation is also found in contemporary discourses around justice in activist communities and civil society, with an emphasis on liberation from structures of oppression imposed exogenously. Both the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (DDV) and *Emergent Strategy* (ES) lay out a particular framework of transformation, yet converge in the assertion that a thorough understanding of the causes and conditions responsible for bondage and suffering is foundational to transformation.[1] Though these two texts are distanced by original contexts, genre, and immediate audiences, both suggest the potential of an all-encompassing transformation–the DDV, through distinguishing the modes of individual perception responsible for suffering and freedom from suffering; and ES, through offering guiding principles of reflexive interaction that are informed by beings' innate capacity for transformation. Through a comparative analysis of the premise, process, and result of transformation endorsed by the DDV and ES, this research explores the notion of collective liberation as a unifying paradigm shift and potential reality.

[1] The DDV is considered a philosophical treatise on the Buddha's teachings pertaining to wisdom and its transformative capacities. It is still studied, memorized, debated, and practiced in Mahāyāna monastic contexts as one of five treatises attributed to the Buddha Maitreya. It is succinct, pithy, and yet also technical in style, intended for meditators and written in third-person. Emergent Strategy is a text that draws from brown's personal experiences in grass-roots organizing, social justice work, and spiritual community. It is informed by principles of emergence, a concept brown derives from the science-fiction writings of Octavia Butler and the natural world. It is radical and yet gaining traction within activist, justice, and new age circles as a guidebook for transforming both conceptions and approaches to social justice and liberation. brown, who identifies as a healer and spiritual practitioner, weds the worlds of spirit and matter, liberation and justice, through first-person writing in ES that calls upon the innate desires and capacities of beings to transform reality for the benefit of all. While divergent in genre, context, intended audience, language, and style, these two texts converge on the intent to help beings awaken to their fullest potential as individuals in communities. In this way, the contents of both works are relevant to those interested in transforming their realities, whether with an expressed aim of social justice, spiritual liberation, or both. Ultimately, I am arguing that a side-by-side reading of these works points readers to the potential of personal transformation to be all-encompassing and thus transcendent. In other words, collective liberation becomes a natural outcome once beings begin the work of transforming individual perception and habits alongside communal engagement.

Collective liberation here is simultaneously an intent, process, and result of individual-turned-communal efforts to clarify confusion and unfold wisdom for the benefit of all. It refers to the complete freedom from suffering and oppression—a unity of spiritual liberation and social justice. While the DDV follows in the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism in framing transformation around the intention to bring all beings to complete and perfect enlightenment, transformation in ES is in the direction of a collective liberation that is explicitly characterized by social justice. Despite seemingly divergent aims, these two texts share the assessment that individuals must begin the work of transforming their own mistaken perceptions in order to become agents of transformation for others. This research is inspired by the conviction that a side-by-side reading, comparative analysis, and cultural translation of the DDV and ES catalyzes the prospect of coming to see collective liberation as both a potential and innate reality that all beings can awaken to. Accordingly, it attempts to address the following questions: *What can these perspectives gain from one another? How can an enriched understanding of beings' individual and shared predicaments lend itself to liberating transformation? Where does transformation begin, develop, and prevail?* Correspondent to their respective premise, process, and result, both the DDV and ES suggest that successful transformation requires a *view*,

cultivation, and *conduct* that is increasingly cognizant of interdependence; namely the notion that transformation at any level has an impact on every level.[2]

In a recent teaching given during the inauguration ceremony of Khamgar Druk Dharmakara College in Himachal Pradesh, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama remarked that the Buddhist tradition has the potential for universal benefit and as such must be shared with those showing interest. When commenting on the appropriate audience for a such sharing, His Holiness named anyone interested in developing *peace of mind*. He emphasized again and again that "peace will not fall from the sky; it must be developed in our minds" (Gyatso 2023). This speaks to the concept of *transformation*, and suggests that personal transformation is intimately related to collective transformation. It is with the hopes of adding to a current dialogue regarding how such transformation can be developed on both individual and collective levels that I take up this effort. My premise is that whether aiming toward liberation or justice, inner or outer transformation, Buddhism and its ancient textual traditions offer a timeless insight into a universalizing capacity for all-encompassing transformation, here articulated in terms of collective liberation.

Both the DDV and ES agree that beings have the innate capacity to transform their experience through wisdom, that this is already happening, and that this process can begin now.

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[2] This syncretic approach to research is inspired by personal experiences in both activist and spiritual communities. I was first introduced to ES in 2017, shortly after it was released, while living at Haley House, a residential community of volunteers in Boston that maintain a soup kitchen for people experiencing homelessness. Our community deeply resonated with the unity of spiritual and social commitments enclosed in its pages, finding solidarity in a refreshed and hopeful perspective on existing wholly in both worlds at once. The DDV I encountered 5 years later in an untranslated course with a Lopon at Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Kathmandu. Despite studying the text in Tibetan, the concept of transformation existing within and yet transcending ordinary dualistic perception solidified the conviction that enlightenment according to this text must affect all that we can and do experience. I began reading these two works in tandem, guided by the assessment that the goal of liberation and justice championed by ES and its constituent populations could be both clarified and supported by the Buddhist perspective brought by the DDV. Additionally, I have found that the timeless insights of the DDV are stoked by a contemporary reading that brings it into conversation with modern agents of social and spiritual transformation.

Both also point to the concentric relationship between individual and collective transformation and place the onus of both on individuals. I argue that the DDV can support both the goal of transformative justice found in ES, as well as spiritual liberation, by clearly identifying capacities of mind that are universal to all beings and predisposed to freedom from all forms of suffering. Close engagement with this text alongside the ES helps equip readers with a conviction in the presence and potential of innate, non-dual wisdom necessary for sustainable and collaborative transformation. This research seeks to highlight the mutual benefit that can arise from bringing Buddhism and its ancient scriptural traditions into contemporary and interdisciplinary arenas expressing overlapping aims and/or assessments of reality.

Bodhicitta, the intent to awaken to one's fullest potential, namely Buddhahood, for the benefit of all beings, is often considered the hallmark of Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, in which here I am including the Vajrayāna. Accordingly, the precise manner in which spiritual attainment towards that end necessarily includes and involves the experiences of others is discussed in a variety of *sūtric* and *śāstric* sources[3] under the heading of Mahāyāna scriptures. While this altruistic intent grounding the study and application of Mahāyāna Buddhism is indubitably a defining feature of engagement with its traditions, explicit discussion of how precisely beings can and do awaken together is deserving of further investigation.

Buddhist scholars like John Makransky and Diane Denis have already made critical contributions to discourse around the relationship between individual awakening and collective

[3] These refer to the discourses attributed to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni and the commentarial treatises on those discourses respectively as included in the Tibetan *bka'-'gyur* and *bstan-'gyur*.

benefit, even employing the DDV as a foundational Buddhist framework in interdisciplinary and secular spaces.[4] This thesis is then similar in bridging the aims of the spiritual and secular, yet unique in doing so through a cultural translation of two representative works with uniquely overlapping concepts and frameworks. The DDV and ES each point to the potential of liberating transformation as rooted in mind. In partnership, they present a blueprint for collective liberation that is inclusive and accessible to all with interest. While each text can be treated as complete depending on individual proclivities, a syncretic comparison reaffirms how ancient Buddhist texts like the DDV articulate the process of perception and capacities of mind in ways both timeless and timely in pertinence with contemporary times.

The persistence of suffering, whether entertaining this within the Buddhist framework of karma and past and future lives or with specific focus on this life alone, is a hot topic spanning a multitude of disciplinary fields of study. It is perhaps ubiquitous across the world's spiritual traditions, each offering frameworks for grappling with difficulty with varying views toward salvation. It is also a focus of popular culture as found in media, news, advertisements, cultural trends, and conventional wisdom. With particular emphasis on the mind's role within experiences of suffering and freedom from suffering, I have found the framework of both presented in the DDV to be of indispensable utility. I have likewise found uncanny similarities between its content and that of ES in ways that mutually reinforce our capacity for collective liberation. Recognizing the scope of possible approaches to intersectional dialogue is infinite, my research aims to privilege the potential of non-conceptual wisdom as explained in the DDV to serve simultaneously as the ground, path, and fruition of collective liberation. Comparing the

[4] See (Makransky 1997) and (Denis 2021, 2022, 2024).

frameworks of transformation found in the DDV and ES in terms of *premise*, *process*, and *result*, reveals the enduring wisdom of humankind across time and strengthens our present capacity to transform our world for the better.

It is a fortunate circumstance that several scholars have already begun the work of contextualizing the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and its associated commentaries, both inside and outside of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Scholarly works on the DDV and its secondary literature such as the that of Jōshō Nozowa (1955), Leslie Kawamura (1984-93), Tsültrim Phuntsok (1990), Stefan Anacker (1992-9), John Younghan Cha (1996), Levinson and Thrangu Rinpoche (2001ab), Jim Scott and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche (2004), Klaus-Dieter Mathes (2005), Raymond Robertson (2006-8), Karl Brunnhölzl (2012), Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2013), and Diane Denis (2013) offer variegated choices in terms of translation, commentarial literature, doxographical categorizations, and philosophical interpretations that are each deserving of further engagement.

My experience studying the DDV has been largely within the context of Rangjung Yeshe Institute, a Tibetan monastic university that combines the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of study and practice. There I studied the root text and several commentaries in Tibetan in a course with a monastic scholar, and in English with lay professors. This research engages with the commentaries cherished in that tradition, specifically the English translations found in the previously mentioned works of Thrangu Rinpoche (2001a), Jim Scott and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamsto Rinpoche (2004), Raymond Robertson (2006-8), Karl Brunnhölzl (2012), Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2013), and Diane Denis (2013). Focus will thus mainly be on the critical editions of the DDV found in these works as well as their translated

commentaries from Vasubandhu, the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, Khenpo Shenga, Ju Mipham, and Thrangu Rinpoche. Since my interest is in what the framework and implications of the DDV have to offer toward practices of collective liberation in and outside of Buddhist traditions, this dialogue between the DDV and ES—intended to be both comparative and syncretic—will include secondary conversation partners whose works I find most accessible, contemporary, and contributive toward that aim.

In brief, the DDV is traditionally regarded as a 4th century North Indian Buddhist treatise transcribed by Asaṅga after he received the teaching directly from the Buddha Maitreya. The Buddha Maitreya is said to dwell in Tushita heaven, and is held by all Buddhist traditions to be the next (fifth) Buddha to arrive on this earth. It is believed Maitreya will appear to teach the Dharma at a future point when the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni have declined or been lost. However, Maitreya is not considered wholly inaccessible to beings in the present. Instead, it is believed that the clarified (or transformed) consciousness of beings has the capacity to perceive divine form, and in this case Maitreya, directly. This is evidenced by accounts like that of Asaṅga, who gained access to Maitreya in a solitary retreat after twelve years of diligent meditation directed toward that aim. After putting the teachings of the DDV into writing, it is not known the extent to which it was disseminated during the 4th century. From an emic perspective, the text is said to have disappeared for nearly 600 years before being rediscovered in physical form by Maitripa (dates) in the 11th century. Maitripa revealed the DDV from within a stupa, together with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which are treated as the final two out of the 'Five Treatises of Maitreya' in Tibetan Buddhism.

While historical accuracy has been long-debated, and is not the focus of this work (See Brunnhölzl 2012), it is important to note that Buddhist traditions diverge from historical scholarship that privileges linearity and cohesive physical evidence as the hallmarks of fact. An alternative emphasis on facts being the objects of direct, non-conceptual perception (wisdom) paves the way for our ability to glean the content of the DDV in a way that was and still is relevant. This is because legitimacy is granted to persons, lineages, and words that demonstrate and evoke qualities of liberation. What is legitimate is then determined by soteriological value—in either contributing to or stemming from wisdom that perceives reality *as it is*—which in Buddhism is also synonymous with truth. As Denis writes, "In such operative philosophies destined to experiential examination, such statements are considered correct according to both their logical coherence and their ethical/experiential outcomes" (2023, 3). This then requires a medium of transmission that is informed by timeless wisdom yet responsive to particular contexts. Therefore, this brief account is offered in order to trace the roots of insight both currently and historically held in esteem within Buddhisms; and to suggest that such insight is relevant and responsive to present predicaments.

The authorship of *Emergent Strategy* (ES) is similarly rooted in this world and beyond. adrienne maree brown[5] draws from themes of emergence, "the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions," as found in the science-fiction works of Octavia Butler and the natural world. Butler's stories are set in alternative worlds that are simultaneously a commentary on, and reimagination of, present contexts. They are stories of transformation made possible through leaning into a reality of interconnection with

[5] Throughout this work I maintain consistent rendering of brown's name without capitalization. This is to be consistent with the way she herself prints her name, and to honor that as an intentional decision.

insight and cooperation. Citing dandelions and mushrooms as examples of successful emergence in nature, brown offers an important analogy for the cooperation necessary for human endurance: namely, "the resilience of these life forms is that they evolve while maintaining core principles that ensure their survival" (brown 2017, 9). This thesis follows along the argument that the most successful core principles are reflective of the most universal truths, and that the DDV together with ES can help us recognize and access universal aspects of mind by which to base these principles.

The English translation of the Tibetan root text and commentary by Ju Mipham authored by Jim Scott and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamsto Rinpoche entitled *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being* (2004) provides the benefit of a side-by-side Tibetan-English format, allowing readers versed in both languages to draw their own judgments of accuracy with respect to translated terms and meanings. Raymond Robertson's *A Study of the Dharmadharmatā̄vibhāga (Volume Two)* provides English translations of three critical editions of the root text, Vasubandhu's commentary, as well as a modern commentary from the Nyingma perspective composed by Master Tam Shek-wing (2008). It also includes an extensive introduction detailing historical lineages, treatments, interpretations, and criticisms pertaining to the DDV as embedded in a larger textual tradition.

Karl Brunnhölzl's *Mining For Wisdom Within Delusion* similarly provides a comprehensive introduction regarding how to situate this text in Buddhist history, its categorical treatment within the Tibetan and other Buddhist traditions, as well as a presentation of consistencies and novelty of its content as compared to relevant *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s (2012). He also provides translations of: the early prose version of the DDV, the later (and most commonly

studied) versified version of the DDV, as well as commentaries by Vasubandhu, the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, and Gö Lotsawa Zhönnu-pel. The translation of the root versified text published by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee (DTC) entitled *Distinguishing Phenomena from their Intrinsic Nature* also includes an English translation of both Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham's commentaries (Maitreya 2013).

It is both Brunnhölzl's and the DTC's formatting I find easiest to follow, their translations most accessible to a modern audience, and their content most clearly explained in their respective introductions. While these are treated most centrally in terms of framing understanding of the structure and content of the DDV, others mentioned provide important fortification of historical and philosophical treatments of the DDV. This is particularly in terms of the DDV's unique discussion of 'fundamental transformation' (Skt. *āśrayaparivrtti*, Tib. *gnas gyur*) as supported by the presence and cultivation of non-conceptual wisdom (Tib. *rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*), which Brunnhölzl remarks as being "the most detailed discussion of this topic in Buddhist literature" (2012, 50).

Additionally, Diane Denis has engaged in detailed work regarding the history, structure, and practical applications of the DDV in a way that will frame the guiding questions and explanations I plan to explore in this work (2021, 2022). She has also produced both a French and English translation of the versified root text as a part of her doctoral dissertation (2013, 2023), from which I draw heavily.[6] John Dunne's work regarding reflexive awareness as situated in ongoing research and dialogue with cognitive neuroscientists likewise contributes greatly to the potential of personal and interpersonal practices of collective liberation rooted in frameworks

[6] Denis assigns numbers to the stanzas of the DDV's versified root text in her 2013 French dissertation, 2022 article, and 2023 English dissertation. Throughout this study I will reference specific stanzas based on her numbering.

of cognition overlapping with that of the DDV (2015, 2018). Finally, adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy* (2017) both requests and offers the potential for liberating transformation to be practiced interpersonally, particularly within marginalized communities presently approaching collective liberation from the inside out.

What propels me toward deeper engagement with this source material is the potential I see for diverse and profound application in the direction of collective liberation, which I believe requires an understanding of how exactly we are unfree and thus bound to suffering. In an article addressing the underlying principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in the face of armed conflicts, Diane Denis articulates how "the formulation of international humanitarian law was influenced by a socially oriented intellectual culture that has often failed to address the inner workings of the individual consciousness" (Denis 2022, 164). She goes on to explain how Buddhism and specifically the DDV can provide a refreshed notion of the 'universal principles' currently informing IHL—namely, through reframing the conversation around the workings of mind and their impact on human interactions (Denis 2022a, 164). Relevance here stems from the explanations of cognition found in the DDV and its associated literature, namely that of Abhidharma, as the source of both suffering and liberation. As this process is held to be, and experienced as, shared in common with all beings possessing sentience, there is no limit to the repercussions of mistaken or unmistaken cognition on our experiences as individuals and communities.

Mistaken and unmistaken cognition in Buddhism and the DDV alike are characterized by dualistic and non-dual perception alternatively, which pertain to suffering and liberation respectively. That said, the DDV prescribes a transformation that utilizes both dualistic and non-

dual capacities of mind to unfold wisdom and liberation. Denis corresponds this conducive dualistic and non-dual mode of perception to the two iterations of *prajñā,* sublime intelligence (2022).[7] In an article regarding the structure of the versified DDV as informed by the method presented in Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti*, Denis argues for these two aspects of *prajñā* being understood as "not only speculative but operative in nature" (2022b). This speaks to profound impact of one's mode of perception on their experience. As she states, "it presupposes a relationship between a point of view (and a formation of it) and experience," meaning perception and experience are mutually reinforcing (Denis 2022b). If indeed views inform experiences and vice versa, an understanding of their formation and this relationship is imperative to any *transformation* conducive to the alleviation of suffering. The DDV is of particular potency in this pursuit due to its presentation of the Buddhist path as one of transformation made possible through a complete understanding of this two-fold intelligence.

At several points within his lengthy introduction to *Mining for Wisdom*, Brunnhölzl remarks that the DDV's presentation of 'fundamental change' as supported by 'non-conceptual wisdom' is "the most detailed discussion of this topic in Buddhist literature" (2012, 50). Similarly, Jim Scott writes in the 'Translator's Preface' to his 2004 work, "The intention in publishing this translation is to provide a working basis for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of the Buddha's teachings and all those wishing to comprehend the nature of their

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[7] The Sanskrit word *prajñā* (Tib. *shes rab*) accounts for both of these aspects. It is distinct from *ye shes* (Skt. *jñāna*), which pertains only to the timeless cognition free from dualistic referents. In its deluded and dualistic expression, it is typically referred to as *shes pa*, while *shes rab* refers just to the kind of knowing operative within discernment or understanding (whether conventional or ultimate). In the DDV, this gross level of deluded consciousness is called the *false imagination* (Tib. *yang dag ma yin pa'kun tog pa*), terminology characteristic of what became categorized as Yogācāra (Tib. *sems tsam pa*) in the Tibetan doxographical tradition. This *false imagination* is presented in juxtaposition with *non-conceptual wakefuless/wisdom* (*rnam par mi rtogs pa'i ye shes*), explained as the basis (Tib. *gnas*) of fundamental transformation (Tib. *gnas gyur*).

own mind and thereby realize their full potential as sentient beings" (2004, 12). In seeming agreement with the unique clarity and profundity of the DDV's presentation, Denis adds that "this text is not only looking at the misleading appearance of duality but is also concerned with the influence of language and with intersubjectivity," despite the absence of a truly existent subject and object (Denis 2022, 62). This introduces the prominence of language and intersubjectivity as ingredients in the creation and persistence of experience, topics that could be addressed in myriad ways and across virtually all fields of study. In the case of the DDV, which should not be separated from the Buddhist worldview and soteriological intent, this requires a particularly close look at that which *appears* to be experienced on individual levels as well as that which *appears* to be shared in common.

The DDV discusses this in terms of 'shared and unshared abodes,' (Tib. *gnas thun mong dang gnas thun min*) that support the experience of both happiness and suffering within cyclic existence. Denis clarifies that the verses pertaining to these abodes delineate three bases for samsaric experience: 1. the seemingly shared outer world; and beings—defined by both 2. shared (in terms of speech); and 3. unshared (experiences of mind) aspects (2022, 58). Denis' article begins with the identifying of a perceived problem—namely, that previous studies on this text and its uniquely detailed emphasis on notions of transformation, support, and non-conceptual wisdom have failed to demonstrate "how these notions are developed within the text itself" (2022, 45). As opposed to approaching these notions according to doxographical styles of interpretation latent in Tibetan commentarial traditions, she proceeds to apply the five-step model articulated in Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti* as a more objective framework for filling in this gap. While there are certainly other methods by which to elucidate the development of these

concepts, my aim will be to begin a process of envisioning how they can be developed *outside* of this text and tradition, and alongside the principles and populations spoken to in ES. Denis' article addressing the IHL provides a beautifully articulated launch pad for this process, drawing together works of great thinkers across disciplines to address arguably the biggest threat to existence—armed conflict (see Denis 2021).

Following along similar inspirational muses, I aim to further develop a vision of collective awakening as informed by the DDV and as predicated on a personal-turned-collective praxis of reflexive cultivation and intersubjective engagement. This will require, as Denis suggests, practices that bring to mind a growing acknowledgement of our embeddedness as individuals within a matrix of interconnection as well as practices that "create the conditions for it (fundamental intelligence) to express itself whenever possible" (2022a, 168). I am persuaded by both the theoretical and practical framework of study, reflection, and cultivation as a liberating praxis upheld by Buddhist traditions and prescribed in the DDV. Popularly referred to as the 'threefold wisdom' model,[8] Philippe Turenne has offered some clarity on how we can understand this as a "practical hermeneutic" (2022, 1). He defines this practical hermeneutic as a "method to maximize a reader's understanding of Buddhist scriptures and their full implication," thereby setting the stage for a notion of knowledge that is both theoretical and practical in its threefold aspects (2022, 1). While I am not of the belief that this framework is useful solely within the context of understanding Buddhist scriptures, it is foundational within the Indo-

[8] This 'threefold wisdom' refers to the understanding that arises out of study, reflection, and cultivation. This encapsulates the spectrum of understanding that is conducive to liberation, and speaks to the progression of understanding that occurs through transformation—namely, the progression from conceptual comprehension of the premise, to the experiential understanding that unfolds through the process, and ultimately to the lasting realization of the result whereby non-conceptual, non-dual wisdom persists.

Tibetan tradition that the DDV arises out of,[9] has its source in Buddhist *sūtra*s,[10] and is mentioned explicitly in the commentaries to the DDV[11] as the proper way to arrive at 'ascertaining' or 'penetrating' the meaning of reality. With respect to this research, these three wisdoms correspond the types of understanding that support the premise, process, and result of collective liberation.

As such I am in agreement with Turenne when he writes of this threefold model being "methodologically relevant, and should be part of any treatment of Buddhist thought presented as a cross-cultural conversation or dialogue" (Turenne 2022, 2). Considering that this framework of understanding is inextricable from the soteriological intent of Buddhist practice, any discussion of transformative knowledge as defined by the liberating potential to deliver beings permanently from suffering would be at best, incomplete without mention of it. Since here I am treating the DDV as a Buddhist representative in this dialogue, it would be utterly incorrect to refrain from emphasizing this model as necessary for accessing the meaning of this text and its role in the present dialogue. Taking Turenne's statement above one step further, I feel strongly that an application of this model is a necessary aspect of embodying knowledge in ways that are increasingly transformative, and therefore can be usefully employed in approaching texts outside

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[9] See Turenne's article entitled "The Methodological Implications of the Buddhist Model of Study, Reflection, and Cultivation" where he traces this threefold wisdom model back to Vasubandhu writing, "The classical locus for, and probably one of the earliest definitions of the threefold wisdom model is found in chapter 6 of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* and its auto-commentary." 2.

[10] Dharmachakra Translation Committee's translation of the root text of DDV, in the section regarding ascertainment of the nature of phenomena reads, "The ascertainment of that refers to the correct way of directing the mind based on the *sūtras* of the Great Vehicle, which constitutes the entire path of joining." 30.

[11] Dharmachakra Translation Committee's translation of the commentary by Khenpo Shenga, in the section commenting on the above verse adds, "…which constitutes the entire path of joining as delineated in terms of study, reflection, and meditation." 30.

of the Buddhist tradition. adrienne maree brown's 2017 book *Emergent Strategy* is one such work that presents itself as both encouraging and modeling this type of approach.

Emergent Strategy provides a heart-felt and informed presentation of how grass-roots organizing can be enriched by intentional commitments to oneself, interpersonal relationships, and the world we share in common. Inspired by the writings of Octavia Butler, a black science-fiction author and afrofuturist icon, brown's book lifts up reoccurring trends found in Butler's works to formulate guiding principles centered around the notion of *emergence* within the movements toward collective liberation. Borrowing from Nick Obolensky's *Complex Adaptive Leadership: Embracing Paradox and Uncertainty* (2014), brown likewise defines emergence as "the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions" (2017, 3). This is a radical reclaiming of the legacy of recent movements historically bound to an individualistic and linear emphasis on constant growth and critical mass, and which are usually led by charismatic leaders and/or budget-building institutions at the behest of capitalistic constraints (brown 2017, 8).

'Emergent Strategy' then becomes the way in which "we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for" (brown 2017, 3). A key premise for this approach is an understanding and acceptance of change as an inevitable factor of experience, and thus the need to be adaptive as subjects, agents, and communities embedded within this constant flux. While not explicitly Buddhist in approach, brown's emphasis on all-encompassing transformation displays both uncanny similarities and subversive differences when placed alongside that of the DDV. Following in the footsteps of work already done to build a theoretical framework of transformation as collective liberation, a joining of

forces is both encouraged and logical. In the introduction to her book, brown invites readers to "come up with new words and new observations for all of this, notice how it connects and echoes other theoretical frameworks" (brown 2017, 8). Both *Emergent Strategy* and the DDV operate on the premise of asserting that beings in the world have all they need to actualize liberating transformation, and a ripening dialogue across cultures, religions, languages, time, and space can possibly provide the necessary fodder for a world blazing with liberating movements. Both also become sustainable fuel only when approached through personal and interpersonal study, reflection, and cultivation.

brown is clear in her intended audience for this work, identifying those who feel they know more than they may be able to say or explain, but who desire to further their understanding of how knowledge "can transform the ways we approach changing the world" (2017, 4). Drawing on themes of intelligence and imagination found in Butler's works, brown is clear in her intent for readers to "deepen and soften that intelligence such that we can align our behavior, our structures, and our movements with our visions of justice and liberation," in ways that are collaborative and co-creative (2017, 6). This then should be understood as a path of practice, of which she offers many explicitly throughout her work. A pivotal aspect in uniting a transforming intelligence with transformative efforts toward these aims rests latent in the potency of collective imagination as a means for giving rise to more options for such efforts as well as for practices of embodying shared values (brown 2017, 6). brown suggests that success in envisioning and actualizing transformation as such requires that these practices be grounded in efforts to foster innate capacities of love, both on individual and communal levels.

In this way brown calls these efforts "science-fictional behavior" in their emphasis on working within patterns of belief and action now—as informed and limited by individual experiences—knowing that they have bearing on shared future landscapes (2017, 16). brown defines science fiction as "practicing the future together," and fleshes out a framework of emergent strategy through her work that is conducive to collective ideation-turned-liberation in ways that are adaptive, intelligent, interdependent, reflexive, and as such radical (2017, 21). Guided by the notion that interpersonal interactions are a medium by which we can understand what happens on societal and global levels, brown's work draws from experiences learned by working with herself, others, and the natural world as the arenas for both collective bondage and liberation.

While I believe that the three wisdom model of study, contemplation, and meditation found in Buddhism and expressed in the DDV offers an invaluable gateway to reflexive cultivation, I also believe our minds and world could benefit greatly from what these sources as combined with works like *Emergent Strategy* have to offer in terms of intersubjective engagement. Thus my focus will be on how a thorough receptivity and engagement with the three wisdoms model can necessarily allow for the sprouting of conditions conducive to the blossoming of transformative knowledge, as well as ways that practices and processes of transformation outlined in brown's work can be mutually reinforcing toward that aim.

This will be developed through a closer look at what the DDV—including its commentaries, practices, and applications—and *Emergent Strategy* may have to offer movements of transformation. This exploration is guided by the conviction rooted in the DDV that any liberating transformation, whether personal or collective, must be grounded in innate capacities

of mind that are non-dual in nature and thus both limitless and sustainable in practice. Looking at contemporary studies of reflexive awareness, research that weds if not transcends the scientific and spiritual domains, will provide a helpful framework for coming to understand how such non-dual awareness can be understood and applied.

In John Dunne's article "Buddhist Styles of Mindfulness: A Heuristic Approach," he provides a synopsis of mindfulness practices and theories stemming from the Buddhist tradition and its related literature that have become popularized in and outside of its source traditions (2015, 251). This is in attempt to shed light on modern applications of mindfulness practices that may be limited (or else ambiguous) in their understanding and consequently their results, offering frameworks of clarification while suggesting opportunities for future productive research. Dunne identifies two heuristic categories of mindfulness application, namely 'contemporary mindfulness' and 'Buddhist mindfulness,' the latter of which is broken into two further categories: 'classical' and 'non-dual' (2015, 254). The classical here refers to practices stemming most directly from Abhidharma while non-dual styles of practice are said to depart from this in terms of focus and approach (Dunne 2015, 255).

While the DDV's foundational framework regarding a theory of cognition does stem from Abhidharma literature, its prescribed style of practice and focus is regarding what is here considered non-dual. Since a more general emphasis on mindfulness practices is beyond the intent of this work, my focus here will be on what Dunne's discussion of non-dual practices has in common with what we see prescribed in the DDV, and this can become a guiding mechanism

in practices introduced by *Emergent Strategy*.[12] 'Non-dual' here should be understood as an absence of grasping to the appearances of subject-object duality, which in the DDV is synonymous with mistaken perception and defined as the cause of suffering. This is the hallmark of the Yogācāra philosophical approach first formulated by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in the fourth and fifth century C.E., of which the DDV is often considered to belong.

Drawing the connection between theory and practice, Dunne writes, "this theoretical account of suffering also promotes a contemplative solution to this fundamental problem: the practitioner must cultivate an experience in which this false distinction between subject and object disappears in a non-dual experience" (2015, 260). In a manner akin to Denis' discussion of cognitive process in her article regarding IHL, Dunne proceeds to present an underlying theory of cognition that arose with this new theory of suffering, one grounded in the presence of "phenomenal forms" that arise simultaneously within experience as an assumed subject and object when in actuality both are of the identity of mind itself (Dunne 2015, 260). He goes on to discuss theories of concept formation developing alongside this non-dual tradition as pioneered in the seventh century by Dharmakīrti and the like (Dunne 2015, 260). What becomes most salient for our purposes here is Dunne's discussion of what he and others have deemed 'reflexive awareness' (Tib. *rang rig*), a preeminent and persistent non-dual feature of mind that can be increasingly accessed and cultivated with practice.

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[12] Dunne's discussion of non-dual meditative practices draws from Tibetan Mahāmudrā traditions, which have close historical connection with the practice traditions of the DDV and other texts related to Yogācāra interpretation. Brunnhölzl's introduction to *Mining for Wisdom within Delusion* (2012) speaks to this historical connection in detail, while Robertson's *A Study of the Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga (Volume Two)* (2007) details the relationship between the DDV and the Tibetan non-dual practice traditions of Great Madhyamaka and Great Perfection (Tib. *rdzogs chen*).

Giving the example of someone witnessing a sunset, he explains, "the sense of oneself as the subject seeing that object is already presented in the experience, even without turning inward and observing, 'I am the one seeing this sunset'" (Dunne 2015, 261). I am in agreement with Dunne in believing that the preeminence and persistence of reflexive awareness is what renders this a fruitful ground for supporting practices of cooperation. I am arguing that this kind of reflexively-informed cooperation is also a necessary and fruitful ground for interpersonal practices of collective liberation. This is because reflexive awareness is intimately related to the understanding supported by both the DDV and ES—a bridge between dual and non-dual modes of perception that possesses the capacity to transform perception and experience in the direction of liberation from both perspectives.

On a personal level of practice, this means access to non-dual wisdom as explained in the DDV does not require the creation of something new, but as Dunne explains, "enhancing an innate feature of consciousness while also using techniques that make the dualistic structures subside" (2015, 261). This theoretical framework of practice is considered foundational in practice traditions like Zen, Dzogchen, and Mahāmudrā. Yet Dunne also concludes his article by beginning to lift up ways in which practices rooted in reflexive awareness can inform and enhance interpersonal dynamics outside of spiritual practice communities. While these are more specifically developed in the latter portion of this work, a preview of this can be seen in Dunne's concluding assertions that the "personal transformation that occurs through contemplative practice is thus not just a matter of what occurs 'on the cushion,'" but also hinging "heavily on the way the world is imagined before and after" (2015, 268).

In seeming agreement with both Denis and brown's assertion that productive, if not liberating, coexistence with others can and must also serve as a fruitful domain for practices of collective liberation, Dunne's chapter entitled, "Reflexivity in Buddhist Epistemology: Implications for Cooperative Cognition,"[13] contributes greatly this potential (2018). Engaged in collaborative work with cognitive scientists, Dunne speaks in the introduction to humans' "very capacity for robustly cooperative action—rooted in key features of cognition that no other primate managed to develop" and are "central to the evolution of humans" (2018, 82). While these 'key features' center around the preeminence of reflexive awareness as a transformative support for maintaining individual and group regulation, Dunne warns that "it seems unwise to simply expand models of individual cognition and apply them to cognitions distributed across individuals" as "phenomenal forms vary across individuals" (2018, 85-86).

While heeding this warning, Dunne also speaks to the convergence and consistency of patterns of perception that appear similarly to minds across species, lending strength to the positions of the DDV and ES by identifying both the shared experiences of beings as well as a collective capacity for transformation rooted in the shared workings of individual mind. Dunne remarks that within ordinary dualistic experience, the phenomenal form of a subject is automatically "reflexively presented" in a way that renders individuals (turned communities) "available for regulation or other deliberate actions" (2018, 87-90). In brief, this means that the subtle assumption of a self is a source of deluded experience that further proliferates through

[13] Dunne prefaces his article with the following explanation: "Before exploring some implications that the Buddhist theory of reflexivity may hold for cooperative cognition, it will be helpful to clarify what is mean by 'cooperative cognition' in this context. As noted earlier, the term 'cooperative cognition' is used here to pick out some common themes in a range of theoretical accounts that overlap significantly, while diverging in ways that are not relevant to the current discussion. All these various approaches, such as 'distributed cognition' and 'group cognition', concern the way that human minds may interact to produce cognitive events together. This perspective stands in contrast to the notion that cognition occurs just 'in the head' of individual humans." 96.

intersubjective agreements regarding the shared patterns of experience, while the awareness able to recognize this assumption of a subject is itself, a transformative source of regulation and deliberate behavior for individuals-turned-collectives. For Dunne, this relies upon practices that enhance the 'salience'[14] of others' experiences as centered upon orientation toward a shared goal amidst differing individual experiences. Citing a study conducted by Hutchins and Tove Klausen (1998) regarding flight crew cooperation, Dunne explains, "Cooperative cognition of this type requires a sense of 'shared intentionality' among the humans involved," while also paving the way for how "intersubjectivity, shared intentionality, and cooperative cognition enabled thereby can also emerge in contexts that are far less scripted than an airline flight crew" (2018, 96-97).

Borrowing from Gerry Stahl's notion of 'group cognition' (see Stahl 2016), Dunne clarifies an added aspect of cooperative cognition relevant to collective liberation, "namely, that it [collective cognition] is marked by an intersubjectivity that enables individuals to contribute to a process whose result exceeds their own cognitive capacities" (Dunne 2018, 98). While Dunne's chapter concludes with further possibilities for research and engagement with cooperative cognition as rooted in implications drawn from Dharmakīrti's presentation of reflexivity, this present research draws on a cognitive framework, methodology, and textual foundation that is both connected to and similarly ripe for such cooperation-turned-liberation.

While Dunne's focus on implications may be expressed in terms of an individual's and groups' capacity to remain reflexively aware of themselves as part and apart of group dynamics in order to regulate and succeed in shared objectives, the potential for misunderstanding this kind of practice when engaged in incorrectly is directly aligned with the DDV. Such

[14] "In general terms within cognitive science, 'salience' in this context refers to the way that an object emerges as significant in perceptual cognition." 92.

misunderstanding is predicated on individuals mistakenly reifying reflexive awareness (one's seemingly inherent subjectivity) as an objective truth itself. Instead, Dunne explains that productive inquiry into one's state of subjectivity requires that "one must drop the conceptualized 'recognition' of an objectified subjectivity and once again allow reflexivity to do its work by making implicit features of subjectivity become explicitly apparent" (Dunne 2018, 99). Dunne's work contributes to the present discourse by bringing Buddhist epistemology into scientific and worldly scenarios, and demonstrating how Buddhist non-dual practices can precisely target intrinsic wisdom in ways that are transformative across a multitude of aims.

The practice of collective liberation as perhaps the most ultimate of aims, is thus united, as Dunne writes, in a dance "between the implicit awareness provided by reflexivity and the explicit awareness that occurs with a moment of recognition" i.e. mindfulness (Dunne 2018, 99). Thus it is the ground of mistaken perception that is fertile for both delusion and wisdom. Thus, this research will culminate in concrete ways individuals and groups can apply intentional practices—prescribed in the DDV and *Emergent Strategy* and characterized by progressive non-dual and non-conceptual experiences—as simultaneously the premise, process, and result of collective liberation through a unity of individual and group reflexivity. In seeming agreement with both Denis and brown, Dunne explains that such practices will require enhancement in "empathy and perspective taking" rooted in a heightened awareness and receptivity to "intersubjective connectivity" as unfolds experientially as a true-er reality of interdependence and affirmed in the DDV (2018, 101).

What I find compelling about placing the DDV and *Emergent Strategy* as opposite bookends on a shelf that sandwich scholarly engagement with cognitive frameworks that include

non-dual capacities, is the potential for the latter to grow bigger and broader through the aid of deep roots in the former. This is because such frameworks, once understood and cultivated personally and interpersonally, have practical bearing on the potential for collective liberation. Since such an investigation would be both limited and biased by privileging a Buddhist perspective on liberating practice alone, the potential for collective liberation stemming from personal and interpersonal transformation is catalyzed by the addition of brown's work and those in between. Fortifying the potential of preeminent, non-dual, and universal aspects of mind directed toward the aim of collective liberation is the DDV's assertion that the final fundamental transformation "refers to suchness divested of [dualistic] stains, where all appears simply as suchness," a reality in which the perceived dichotomies responsible for suffering—'the shared and unshared abodes'—are utterly and completely transcended (Maitreya 2013, 32).[15] Though brown speaks of the liberating result of transformation most explicitly in terms of justice, I argue that the DDV provides a framework that can deepen and clarify brown's take on liberation. In return, the ES presents the opportunity to bring concepts from the DDV into broader and contemporary relevance. Together, they provide a holistic pathway to a liberation from all causes of suffering and for all beings.

The subsequent chapters of this work will address the *premise*, *process*, and *result* of collective liberation respectively. Precedence is given to the DDV's presentation of fundamental transformation as a timeless framework of the mind's role throughout these stages. Reflections

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[15] Dharmachakra Translation Committee's translation of the commentary by Ju Mipham, in the section commenting on the above section of verse reads, "To arrive at the identity of suchness, the way all phenomena truly are, refers to suchness being divested of all adventitious stains. Once this has taken place, the way things appear completely matches the way they actually are. In other words, all phenomena appear as nothing but suchness. Moreover, at this time, fundamental transformation has reached a point of completion. Though this fundamental transformation is indeed present from the first ground onward, on this final ground this transformation is final and complete." 33.

drawn from its secondary literature and *Emergent Strategy* will offer further clarification and opportunity for accessing the meaning and potential of fundamental transformation as a lived and embodied practice. Drawing on the works of scholars engaged in intersectional dialogues that bring the ancient Buddhist and modern worlds to the same table, this exploration is enriched by overlapping intentions, understandings, and efforts toward liberation found in scientific and socio-political studies relevant to present situations. This work culminates in an offering of personal and interpersonal practices available and necessary for those who seek peace and freedom within and beyond themselves.

The discussion of premise seeks to address answers to the question, 'what is transformed?' This involves a closer look at what the DDV and ES present as the shared and unshared aspects of experience, which both validate and challenge our understanding-turned-approach toward living as beings in the world. The discussion of process seeks to address answers to the question, 'what is doing the transforming?' There we begin to clarify the innate capacities of mind underneath and within ordinary experience that lend themselves to a decreasing distance between self, other, and the world. The final chapter regarding result seeks to address answers to the question, 'how does/can transformation as such manifest as collective liberation?' There we begin debunking abstract notions of collective liberation as a far-fetched fantasy or exclusively religious aim, instead exploring the result of personal liberation in terms of transformative relationship with others through conduct both ethical and just.

Though what was has been stated may appear linear in both theoretical and practical progression, these normative categories emerge and dissolve through engagement with the three wisdoms model of study, reflection, and cultivation. This is because what is being shared is not

new, does not need to be manufactured, and does not belong to anyone with exclusion. What this work points to is that with an informed approach to study, reflection, and cultivation we will come to see that collective liberation could not possibly be novel, produced, or possessed. That said, it does require curiosity, receptivity, and effort. To leave space for an alternate reality better suited to the aims of beings will then require a privileging of imagination in both the perceived beginning and end of the process. Throughout, we are asked to look carefully at our own experiences as individuals and communities, considering the very possibility that what has been assumed to be true and persistent about these experiences is actually a result of imagination already. We are then left with choices regarding whether or not something else is desired. If yes, we are provided a path toward actualizing that in ourselves, our communities, and our world. In this way imagination is aspirational until it isn't, because transformation in the direction of collective liberation is an expression of universal principles of mind lived out with others, and a global ethic that is ours to see prevail.

Chapter One: Understanding, the Premise of Transformation

As long as there is someone circling somewhere,
These are the grounds in each and every case—
The constituents of sentient beings and those of the vessel.
The constituents of the vessel appear to be shared,
The awareness being the common experience;
Some of the constituents of beings
Are experienced in common and some are not.
Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 23

Transform yourself to transform the world
Grace Lee Boggs

This chapter focuses on the *premise* of transformation, or the supportive grounds (Tib. *gnas*) by which transformation takes place. Transformation here pertains to the process of clarifying the perceptions and behaviors responsible for suffering through a thorough understanding of their causes and conditions. In this way we are to regard knowledge itself as transformative, serving as both the key to understanding confusion and also the source of liberating wisdom. In this way understanding is both a verb and a noun. The supportive grounds pertain to the different dimensions of experience where these perceptions and behaviors come to life, the places where we experience myriad hardship and joy. In this way, these grounds are amoral as supports, helping to cause and condition the proliferation of perceptions whether mistaken or correct, bemoaned or enjoyed.

Specifically, this chapter examines the intersection between traditional Buddhist and contemporary secular discourses on transformation that have liberation as their aim. While these may appear to offer opposing paradigms in emphasizing either inner or outer structures of oppression and bondage, I argue that these structures are intimately and necessarily connected. This chapter explores the ways in which a reckoning with the causes and conditions that create

suffering on the level of individuals then extends to the interpersonal and global domains. This is in attempt to elucidate the potential to assess and address challenges using the aids of Buddhist texts like the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (DDV) in combination with contemporary activist works like *Emergent Strategy* (ES). This chapter begins addressing the following questions: *What can the DDV and Buddhist framework offer contemporary ways of approaching liberation as centered around justice? How can a unity of frameworks enrich our understanding of what is present and what is possible? How can we begin to understand liberating transformation in relationship with ourselves, each other, and the planet? What is the role of knowledge in the process of transformation?*

A fruitful dialogue is made possible from the premise of converging theoretical frameworks. We can think of this as the syncretic *view*, within the Buddhist threefold schema of view, meditation, and conduct. The DDV begins with a classic Buddhist theory of perception, described as ordinarily dualistic (subject/object) and therefore predisposed to experiences of suffering. *Emergent Strategy* (ES) similarly emphasizes the role of perception in reality, though is focused predominantly on shaping change in the direction of liberation as expressed in terms of justice. Both the DDV and ES assert that experiences of suffering result from perceptions, which in turn cause actions, that are discordant with reality as we can come to know and embody it. It is through engagement with the respective paradigms of these works that we find the DDV's potential to support an enriching interpretation and skillful application of strategies to transform contemporary challenges.

From the DDV's expressed view, efforts to solve current challenges require understanding the relationship between shared and individual realities (Tib. *mthun pa'i gnas*

dang mi mthun pa'i gnas). From the perspective of *Emergent Strategy*, transformation depends on understanding the implications of our embedded situation within a reality of perpetual change. In both works, the notion of transformation is predicated on the extent to which we are cognizant of our role in shaping reality in the directions of bondage or liberation: as individuals, groups, and a global community. Accordingly, this chapter will take after the approaches found in both texts, offering a framework of understanding that is descriptive, evaluative, and transformative.

For the sake of rendering this dialogue most inclusive and accessible, we must establish a common ground. This is again in terms of shared views. This means looking closely at where we are now before beginning to conceive of where we can go and how, using the aids of frameworks offered from the DDV and ES. It is important also, to situate this conversation in a context immediately accessible to beings in the world, who experience themselves as *beings* in *the world*. This is an integral part of the DDV's approach, being both gradually progressive and radically all-encompassing. The DDV begins in the above verse by presenting the aspects of experience that are shared with others and those that are personal (Tib. *mthun pa'i gnas dang mi mthun pa'i gnas*). This is a description of reality as conditioned by dualistic perception, whereby we experience a distinction between self and the world. The term used in Tibetan to describe the locales of these shared and unshared aspects is *gnas*, which as a noun has the sense of *place*, *abode*, *realm*, *ground*, *stance*, *basis*, *matrix* or *domain*; in some cases this can even be translated as *environment*.[16] This is also the first syllable in the compound *gnas gyur*, as underlined in Denis' work, which I have been translating according to the Dharmachakra Translation

[16] I will be translating this as 'ground' for the sake of consistency unless citing a specific translation, though it is important to be cognizant of the polysemous nature of the Tibetan language and the potential for English renderings to become stale, pigeon-holed, or misleading. Therefore I have offered some other common translations to aid in accessing its meaning(s).

Committee's (DTC) chosen terminology 'fundamental transformation.' These grounds are therefore supportive or *fundamental* to both confused experience and an understanding of them that lends itself to liberating transformation. Drawing from the above quote from Boggs, brown writes in ES of the "major shifts" that result from an understanding that sees "our own lives and work and relationships as a front line, a first place we can practice, justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the planet" (2017, 53).

The DDV lists the *grounds* in a way that demarcates similar domains of liberating practice: namely in relationship with one's own mind, other beings, and the external world. The DTC translates these as 'shared' and 'unshared abodes,' and the above verse, taken from the translation provided by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso and Jim Scott, clarifies the shared aspects as belonging to the 'vessel' of the external world while the realm of sentient beings is attributed aspects that are shared and some that are not. Ju Mipham's commentary on this verse offers a further clarification: "The constituents of the world's environment are referred to as "shared abodes" insofar as they appear collectively to those sentient beings whose active habitual tendencies correspond with one another and who have corresponding perceptions, or consciousnesses" (DTC 2013, 18). This speaks to the consensus both possible and assumed about a world we seem to perceive in common out of habit, which Scott translates as "the common ground of experience" (2004, 91). Given that habits can be both noticed and transformed, these grounds are also the operating premise for movements of collective liberation as presented in *Emergent Strategy*. There the conversation begins with a focus on the 'small,' recognizing this as both a reflection of the large and often all that we feel available to our individual spheres of knowledge and influence.

brown utilizes the analogy of a fractal to elucidate the presence of "shapes and patterns fundamental to our universe," and demonstrate that "what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale" (2017, 52).[17] Without digressing into a lengthy discussion of Buddhist assertions of *karma* and habitual tendencies, suffice us to say that underlying views of both the DDV and ES converge on the presence and potential of habit as a ground of transformation. It may be helpful to note that the term *sgom* in Tibetan, often translated as *meditation* or *cultivation*, is also used both formally and colloquially to describe 'habituating' oneself to certain behaviors.

Akin to 'understanding' (Tib. *shes*) in being also both a verb and noun, to habituate oneself requires understanding the causes and conditions of present habits. This is why *knowledge* in the Buddhist tradition and DDV progresses from inferential and conceptual to direct and non-conceptual within another threefold praxis: learning (Tib. *thos*),[18] contemplation (Tib. *bsam*), and cultivation (Tib. *sgom*). Since here 'cultivation' or 'habituation' is the last step in the progression and the subject of the following chapter, we begin with a closer examination of the DDV's discussion of grounds. After learning from the framework of dualistic perception contained in the DDV, one's understanding will be riper for integrating the principles of *Emergent Strategy*, which gain salience when focus shifts from the grounds of self to the interpersonal and global. All the while, it is crucial to remain receptive to emphasis on interconnectedness in both works, specifically the notion of transformation on any level having an impact on every level.

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[17] This is one factor of what she calls the "science of emergent strategy," which demands a theory and application that is: "relational, adaptive, fractal, interdependent, decentralized, transformative" (brown 2017, 56).

[18] This term refers to engagement with Buddhist philosophical studies in particular and is often translated alternatively as 'study,' 'learn,' 'hear,' or 'listen.'

The next verse in the DDV points to the aspects present in the realm of beings that are shared, which Diane Denis translates as:

> More precisely:
> Birth, conventions [necessary for communication],
> Help or coercion,
> Benefit or oppression,
> And qualities or faults,
> Are caused and determined in reciprocity.
> That is how they are shared. (2022, 84)

Here we see a list of experiences defined by the mutual involvement of beings in a way more overt than that of 'corresponding perceptions' responsible for the appearance of a shared outer world. While this list can be taken as a truth at face-value, here it is a starting point for contemplation and practice. None of these concepts are foreign to us and neither are the value-judgments we place on them—they are features of conventional wisdom, so to speak. This means beginning to notice the reality of interconnectedness, whether or not this is reflected in our day-to-day assumptions about experience, and what results of this. Recognizing also the polarities offered in each line, the next step would be a conscious participation in this process so as to facilitate the kinds of interactions that result in *help*, *benefit*, and positive *qualities* for all beings involved.

For the DDV, which models a traditional Buddhist framework of cognition, these results correspond to an understanding-turned-perception, or view, of the nature of reality. While not Buddhist in its theoretical foundation, the view presented in *Emergent Strategy* is similarly rooted in acknowledging the influence of perception on reality and in how one can better align this perception through transformative understanding and practice. Before beginning to flesh out how this can be enacted, let us turn to the notion of *conventions* (Tib. *tha snyad*) in the above

verse and how this can be understood. This is in order to become better acquainted with what is included in this term, and to gain a deeper understanding of all other elements of the list.

The Tibetan term *tha snyad* is both popular and diversely employed in Mahāyāna scriptures. The above rendering, *conventions*, has been used by Jules Levinson, Jim Scott, the DTC, and Diane Denis to translate this verse. The above quotation from Denis adds "[necessary for communication]" afterward, which alludes to the function and mode in which these conventions appear to us. Similarly Raymond Robertson translates this as 'social conventions,' while Brunnhölzl translates it as 'behavior.' We can see the vast scope of interpretation available through this range of definitions, as well as a similarity in what they seem to suggest, namely the various forms of communication that carry meaning and effectuate results. These results take shape in felt experiences of "help or coercion, benefit or oppression, and qualities or faults…," which precipitate further behaviors and experiences (Denis 2022, 84). This is based on the assumption that certain meanings are inherent to certain interactions, reinforced by patterns of cause and effect that seem to exist *out there*. What the DDV offers at the end of this verse is an invitation to consider how in fact such experiences are "caused and determined in reciprocity," a framework that grants opportunity for greater understanding and informed engagements (Denis 2022, 84). This presents a starting point for transformative understanding in both texts, which begins on a personal level, extends to the interpersonal, and ultimately views both as inseparable.

The above verse suggests that this process begins with the assumption that all beings that are born into the same world, as evidenced by the fact that it appears similarly within the individual minds of beings. This mode of appearance being similar or common is affirmed by both the root text and its commentators. In his translated commentary, Thrangu Rinpoche

simplifies the seeming dichotomy between beings and the world in the following way. In terms of the realm of sentient beings, he says "we are considering the mind and the individuality of sentient beings" (Thrangu, Jules Levinson 1999, 28). In terms of the external world, he says "we are interested in questions such as where sentient beings are born, where they live and so forth" (Thrangu, Jules Levinson 1999, 28).

Using the example of perceiving a mountain, he affirms that the experience of different people is more or less the same. That said, these verses are situated within the first section of the text, which is a presentation of the characteristics of phenomena or *dharma*s. These must be understood as faulty, as our perceptions of phenomena are based in confusion and are thus inherently misleading. Thrangu Rinpoche gives voice to this earlier in his commentary by defining *dharma*s as "the various apparent phenomena and confused appearances of saṃsāra which bring with them a great deal of difficulty and hardship" (Thrangu, Jules Levinson 1999, 12-13). Such phenomena are indeed perceptible and as such are granted the status of conventional truths, yet the DDV asserts that they do not truly exist in the way that they appear. This is on the level of conventional appearance, meaning what *seems* to be shared and unshared about experience when left uninvestigated and as such *untransformed*. This is important to state now so as to refrain from diluting the scope of transformation endorsed in this text. It is this discordance between appearance and reality that lends itself as a support for both the presence of suffering and potential of freedom from suffering.

In Brunnhölzl's translation of the commentary by the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), Rangjung Dorje too expands on the idea that what seems to be perceived as a common world is revealed to be otherwise upon investigation. Bringing in the example of colors

and shapes that may seem to appear as if common to everyone, he elaborates writing, "A single entity such as a tree appears as good to some and as unpleasant and different to some" (Brunnhölzl 2012, 221). Drawing from classic Mahāyāna cosmology, which propounds the presence of six classes of beings within the desire realm of cyclic existence (Skt. *saṃsāra*, Tib. *'khor ba*) he adds, "Likewise, hungry ghosts, hell beings, humans and gods engage in seeing [what humans perceive as] water in different ways—as pus and blood, [molten] lead, water, and nectar respectively" (Brunnhölzl 2012, 222).

One need look no further than the difference in how humans versus fish experience water to begin analyzing the lack of a truly existent external world. This is encouraging in implying an alternative, to which Thrangu Rinpoche writes, "If we are able to realize that phenomena are not the massive, solid things that they appear to be, then that is the first step on the staircase" to liberation (1999, 14). He goes on to suggest that by understanding, meditating upon, and truly realizing how phenomena appear versus how they actually are, "then we will abandon a great many faults and achieve a great many good qualities" (1999, 14). Such a process therefore begins with questioning and investigation of our own personal experience as it appears within dichotomies of self and other, mind and world. In short, what appears to individuals as an objectively existent world is actually a cognitive construction based on their own patterns of perception, cognition, and reaction.

In this spirit, brown begins her chapter on "Principles of Emergent Strategy" by offering some guiding maxims that have inspired her work on a personal level. Speaking of emergent strategy as both a study and practice, she writes, "small is good, small is all" (brown 2017, 41). Situating her presentation in a context of constant change (i.e. impermanence), brown then points

attention to the present moment as the necessary ground of transformation, encouraging presence over preparation as a way to become receptive to the way perception shapes reality, and to participate productively in that process. Along these lines she writes, "Trust the people. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy). Move at the speed of trust" (brown 2017, 41).

Granting salience to the notion that "what you pay attention to grows," brown encourages a focus on critical connections over critical mass, highlighting the fact that "there is a conversation in the room that only these people in this moment can have" (brown 2017, 41-42). Finding this conversation involves a commitment to learning that is spacious in terms of a willingness to zoom out, refresh, and recalibrate according to the constraints and possibilities presented in an unfolding manner. In this way brown speaks of the order of key elements[19] in her book as a "snapshot of a theory in perpetual motion" (2017, 44). We are then to understand the unity of theory and application, understanding and transformation, and perception and experience foundational in both works.

The reality of constant change and perpetual motion is given further breath in the Buddhist presentation of *saṃsāra*, defined by the experience of repeated *birth* as someone somewhere. This is encapsulated in the image of a wheel, often depicted on the outside of Tibetan monasteries as both a symbol of bondage and of the way out, once united with transformative understanding of our predicament. The Buddha is said to have taught an understanding of existence as taking place continuously—from beginningless time—as a result of an assumed self in contrast to other. Additionally, in later texts, the Buddha is said to have *turned the wheel of Dharma* three times, the first involving a presentation of existence as defined

[19] brown defines the elements of emergent strategy as: "relational, adaptive, fractal, interdependent, decentralized, transformative" (brown 2017, 56).

by potentialities of bondage and freedom. The path between the two requires an understanding of how bondage occurs.[20]

The following verse draws upon this image and speaks to the characteristics of existence when bordered by dualistic perception—that of self and other; mind and matter.

> As long as there is someone circling somewhere,
> These are the grounds in each and every case—
> The constituents of sentient beings and those of the vessel.
> The constituents of the vessel appear to be shared,
> The awareness being the common experience;
> Some of the constituents of beings
> Are experienced in common and some are not. (Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 23)

Note that the initial phrase, "As long as…" frames an understanding of this perception that simultaneously appeals to and subverts the assumption that there are actual grounds for this perception. After all, there is no ground to be found in the process of circling. In this way, the habitual tendencies of beings are like the gravity keeping them orbiting through an existence fraught with difficulty. That said, in Buddhism the investigation of ordinary perception is granted provisional meaning, which allows us to be in conversation with non-Buddhists for quite a while before a disagreement or departure is necessary.

Similar to brown's setting the stage for collective liberation as a call and response to perpetual motion, the above verse lays out some ground rules for transformative understanding. This requires an acknowledgment that within ordinary experience, here equated with *saṃsāric* existence, the realms of sentient beings and the outer world seem to possess a natural order. Spoken of as a 'vessel' or 'container' (Tib. *snod*), the outer world is what houses the inner 'contents' (Tib. *bcud*) of sentient beings. So long as this appears to be the case, there are aspects

[20] Accordingly, the image of a Dharma wheel is typically the crown jewel topping every Tibetan monastery.

of these realms that are shared and some that are not. The DDV is emphatic in stating that "these are the grounds in each and every case," meaning this is necessarily the starting point for both suffering and liberation from suffering (Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 23). Following the progression of the DDV, Thrangu Rinpoche explains how we must begin with the recognition that "external phenomena and internal mind are inseparable" (1999, 15). This is the case because there is no way to prove the existence of something that has not and does not appear to mind.[21] Calling this the 'second step' on the proverbial staircase, we are here encouraged to look closely at how and why we attribute a separate reality to what appears to be external.

Coming to resolve that external phenomena are actually a product of mind is admittedly a big step in terms of arriving at a transformation of experience that accords with this understanding. Yet leaving space to notice how it is our perception shapes our experience is readily available, as seen in brown's work as well as everyday occurrences. Returning to the idea that trusting people allows people to become trustworthy, intentional and cultivated shifts in perspective are commonly known to have bearing on the ways we experience ourselves, others, and the world. Consider the notion of someone 'lighting up the room' or the way changes in weather affect beings' sense of well-being. The possibility of mutual influence between beings and the world and vice versa—even if ultimately confused—is a fertile soil for transformation. It is for this reason that brown encourages a deeper engagement and alignment with the external world as a sort of instruction manual for liberating change. Taking stock of the reasons behind feelings of stagnation and heartbreak within her own personal experiences social justice organizing, brown testifies to the benefit of "paying deeper attention to how the natural world

[21] This includes all sense faculties that still require a mental consciousness to interpret and imbue meaning to perceived objects.

has solved these same problems" (2017, 46). Employing the term 'biomimicry' as a description of human efforts throughout history to learn from natural processes as a means for actualizing solutions in societies, brown cites thinkers and movements modeled around this concept to highlight one entryway to emergent strategies.[22]

Similar to the DDV's presentation of transformation within the personal, interpersonal, and external world, brown references Janine Benyus' definition of biomimicry,[23] which likewise includes three types. While Benyus speaks of copying form and shape, copying process, and emulating ecosystems, brown is explicit in her application being centered around systems and processes (2017, 47). As such she begins her discussion of biomimicry by citing the example of Complex Movements, a Detroit-based artist collective "supporting the transformation of communities by exploring the connections of complex science and social justice movements through multimedia interactive performance work" (brown 2017, 44). Treating the work of Complex Movements as an example of emergence within the realm of social justice movements, brown highlights their emblem system as a model of liberating formations and movements of the future (2017, 44). This emblem system highlights the presence and roles of mycelium, ants, ferns, wavicles, starlings, and dandelions in the natural world as examples of emergent strategy that can be further conceptualized and cultivated within communities (see brown 2017, 45-46). What is most pertinent for this discussion is that the success exemplified by each of these

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[22] It may be important at this point to recall that an 'emergent strategy' is the application of theories reflected and informed by reality as we are able to better understand it. brown's work is inspired by the potential of such strategies to be transformative in the direction of collective liberation—albeit explicitly within the domain of social injustice and political oppression—precisely because they are aligned with truth as we inherently know and feel it.

[23] Regarding biomimicry, brown writes, "Biomimicry is basically taking a design challenge and then finding an ecosystem that has already solved that challenge, and literally trying to emulate what you learn. There are three types of biomimicry—one is copying form and shape, another is copying a process, like photosynthesis in a leaf, and the third is mimicking at an ecosystem's level, like building a nature-inspired city" 46-47.

emblems is likewise in their being "caused and determined in reciprocity" (Denis 2022, 84). Similar to the DDV's assertion that liberating transformation is possible precisely because it is an expression of mind's nature—despite the presence of confusion—brown asserts that "we are already emergent beings, just by our very existence," even though "we've been tricked away from it" (2017, 47).

Rather than framing this assertion of reality in terms of phenomena and their intrinsic nature, conventional and ultimate truths, or appearance and reality, brown speaks in terms of nature vs. nurture to begin approaching transformation. She refers to ways people are "socialized to work against respecting the emergent processes of the world and each other" as 'anti-nurturing,' and provides a list of examples by which to assess her claims (2017, 47). These are examples of ways we learn to divorce humans from nature, individuals from communities, individuals from each other, and facts/theories from application.

In a recent talk given by Reverend angel Kyodo williams regarding the exacerbated violence between Israel and Palestine,[24] williams speaks to the trend of war and warring as "a feature of our collective anxiety about our essential lack of safety, lack of easefulness, that comes from the corruption of our relationship with the planet." She claims that the heightened tendency to "coarsely grope and grab and grasp trying to hold onto mine mine mine" is a response to being confronted with the results of being so out of order and balance in our relationships as a species on the planet (November 14, 2023). This is only possible with the assumption that one's perceived world belongs to them, which is ironic in revealing simultaneously: that there is a shared perception of an external world that unites us, and yet a wide-spread investment in the

[24] see "Unspeakable: Allowing our heartbreak so we don't break the world" (November 14, 2023).

belief that some of it belongs to some of *us* and not to someone *them*. The arbitrariness with which we, as individuals and socieities, draw lines and divide is then seen to be not only a symptom of confusion in its absurdity, but a choice in favor of it despite the supported consequences of *coercion*, *oppression*, and *faults*.

This is why williams calls binaries "the devil," and mentions how "when you start pulling at the binaries you see the falsehood of them" (November 2023). Though one can argue this statement is itself entertaining a binary between good and evil, there is nuance and paradox to her statement. williams is clear in this revealed falsehood pertaining not just to the binaries seemingly imposed from the outside—along lines of gender, race, class, etc.—but also the binaries that exist within us individually. It is these binaries that we live and exist inside of—"in response and reaction to the imposition of binaries" on our bodies—that she says give rise to wars within ourselves turned wars on peoples (williams 2023). brown includes this in her list of anti-nurturing practices, namely our learning "that factors beyond our control (such as those mentioned) determine the quality of our lives," which then "sets a path for survival and quality of life" (2017, 48). This is preceded by the anti-nurturing practice of learning "to disrespect Indigenous and direct ties to land" (2017, 47).

The DDV is a critique of binaries as well, which are similarly treated as a result of 'false imagination.'[25] williams speaks of them as a result of 'abstraction,' stating that people's lives are not valued enough because they've become too abstract: that "our humanity has become abstracted into a world called humanity that isn't made of real within ourselves unless we can

[25] Regarding false imagination, the DDV reads, "Here the traits of phenomena are defined as duality plus assumption and formulation, whose appearance is the mistaken conceptual process, since what appears is not and is thus not real" (Tsültrim Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 19).

find that realness within ourselves and keep touching it" (November 2023). williams speaks of how, the more we, as a collective, turn into ourselves, the more the lines we have drawn within ourselves implode with the revelation of their absurdity; because we are meant to be safe, meant to be free. But the more aggressively we carve the boundaries, the more aggressively we need to defend them, and the less safe we feel and become.

This is directly aligned with the notion found in both texts that actions rooted in confusion necessarily cause harm, because they are unnatural despite their being normalized. As we turn back to ourselves, with consistency and courage, and "those borders are decimated and we reclaim a love of the wholenesss of who we are, we have no choice but to find there a love for humanity. For all of humanity" (williams 2023). Thus, says williams, "whenever we return to ourselves, we return to everyone" because "every time I turn to myself I yearn for your freedom, because I yearn for mine" (2023). This points us in the direction of collective liberation being a product of practices that reveal and acquaint us with non-duality, interdependence, and interconnection.

brown's work combined with the DDV provides a roadmap for accessing this kind of practice, which is discussed more explicitly in the following chapters. What is pivotal for preparing ourselves to entertain and engage such practices is a conceptual understanding of what williams introduces as the 'binaries' that exist both within and outside of us, as well as the correlation between the two. What the DDV presents as what we can call the 'third step' on the staircase of progression, is a reckoning with the logical implications of external phenomena being realized as a product of mind. While this is often considered the hallmark of the Yogācāra or 'Mind Only' school—a category of Buddhist philosophy I have intentionally avoided until this

point[26]—the most significant portion of the DDV is based in an understanding of nonconceptual, non-dual wisdom (Tib. *rnam par mi rtog pa'i yeshe*) as the support (Tib. *rten*) of fundamental transformation. Despite being taught similarly in leading Yogācāra texts, this then also suggests a connection to (what is now considered) the Madhyamaka or 'Middle Way' school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which requires a grappling with and acceptance of the non-establishment of mind.

Returning to the commentary from Thrangu Rinpoche, he writes, "…if the phenomena that seem to be external and that are apprehended by consciousness were, in fact, not external phenomena, then similarly the internal consciousness is not valid" (1999, 16). This is because "the lack of solid external phenomena indicates similarly the lack of valid establishment of internal consciousnesses that apprehend external phenomena," which is then logically extended to the domain of words and language used to name and express those phenomena i.e. communication (Thrangu Rinpoche, Jules Levinson 1999, 17).

Thus the interpersonal domain of experience, which takes shape most prominently through communication in its myriad modalities, is a critical point of intervention for those who seek to steer trends away from the negative and toward the positive. This is because interaction is a powerful stage for either delusion or wisdom to manifest and proliferate. As we have discussed, transformative interaction requires mutuality and reciprocity—the opposite of binaries and the competition and manipulation that ensue from them. To this end, the DDV speaks of sentient beings as the 'ruling condition' (Tib. *dakpo rkyen*) responsible for the assumption of the shared abodes that house such interactions.

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[26] The choice to refrain from speaking of the DDV in terms of its long-debated categorizations is to maintain focus on the text and its authorship refraining from claiming categories themselves. In actuality, the content and its progression as found within the text itself is both inclusive and transcendent of philosophical interpretations popularized in the Tibetan contexts that were developed centuries after its composition and later revival.

Mipham summarizes this concept with the following: "situations where one individual acts as the ruling condition and the phenomena of another person's mind stream function as the primary cause are referred to as "shared" from the perspective of there being a single shared result" i.e. the *shared conventions* grounding experiences of care or coercion, harm or benefit (DTC 2013, 19). Mipham clarifies that such conventions "involve observing and communication with others, as well as other such activities that are instigated by another individual's physical or verbal communication" (DTC 2013, 20). Yet again, the notion of such interactions taking form as a result of causes and (in this case, ruling) conditions points to the reality that there are no collectively experienced external objects ultimately, and therefore no "determinate event in which each participated" (Robertson 2008, 322). We are then left with the question of what possibilities present themselves in the interpersonal realm when increasingly aware of this. Brown's response boils down to the capacity of awareness to understand, reverse, and reimagine.

brown provides a glimpse into the potential of redirecting our anti-nurturing through the language of Joanna Macy, who speaks of the 'great turning,' "a collective awakening and shifting direction, away from the wanton destruction of this planet and each other, away from those practices of separation and competition listed above, towards life and abundance" (2017, 49). Guided by the notion that "matter doesn't disappear, it transforms," brown speaks of such an approach as an alternative to abolitionist notions of destroying the systems currently in place (2017, 49). This also refreshes the notion of transformation as a possibility both inherent and necessarily within the domains we currently exist in. Within the DDV, the grounds of lived experience are necessarily connected, and yet not equivalent, to the lived experience of awakening once a fundamental transformation has been fully actualized. The perceptions of self,

other, and the world are then the grounds on which such a transformation takes place, and in the process are themselves transformed.

'Shaping change,' the first principle located in the subtitle of *Emergent Strategy*, is then revealed by both works to be available from the central axis of the shared constituents of experience. Returning to the image of a wheel, the sort of transformation implied by both texts involves a steering in a different direction, cognizant that it is the same wheel and peripheral points along the rim that persist and return to the ground even as it travels and carries in a new direction. Alternatively, brown offers up fractals as an image to elucidate the relationship between small and large, as well as the need to be skillfully adaptive to present circumstances as they change.

Returning to *birth*, the first term used in the verse above, an acceptance of rebirth as shared across Buddhisms is not wholly necessary for maintaining this dialogue, and may in fact lend itself to disagreement based on further false assumptions.[27] In light of our previous discussion regarding causes and conditions being the key ingredients of relative appearance, both shared and unshared, we are also invited by the DDV to entertain the possibility of reality persisting in a mode that is non-dual and non-conceptual. As such, what is referred to as the *nature of reality* (Skt. *dharmatā*) is utterly empty of causes and conditions. This means birth can be observed from an ordinary perspective to be taking place each and every moment, the present then birthing continuous and limitless opportunity in accordance with our recognition of it.

Simultaneously, we can investigate the assumption of time as linear and concrete being

[27] "It is known that one of the specific characteristics of Buddhist thought is the refutation of the existence of a "me" or of a soul. The idea that the soul migrates from one body to another is therefore not accurate according to these traditions. Likewise, the idea of the progression of a soul through many lives is not completely accurate" (Denis DATE, PAGE #).

ultimately subverted by the image of a wheel or circle—i.e. the earth's sphere as simultaneously rotating and orbiting, granting differing access to the sun and moon in oscillation by which we define 'time'—where there is no possibility of clearly defining a beginning or end. This is not a dismal outlook for then arriving at a complete transformation or collective liberation. Rather it is hopeful in suggesting that the realm of possibility must and does exist right here. This is why the practical implications of beholding such a view, whether relative or ultimate, are vast and profound in its inclusion of both limitless suffering and complete liberation. We can see this reflected in the terminology of 'awakening,' widespread in the Buddhist worlds, to articulate the relationship between *realizing* the causes of suffering to be rooted in false assumptions and *actualizing* a lasting freedom from that very confusion and its requisite experiences.

The DDV suggests that awareness of this falsity and its asymmetric truth occurs to individuals (and as a byproduct their communities) at increasing levels in correspondence with the extent to which such an understanding has transformed their experience/*imploded their binaries*. This is where the notion of transformative understanding as a practice becomes of key precedence, as it takes place through study, reflection, and cultivation within the Buddhist traditions and the DDV in particular. While this process is important to hold as a unity of theory and practice—a practical hermeneutic where cultivation is taking place at every level—the DDV and *Emergent Strategy* suggest that this transformative understanding begins in the realm of individuals before being applied to that of the interpersonal. Thus the next chapter begins with the 'uncommon aspects' or 'unshared abodes' of individual experience.

Chapter Two: Cultivation; the Process of Transformation

In the previous chapter the *view* of transformation found in the DDV and ES were exposed. Both frameworks are predicated on the primacy of mind and perception in our experiences of bondage and liberation, and suggest pathways to collective liberation fundamentally rooted in understanding. This establishes mind, and specifically understanding, as the premise of transformation and collective liberation. This chapter examines the process of transformation in terms of a practical cultivation of transformative view. To review, the *view* of the DDV hinges on a two-fold understanding of phenomena and their nature, apprehended through the conceptual (dual, indirect, gradual) and non-conceptual (non-dual, direct, immediate) aspects of cognition respectively. ES similarly proposes a *view* of transformation that requires conceptual analysis of present perception as the key to liberating theory and practice.

With respect to establishing a shared view to be cultivated, both texts emphasize the mutually-constructed nature of perception and interaction, and thus the importance of aligning perception of reality with interdependence. Actually recalibrating thoughts and behaviors on the path to liberation is the *cultivation* of two-fold understanding. While initially supported by comprehension of reality as it seems through reliance on concepts, practitioners become increasingly supported by resultant knowledge as it unfolds experientially and takes precedence on the path. In terms of process, or transformative *cultivation*—the focus of this chapter—these works are united in a logical assertion: if reality is both an object and creation of mind, the path of transformative cultivation begins in one's own mind and extends to the minds of others.

For both authors, each step in the praxis of *view, cultivation,* and *conduct* is both inherently and gradually transformative. Transformation as such is two-fold: letting go of confusion and connecting to wisdom. In Buddhist terms, this means our misguided view, cultivation, and conduct is *transformed* by insight into the nature of reality. Each step then becomes increasingly *transformative* through connection to that wisdom, which is the direct experience of reality *as it is*. These two aspects of transformation correspond to the two aspects of understanding at play during cultivation. The former indicates a pre-eminent, unconditioned capacity of mind—non-conceptual wisdom—that is always present and capable of beholding reality beyond the stains of confusion. This is knowledge that apprehends reality *as it is* (Skt. *dharmatā*). The latter indicates the conditioned aspect of mind—conceptual understanding —that is bound within the confusion of duality and further proliferates perceptions born from the binary of subject and object. This is the capacity of comprehension, or understanding reality *as it seems* (Skt. *dharma*). Cultivation is then both immediate and gradual, all-encompassing and yet progressive. While individuals never truly separated from the wisdom to unite *view* and *conduct* with reality as it is, effort is exerted on the path to cultivate the necessary causes and conditions for this wisdom to dawn and persist.

Although presented in Buddhist terms above, I argue both the DDV and ES express the need to develop and sharpen conceptual understanding (comprehension) of the disparity between reality as it *seems* and *is*. Within both of these approaches, individuals must understand how they are confused in order to identify what to renounce on the path. They must also directly experience the alternative—wisdom—in order to identify what to cultivate. In this way cultivation is a bridge between these two capacities, initially directed toward conceptual

understanding until non-conceptual wisdom is increasingly accessible and ultimately stabilized. The DDV's presentation of non-conceptual wisdom (Tib. *mi rtog pa'i ye shes*) as the support (Tib. *rten*) of fundamental transformation (Tib. *gnas gyur*) strengthens the transformative potential of cultivation as endorsed in ES in four important ways: i. By affirming the primacy of perception within experience; ii. By elucidating the mind's two-fold potential to know reality as it appears and exists; iii. By demonstrating the emptiness of dualistic perception and in turn, the individual and shared aspects of experience; and iv. By providing a road-map for how transformation fueled by wisdom necessarily includes the liberation of ourselves, others, and the world.

This discussion regarding premise is undergirded by the schema of fundamental transformation as found in the DDV. This is because it is the essential subject-matter of the text,[28] and because transformation in the DDV is also explicitly liberation from subject-object duality, thus transcending the grounds of perception that otherwise serve as supports for suffering. Perception therein is experienced by individuals yet reliant on shared or collective aspects (mutually and reciprocally dependent). I argue thus that fundamental transformation expressed in the DDV should then be understood as synonymous with collective liberation as intended in ES. If liberation from dualistic perception—the manufacturer of habitual confusion and suffering—is simultaneously liberation from the experience of separation and suffering, then fundamental transformation is necessarily all-inclusive. Since fundamental transformation is made possible and supported by non-conceptual wisdom, a mental capacity of all sentient beings,

[28] As Brunnhölzl remarks in his introduction to *Mining,* "This discussion of the fundamental change covers 60% of the entire text (being the most detailed treatment of this topic in any treatise) and the explanation of non-conceptual wisdom makes up 70% of that discussion" (2012, 52).

this concept of collective liberation is rendered universalizing and hopeful. While wary of oversimplification, the similarities of the DDV and ES with respect to content afford the opportunity to grant ancient Buddhist wisdom a contemporary voice through the terminology and cultural landscape of brown.

The framework from the DDV grants strength to brown's borrowed slogan, 'transform yourself to transform the world,' in solidifying the connection between personal and collective liberation, and ensuring the possibility of transcendence. Despite differentiated definitions of what precisely fuels or supports the process of transformation, this chapter further examines this resonance by utilizing stanzas from the DDV to scaffold a syncretic dialogue with ES; a dialogue centered around non-conceptual wisdom as the support for cultivating collective liberation. This choice is motivated by traditional treatment of the DDV as a Buddhist treatise and practice manual, wherein a thorough understanding of its terms through listening, contemplation and meditation, facilitates the opportunity for direct experience of their meaning.

Since direct experience of reality beyond delusion is the ultimate support for transformation in the DDV, it seems wise to examine the author's approach to facilitating this experience. Given the emphasis in both works on the necessity to begin the process of transformation within one's own mind, this chapter begins by lifting up how this approached in the DDV before joining forces with ES. brown's take on cultivating transformation in ES becomes exceptionally useful when the conversation transitions into *conduct* involving others, the subject of the next chapter. This is because, in ES, wisdom is directed toward and supported by patterns of *emergence*, which is still dualistic, and thus relegated to the domain of relative

appearance according to the DDV's criteria. Before examining this discrepancy, let's establish the common-ground that renders this an enriching exercise.

ES and the DDV employ different terminologies for explaining cultivation, yet both agree on an important distinction—between *cultivating* transformation and *transformative* cultivation. Neither identical nor different, these two aspects of cultivation correspond to the two related aspects of cognition as explained in the DDV. Thus for *cultivation* leading to transformation, the DDV suggests a practice of conceptual analysis that reveals the emptiness, or suchness, of reality on an experiential level, whereby non-conceptual and *transformative* cultivation manifests. This points to transformation being an effortful act of conceptual mind as well as an intrinsic function of wisdom. For brown, *cultivation* leading to transformation requires a conceptual imagining of alternative realities.[29] There, it is adherence to emergent principles of collaboration and cooperation with the planet and others that ensure the transition to *transformative* cultivation, described by brown as the process of 'shaping change' and 'changing worlds.'

Though ultimately not linear in relationship either, both authors suggest a gradual approach to cultivation that habituates individuals with access to wisdom, the potential scope of innate transformation. In this case, the DDV offers a useful definition of wisdom. Described as non-conceptual and non-dual, wisdom is explicitly, logically, and experientially linked to a definition of liberation that is preclusive of duality and thus inclusive of all beings and the world. As Denis writes, "Non-duality is, in this case, a preferable ethical stance (relative reality) because it can lead to direct experience (ultimate reality)" (2023, 3). However, both the DDV

[29] The use of imagination by brown is not wholly different from what some Tibetan Buddhist practices advocate in terms of visualizing and inhabiting purified realities and forms. A further look at the role of imagination in the DDV and ES will ensue in the subsequent discussion and chapter.

and ES assert that practices of cultivation must first be directed toward effortful transformation before becoming effortlessly transformative. Traversing and closing this gap is what is meant by *cultivation*, the process of collective liberation.

i. *The process of transformation begins in the mind*

> What appear to be outer, perceivable in common,
> Are perceiving awareness; they are not referents
> Existing as something extrinsic to consciousness,
> Precisely because they are common experiences.
> (Gyatso, Jim Scott 2004, 25)

In the previous chapter, we opened discussion of view—the premise of transformation—by introducing the shared and unshared grounds (Tib. *mthun pa'i gnas dang mi mthun pa'i gnas*) of experience.[30] As demonstrated through above stanza 15, the DDV and its commentarial literature clearly refute the existence of an objective reality through describing a *seemingly* (Tib. *ltar*) shared reality that is inseparable from individual perception and thus cannot be confirmed to exist beyond mind. As such, all dualistic appearances are considered the display of false imagination, or a mental fabrication that is misleading (Tib. *yang dag ma yin pa'i kun rtog*). It is through reliance on the support of individual consciousness, the seemingly unshared domains of experience, where individuals engage the process of transformation.

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[30] Following the progression in both the DDV and ES, that discussion began with the shared aspects of experience pertaining to an external world appearing to beings in common. There we considered, through the aid of the DDV, how the seemingly shared appearances of an external world are shown to be products of the false imagination—like a magician's trick. What is 'shared' about such appearances is not a truly existent external referent, but similar tendencies within the process of apprehension as spread across individual, 'unshared' mindstreams. As Denis summarizes, "When several processes of apprehension are in agreement, the impression of a common external world arises" (2013, ch. 7 p. 9). These *grounds* thus correspond to both the (seemingly) physical and mental domains that house and reinforce experiences of duality—i.e. the perception of beings (subject) and the world (object).

Similarly, brown speaks of our present reality as a product of imagination, yet does not equate the full gamut of dualistic perception with imagination (the creative capacity of mind). To this end, she writes, "We are now living inside the imagination of people who thought economic disparity and environmental destruction were acceptable costs for their power" (2017, 197). While the DDV utterly refutes the true existence of dualistic appearances (phenomena) from the outset, brown's words underline the practical implications of imagination on experience when disparately empowered in societies. In other words, brown is also identifying imagination as a mental activity that can be transformative or enslaving. As a skillful response, the DDV suggests a distinction at the level of relative reality—between misleading imagination that tends toward suffering and virtuous imaginings beneficial for oneself and sentient beings. Still, a correspondence with the DDV regarding the significance of imagination in constructing reality is evident. This is an extension of the fundamental relationship between perception and reality, which these works describe in ways both differentiated and complimentary.

Through brown's statement her readers are asked to reckon with the way shared outer circumstances in societies are caused by the privileging of certain imaginations at the expense of others. Circumstances like economic disparity and environmental destruction are further conditioned by the legitimization of power structures and imaginations that may claim to benefit all but do not reflect the shared reality of all. For brown, cultivating liberating transformation then requires a 'radical imagination' that is subversive in being collective and collaborative instead of individual and competitive (2017, 59). This is guided by the belief that empowering the imaginations (the capacity to think in creative ways) of more people will result in circumstances conducive for more people.

For the DDV, ordinary perception of reality is a radical imagination, and when not recognized as such and not utilized skillfully, it brings suffering. In that context, a shared objective reality is both an impossible and antithetical reference point since it is a conglomeration of individual misassumptions. From this perspective, the logical trajectory of action stemming from this assumption would solely reinforce the delusion and suffering of beings. Instead, transformation must take place within the ground responsible for this false assumption, placing emphasis on liberating individual perception as a prerequisite for any collaborative ideation that could be considered truly radical and subversive.

Collaborative ideation stemming from innate wisdom would then necessarily facilitate liberating circumstances for all by subverting ideologies and efforts based in duality, and ensuring the access and flourishing of non-conceptual wisdom as present in the minds of all. Cultivating transformation according to the DDV then requires understanding present circumstances as products of our own confused imagination—whether shared or individual—caused and conditioned by dualistic perception. Though the DDV takes its analysis a few steps further than that of ES, these works are united in highlighting the role of imagination in conditioning perceptions and in turn, reality. Despite differentiated definitions of "imagination," it becomes, for both texts, an essential instrument of liberation. Drawing inspiration from brown's slogan 'small is all,' we now turn to what the DDV and ES have to offer in terms of cultivating transformation in what appears most immediate and individual—our own minds.

ii. *Elucidating the mind's conceptual and non-conceptual wisdom*

The DDV suggests that one can see through one's own confusion through a specific and gradual path, which supports transformative experience for oneself and, by consequence others. In this way wisdom occurs to individuals (and as a byproduct their communities) at increasing levels in correspondence with the extent to which conceptual knowledge has transformed their experience/*imploded their binaries*. This is where the notion of transformative understanding as a practice becomes of key precedence, which takes place through study, reflection, and cultivation within the Buddhist traditions and the DDV in particular. While this process is important to hold as a unity of theory and practice—meaning cultivation is thus taking place at every level. This description is similar for both the DDV and *Emergent Strategy,* as they suggest that cultivation begins in the realm of individuals before being applied to that of the interpersonal.[31]

According to the DDV, shared experiences intimately rely on what are intimately unshared experiences. Thus, readers are invited by stanza 16 to begin engagement with the "unshared grounds" of individual experience. This verse reads:

> Since the ground, awareness, happiness, suffering
> Action, transition at death, captivity, birth,
> And liberation are not observed in common,
> They comprise the realm of experience not shared in common.
> (Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 23)

Here the 'ground' of *awareness*, *happiness*, *suffering*… is again a translation of the Tibetan term *gnas*, which the commentators such as Vasubandhu or Mipham agree is pertaining to the all-ground consciousness (Skt. *ālāyavijñāna*) — a collection of impressions, conditioning

[31] While the grounds of personal and interpersonal experience are not wholly distinguishable, both authors suggest an approach to transformation that begins with what appears to individual mind steams as a service to the collective.

factors, influencing perception — in this case. This term again sees an array of English translations.[32] Thus this particular 'ground' is the *basis* for individual apprehension and confusion. It is that most subtle quality of mind, which provides and reinforces a sense that 'I' exist as separate and enduring within a world of other individuals. It is the also the *basis* for experiences characterized in the text by 'thorough affliction.' Again in this verse, the term translated by Scott as *awareness* (Tib. *rnam par rig pa*) is then the collection of experiential data that is encountered through sense faculties. This raw data is said to then be subjected to this basis such that one experiences these sights, sounds, tastes, textures, thoughts, and emotions as happening to oneself individually.[33] Denis translates this alternatively as "the process of apprehension" (2013, chapter # page #). This helps pave the way for understanding and welcoming the more familiar experiences symbolized by the terms that follow: namely *happiness, suffering, action, death, captivity,* and *birth*. This cursory explanation of the perceptual process according to the DDV supports brown's call for collective transformation by providing a map of mind that is predisposed for both bondage and liberation.

The term *birth* appears again this time as something *unshared* whereas it was considered *shared* in the previous verse. Birth is both a personal experience and the result of collaborative forces. In the framework of two-truths (relative and ultimate), the presence of paradox as a soteriological tool and *skillful means* of the historical Buddha is of particularly radical character when compared to theistic and academic traditions. While inherently problematic to speak of

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[32] In order to avoid a lengthy discussion of the all-ground consciousness—a foundational aspect of Buddhist theories of cognition under the category Yogācāra in longstanding and present traditional and academic discourse—I will employ layman's terms, so to speak, for the sake of accessibility and inclusivity. This is again to honor the text itself as presenting a capacity for intersectional engagement that would be shrouded in assumptive baggage from camps of Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars.

[33] Robertson's translation of Vasubandhu's commentary on this second term reads: "Perceptual operation [Tib. *rnam par rig pa*] is the consciousness (*awareness*) that engages [objects]" (2008, 329).

two truths or realities, these are indeed reflective of the scope of the DDV's content as defined by phenomena (*dharma*) and their reality (*dharmatā*).[34] Ju Mipham's commentary affirms this assessment in his statement, "Hence it is evident that it is appearance that manifests through the power of mind, not mind through the power of appearances" (Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 105). Thus this verse is important in suggesting that shared experience occurs first within the minds and experiences of individuals.

iii. *Demonstrating the absence of separation between self and other*

brown does not use duality as a spring board to address the problem of separation, yet because the DDV invited readers in the previous section to conceptually resolve the primacy of individual consciousness in shared outer appearances, the role of dualistic perception becomes significant for this cross-textual dialogue. In this way, for the DDV, external phenomena that appear common to beings are understood to simply be correspondent appearances of individual mind streams. To explain this further, the DDV turns to this appearance of apprehending subject in order to demonstrate the falsity of this too, paving the way for experiencing the absence of duality through meditation—the dawning of *transformative* cultivation. This is how it becomes relevant for this comparative study. This is summarized by verses 18-20, translated by Diane Denis as:

> If it is established that what appears as an object-grasped does not exist,
> then what appears as a grasping-subject does not exist either.
> An understanding of the non-existence of the appearance of [the duality]

[34] The DTC translates the title of this text as "Distinguishing Phenomena from their Intrinsic Nature," which again presents a redundancy in the case of the latter when treating the notion *nature* as being necessarily *intrinsic* and thus that of a non-intrinsic nature to be an impossibility. These are moments were traditions of philosophy, logics, and linguistics outside of the Buddhist context may not be an appropriate evaluative or interpretive framework.

> of "object-grasped — grasping-subject" can then occur
> because [on the one hand], one understands that since beginningless time
> [this duality] has manifested without interruption, [due to habitual tendencies];
> and [on the other hand]
> because one clearly understands that this duality is without any existence at all.
> (2013, ch. 7 pp. 39-41)

Once shared appearances are shown to be the products of unshared consciousnesses, the individual mind stream is identified as the necessary domain for cultivation. This is because the previously assumed relationship—between the world as the outer vessel supporting the inner contents of beings—is completely reversed; it is a basic (mis)conception within individual minds that supports our conception of an outer world. This is affirmed again in Rangjung Dorje's commentary when he writes, "All thoughts that external referents exist, that hidden referents exist, and so on originate from latent tendencies of mistakenness dwelling in the mind stream, but there are no [external] referents" (Brunnhölzl 2012, 224). This quote addresses the degrees of nuance behind our assumption of a referent—first when directed toward outer perceived objects and then toward the more 'hidden,' inner perceiving mind. After refuting the former as a valid referent, the text moves on to refute the latter. The absence of a truly existent separation between subject and object frees individual capacities to imagine and access alternatives, rendering imagination a powerful tool for cultivating transformation. Non-duality in the DDV's framework is akin to the interdependence and interconnection informing brown's *Emergent Strategy.* Both pathways help individuals clarify their role and potential within collectives.[35] As brown writes, "There are a million paths into the future, and many of them can be transformative for the whole" (2017, 8).

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[35] "I believe we are all actually already aware of these things, we just have the volume turned down. May this serve as a turn up of our awareness of our place in the miraculous" (brown 2017, 8).

The previous stanzas explained that externally-apprehended objects cannot be shown to exist with an essence distinct from the inner-perceiving mind (subject). Stanzas 18-20 then elucidate the logical consequence—that whatever appears as a subjective perceiver cannot truly exist either. As Mipham explains, "This is because perceiver exists relative to perceived but never exists on its own" (Scott 2004, 107). This harkens us back to the interdependent nature of perception, which then causes and conditions reality as individuals experience it. The DDV's assertion of the absence of true subjectivity when read in combination with ES can revitalize brown's notion of fractals, confirming the notion that transformation occurring on small (individual) scales inevitably demands transformation on larger scales since all are connected.

Conceptual comprehension of this dynamic through analysis is what grants access to *experiencing* the absence (or suchness) of subject and object and reality of interdependence, which Denis translates in this verse as 'comprehension.' This is a translation of the Tibetan term *'jug pa*, which suggests a type of understanding that includes a sense of practical application, and thus serves here as the bridge between comprehension and knowledge as previously enumerated. Accordingly, this is also the point in the text where focus transitions from understanding phenomena to understanding the nature of phenomena. Ju Mipham indicates in his commentary that the non-dual awareness accessed here is not different from suchness, "the actually present aspect empty of the two forms of self-entity" (Scott 2004, 109). The term *'jug pa* pertains to the fulcrum of cultivation, whereby the cultivation of thorough comprehension grants *access* to the non-dual wisdom that becomes the source of transformative cultivation.

In the DDV, cultivation is explicitly discussed as a process of meditation. brown likewise offers up practices of emergent strategy in the form of guided meditations, stories, spells, and

musings, though these do not target the uprooting of dualistic perception. While the above rationale is offered initially for the sake of conceptual clarity, it is through its application that the value of these works are tested and verified. For both texts, the path of cultivation involves a praxis of observing oneself as both apart from and a part of a collective. In both cases individuals are asked to challenge their assumptions.

The DDV and its commentators are clear in asserting that it is only the non-existence of dualistic referents that truly exists.[36] From this perspective, it is only through precise meditation as cultivation that such an understanding can be transformative in the direction of liberation. I am arguing that the transformative practices enclosed in ES find further grounding and impact if approached through the longstanding meditative tradition of the DDV. This is because the practices outlined in the DDV are specifically tailored to helping individuals access non-dual wisdom, which I am arguing is an infallible support for both versions of transformation. As Mipham states in his commentary, "When one meditates with such an understanding, this [suchness] will be seen directly" (Scott 2004, 111). Mipham's commentary translated by Jim Scott then speaks of meditation as a "process of refinement," whereby understanding becomes increasingly transformative when directed toward (and eventually from) non-conceptual wisdom. The DDV's theoretical framework of two-fold wisdom and its graduated path of practice that positions non-dual experience as the ultimate support, ensures the success emergent strategies to foster a sense of interconnection and collaboration in communities.

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[36] "Then again, one might suppose that, as a consequence of their coexisting in a beginningless fashion, dualistic appearance would be impossible to relinquish, but this is not the case either, *because* the *duality* of perceived and perceiver's *not existing at all is what really exists*." (Gyamtso, Jim Scott 2004, 111).

This process is further clarified in verse 21, which begins the extensive explanation of the nature of phenomena through a six-point summary of its headings. Jim Scott's translation reads:

> Through introducing traits and a ground at all times,
> Definitive verification as well as encounter,
> Recollection and immersion into its core,
> This six-point approach to pure being (the nature of phenomena) is unsurpassed.
> (2004, 113)

This verse outlines the process of transformation as it progresses from a conceptual process of cognition requiring support to the non-conceptual experience of suchness that is without support. Now bringing focus to the nature of phenomena (Skt. *dharmatā*), a term Scott translates as 'pure being,' this verse lays out a six-point approach to accessing and stabilizing direct experience of non-conceptual wisdom. Similar to verse 10, which outlines the characteristics of phenomena, the above verse also begins with a conceptual understanding of the *traits* (Tib. *msthan nyid*) and ever-present *ground* (Tib. *kun tu gnas pa*) of the nature. Through comprehending these first two aspects, we are able to gain certainty, or *definitive verification*, regarding the presence and promise of a fundamental transformation fueled by innate wisdom. Here we individuals begin to feed their capacity to envision and experience a liberated alternative through conceptual consideration of what it is and is not. This capacity to imagine a better future is a requisite for transformation in ES, and a skill intentionally cultivated through the DDV's path of practice.

The *traits* were outlined earlier in verse 6, where the nature of phenomena is characterized by suchness beyond distinction between subject and object, the expressed and expresser. Verse 23 specifies that the *ground at all times* mentioned above pertains to the

Mahāyāna Sūtras. Borrowing from the language of Denis, here 'one relies on' the Mahāyāna Sūtras as the *ground* (Tib. *gnas*) to arrive at certainty through the use of rational mind.[37] The principles of Buddhism thereby become first a conceptual toolbox by which to compare and evaluate individual experience. This ensuing certainty marks the bridge from analysis to experience, whereby one comes to *encounter* the nature of phenomena directly. From there the path of cultivation is supported by non-conceptual wisdom as it is *recollected* up until arriving at *immersion into its core*. The schema presented in this verse maps out a path of practice that becomes increasingly effortless as the supports for dualistic perception are transformed by wisdom that is without support. To read this in combination with ES and borrow from brown's toolbox, cultivation is thus *adaptive* to progressive grounds of understanding and *iterative* in being a process of repeated engagement with the non-conceptual support of transformation.

In *Emergent Strategy*, brown uses the principles of 'adaptive' and 'iterative' to describe the process of transformation. She defines adaptation as "the process of changing to fit some purpose or situation," and pairs this with intention (2017, 67). For brown, intentional adaptation is "how we change" (2017, 69). Change requires commitment and clarity regarding the destination. The process of transformation encouraged by the DDV also demands conviction or 'definitive verification,' as mentioned in verse 23. There, it functions as the culmination of comprehension and gateway to liberating knowledge through meditative practice. Again, I argue that the DDV provides a comprehensive framework for gaining conviction regarding delusion (premise) and freedom from delusion (destination) that fortifies individual's potential to be

[37] Denis translates verse 23 as the following: "Definitive certainty [about the profound meaning] [is obtained] through the use of the reasoning mind that relies on the Mahāyāna Sūtras. [This stage] constitutes the totality of the path of junction" (2013, ch. 7 p. 47).

intentionally adaptive as endorsed in ES. While intentional adaptation in the DDV is informed by study, contemplation, and meditation according to the Mahāyāna Sūtras, transformative knowledge can also be accessed and harnessed when applying this three-fold model to any subject matter and experience. In other words, the Buddhist framework can be useful outside of its specific framework. I argue, if having clarity and commitment regarding the result of transformation is a necessary ingredient for staying on course, the DDV is invaluable in clearly demarcating the ground, path, and fruition of transformation as pertains to individual minds, thus reinforcing brown's idea of purpose.

Intentional adaptation in ES is a process of transforming our relationship with impermanence. Through a thorough comprehension of reality as impermanent, we can transform the perception of ourselves—from victims of a determined yet unpredictable reality to agents of liberating transformation. In both works, success on the path is ensured by our capacity to know reality as it seems and as it truly is. That said, the DDV's clear definition of this dual-capacity and thorough explanation of its function on the path helps facilitate a conviction in beings' innate ability to transform. Accessing this innate capacity through its meditative instruction then provides a clearer, liberated alternative to a reality now recognized as the appearances of false imagination. In ES, brown draws from the alternative realities depicted in the science-fiction novels of Octavia Butler as well as patterns in the natural world, wherein the liberating circumstances modeled are both a calculated reversal of present reality and an expression of its innate wisdom. Yet the ability to imagine a liberated reality would seem most reinforced through direct *encounter* with, *recollection* of, and *immersion* in the nature of that reality. In this way, the DDV clarifies the ambiguity of present and future that brown claims has left us feeling

disempowered, fearful, or irrelevant within a context of change (2017, 69-70). Since brown articulates intentional adaptation as a practice of being "at ease with what is" as opposed to "being in nonstop reaction," the DDV is invaluable in proposing a pathway to liberated experience that we can test and taste for ourselves right now (2017, 69-70).

Furthermore, in ES, the pace and pathways of transformation are described as *nonlinear* and *iterative*. This refers to a cultivation that does not unfold in discrete and progressive steps, but rather "in cycles, convergences, explosions" (brown 2017, 105). Citing examples from the natural world like the butterfly effect, the changing of seasons, the spirals of fiddleheads, and compost, brown draws attention to the ways individuals can soften into impermanence and the innate capacity to transform with hope and conviction. For brown, this entails recognizing the history of urgency thinking that fuels both crises and responses to crises in unsustainable ways (2017, 114). Instead, she says, we need to go beyond criticism and alternate plans for society: "we have to actually do everything differently, aligned with a different set of core principles for existence" (brown 2017, 114). The DDV presents a process of transformation that both mirrors and supports the transformation of such 'core principles' through unpacking the basic structure of perception responsible for mistaken and misguided behavior, introducing the reader to an alternative that unfolds in a fashion both non-linear and iterative.

iv. *How transformation fueled by wisdom is necessarily inclusive*

I argue here that both brown and the DDV assert a non-linear approach to cultivation in spite of the fact that the DDV seems to present the process in a gradual fashion. Though

verse 21 of the DDV delineates a six-point approach to a practice that subsumes the five paths of model of the Mahāyāna, there is much debate regarding whether or not cultivation is indeed a gradual progression according to the text. From the title and structure of the text a clear dichotomy is drawn between phenomena and the nature of phenomena, distinguished by both the mode of apprehension and its resultant experience. Indeed it is clear the DDV "offers a progressive path that starts from the most common view of the world: the world (object) and its inhabitants (subject)," employing conceptual understanding as a support up until knowledge as wisdom is accessed and stabilized (Denis 2013, ch. 7 p. 6). However, as she writes, experience itself is immediate; direct. The text is firm in defining phenomena as utterly non-existent, and the nature of phenomena as suchness devoid of duality, thereby excluding dualistic perception from the experience of wisdom.

This may lead one to deduce an assessment of experience as either confused or liberated, and minds either deluded or clarified. While such an interpretation may be considered true from an ultimate perspective, in verse 9, phenomena and their nature are not the same nor different.[38] This reintroduces the soteriological potential of paradox as employed in the text, whereby conceptual discrimination in terms of duality is intended to implode the binary of duality itself. Mathes offers further clarification of this point in writing, "Analytic meditation turns into non-conceptual abiding in the same way as a fire kindled from rubbing pieces of wood burns the pieces of wood themselves" (2005, 13). In this way the relative and ultimate are only truths

[38] Denis translates verse 9 as: "These two, [phenomena and their nature], are not one nor different because between what exists and what does not exist the difference exists and does not" (2013, ch. 6 p. 33).

when realized in their inseparability.[39] Similarly, this detailed investigation of the DDV's root verses is for the purpose of establishing a complete outline by which both the DDV and ES gain color. This is guided by the conviction that a focused treatment of the DDV allows for a more universally accessible understanding and application, especially when paired with non-Buddhist works on liberating transformation like ES.

As prescribed in the DDV, the seeming paradox of a gradual process of transformation that manifests as non-dual, direct experience is well suited to rational mind and provides clear steps by which to approach cultivation. Once a map of the path is established, the non-linear presentation of practices in ES gain further traction and purpose. The first two points in verse 21, 'traits' (Tib. *mtshan nyid*) and 'ground,' (Tib. *gnas*) pertain to the conceptual understanding that fuels fundamental transformation along the first of five paths, that of accumulation (Tib. *tshogs lam*). The verse devoted to traits refers readers back to the aforementioned summary at the beginning of the text, while the 'ground'—again, *gnas*—is described as "all phenomena and all the sublime words of the *sūtras*," which is the subject of 'study' and 'contemplation' within the above triad (DTC 2013, 30). According to Mipham's commentary, "it is by engaging in study and contemplation of these teachings that one eliminates ignorance concerning the manner in which one should practice the path," effectively learning what to accept and reject on the conceptual level as well as understanding the nature of phenomena to be "beyond observation" (DTC 2013, 30). The third way of accessing the intrinsic nature is 'definitive certainty' (Tib.

[39] That said, scholars and commentators have long debated the exegetical model of the path contained in the DDV as being either progressive or pivotal (see Sponberg 1981 and Mathes 2005). These debates have historically been linked to allegiances in interpreting the text and authorship along lines deemed Yogācāra or Madhyamaka, which seek to associate Maitreya and the DDV with other Buddhist scriptures, masters, and practice lineages more explicitly linked to these categories. Since my focus is rather on the language employed in the DDV itself, which refrains from explicit mention of the three natures and two truths as popularized in Yogācāra and Madhyamaka literature respectively, we will take a closer look at the six-point path contained in the above verse.

nges par 'byed pa), which involves the experiential understanding gained on the path of joining (Tib. *sbyor lam*) as one learns to correctly direct the mind based on "the *sūtras* of the Great Vehicle" (DTC 2013, 30). Mipham clarifies that this also utilizes "the three forms of insight as spelled out in the *sūtras,*" namely the results of study, contemplation, and meditation (DTC 2013, 31).

It is in the fourth method that the DDV's radical contribution to brown's framework is revealed. The fourth method of access is 'contact' (Tib. *reg pa*), which marks the first instance of non-conceptual wisdom directly accessing the nature of phenomena—suchness—on the path of seeing (Tib. *mthong lam*). This is where the bridge between the two aspects of understanding emerge, and with it access to the authentic view, which Maitreya describes as occurring "by way of the direct perception brought on by the path of seeing" (DTC 2013, 31). Mipham further clarifies this direct perception in his commentary to the above verse to mean an experience divested of stains during meditative equipoise and an experiential understanding of the authentic view during post-meditation (DTC 2013, 31).[40] This moment of contact is necessary for individuals to gain conviction regarding both the proliferation of suffering and uncompounded freedom to be experiences of mind. No longer are "the just and liberated worlds we long for" solely a figment of imagination and source of despair (brown 2017, 3). In the DDV this experience of contact is followed by 'recollection' (Tib. *rjes su dran*) where begins the process of further acquainting oneself with the direct perception of suchness on the path of meditation (Tib. *sgom lam*). This is effectively an ongoing oscillation between experiential understanding and

[40] "Through this accomplishment one attains and experiences the object, suchness, through the path of seeing. Divested of those stains that are eliminated through seeing, suchness is attained in actuality by way of direct perception during meditative equipoise and experienced via the authentic view in the ensuing attainment." 31.

direct perception as one progressively eliminates the stains of conceptual mind through "repeatedly recalling and realizing" suchness devoid of concepts (DTC 2013, 32). This is also the point at which imagination becomes a process of remembering to be free.

The final means of access is called 'immersion' and describes 'becoming the identity' (Tib. *nye bar son pa*) of suchness completely (DTC 2013, 28). This is synonymous with the complete and final, fundamental transformation "where all appears simply as suchness" on the fifth path of no more learning (Tib. *mi slob lam*) (DTC 2013, 33). Mipham explains this as the point on the path where appearances match reality, and which Maitreya describes as "the establishment of the fundamental transformation" (DTC 2013, 33). Here, conceptual and experiential understanding has given way to the complete unfolding of non-conceptual, direct perception and its corresponding experience. Thus, this final transformation subsumes and unites the entirety of view and experience of reality, now completely purified of delusion in the form of nonexistent dualistic appearances and the accompanying thorough affliction. This is also referred to later in the text as the 'complete knowledge' (Tib. *yongs su shes pa*) of reality as it *seems* and as it *is*, the all-inclusive expression of two-fold wisdom.

We have seen how the DDV presents the two aspects of knowledge (conceptual and non-conceptual) as being in opposition when not on the path, and yet indispensable and complimentary when on the path. This spectrum between the conceptual and non-conceptual is to be traversed as the process of transformation itself, the latter gradually purifying the stains of the former. This is why 'complete understanding' is expressed in terms of 'complete immersion' with non-conceptual wisdom and is what delivers beings to fruition—an all-encompassing, final,

fundamental transformation.[41] While suchness has been defined in terms of absence or transcendence of dualistic perception, the final unification with suchness is not to be understood as a sheer void of experience. Instead, the appearances of reality as tempered by dualism unfold in their pure essence. Maitreya explains this in a section regarding 'substance' (Tib. *rdzas*), shedding light on how to understand the pure appearances of suchness as a transformation (Tib. *gyur*) of the grounds (Tib. *gnas*) of dualistic perception—in their seemingly external, intermediary, and internal aspects (DTC 2013, 35). What is revealed through the DDV's path of practice is a deep respect for appearances as inseparable from wisdom, and an approach to individual cultivation that necessarily includes the experiences of all as the perception of separation is transformed into the experience of interconnection.

Returning to the grounds of experience (individual, interpersonal, world) identified by both works, accordingly transformation in the DDV occurs on three levels. Maitreya describes this as "the transformation of the shared awareness of the environment into suchness, the transformation of the *sūtras'* basic field of phenomena into suchness, and the transformation of the unshared awareness of the realm of sentient beings into suchness" (DTC 2013, 35). In other words, complete transformation takes place regarding the perception of the external universe; the intermediary gestures, tone of voice, names, words, and letters that comprise all types of communication; and the collections of consciousness that comprise the internal minds and mental events of beings. Mipham clarifies these points further using a framework of the three dimensions or enlightened bodies (Skt. *kayas,* Tib. *sku*), which he describes as transformation

[41] "Thusness (suchness) free from all the impurity that has covered it is the essence of full enlightenment. Gradual purification of thusness occurs through development of more and more powerful forms of gnosis realizing thusness, referred to as "non-conceptual gnosis" or "thorough knowledge." The complete purification of thusness is accomplished by and realized by that gnosis. The essence of enlightenment being purified thusness, non-conceptual gnosis is both entrance into that essence and inseparable from it" (Makransky 1997, 68).

into "the realms and bodies, the teaching of the sacred Dharma, and the revelation of all domains of knowledge through the wakefulness that knows things as they are and in their multiplicity" (DTC 2013, 36).[42] These profound explanations help to debunk abstract notions of enlightened reality as a voidness or isolation of experience, and inspire readers through an emphasis on the all-encompassing nature of understanding as a prism able to reflect the entirety of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāna* in ways that inherently include the experiences of all.

Since a detailed examination of the *result* of transformation according to the DDV and ES is conducted in the next chapter, may the above summary of final transformation suffice for now in highlighting an intrinsically collective quality of cultivation and a foreshadow insinuating its implications. What is critical at this point, is to understand how the path of cultivation in the DDV secures the potential of collective liberation in being a process of individual efforts directed toward accessing innate wisdom, a universal aspect of individual minds. Through the aid of the DDV's progressive framework, we are able to more effectively envision a resultant (non-dual) ethic that would necessarily guide the transformation societies through the liberation of individuals. As brown's interest is in how transformation "becomes the common orientation and practice of movements for social change, for peace, for liberation," the path prescribed in the DDV is a key ingredient in ensuring the potential and success of this aim (2017, 133). While brown similarly points to the need to start small by cultivating transformation within ourselves and our immediate surroundings, the DDV's discussion of innate, non-conceptual wisdom grants

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[42] "The extension of suchness without limitation—in which everything that appears as the environment and, by extension, the body, undergoes a fundamental transformation—is the attainment of the body of qualities. Second, the mastery of the uninterrupted and inexhaustible qualities of the melodious sound of the Dharma—the fundamental transformation of all the conditioned verbal factors exemplified by the *sūtras*—is the attainment of the body of complete enjoyment. The fundamental transformation of all that comprises the mind—the all-ground and the and the seven collections of consciousness that depend upon it—is the attainment of the emanation body and its attendant knowledge of the five wakefulnesses" 36.

strength to her statement that transformation "is accessible to anyone, anywhere, at any scale" (2017, 133). Additionally, brown's assertion that "transformative practices that begin small will demand new societal structures" grants secular and universal relevance to the DDV regarding the potential of individual cultivation to transform our world into one conducive to the liberation of all.

Chapter Three: Transformative Conduct; the Result of Transformation

Having conducted a comparative assessment of the premise and process of transformation in the DDV and ES, this chapter examines the *result* of transformation as explained in these works. Before opening this discussion, it behooves us to recall that the *premise* of transformation corresponds to the theoretical view, and *process* to the practical cultivation of experience in accordance with that view. That said, these categories are fluid, non-linear and mutually reinforcing. Both works ask the reader to transform their perceptions and behaviors from two ends. To arrive at a transformative view, one must first discern the causes and conditions of deluded and liberated experience, recognizing these experiences to be fundamentally rooted in disparate modes of perception. One's view-turned-experience then becomes the 'object,' so to speak, of cultivation as they deepen knowledge regarding what to reject and adopt on the path. This object can also be expressed in terms of ground or support (Tib. *gnas*), first coming to identify the supports for bondage and liberation before renouncing/ purifying the former and engaging with/revealing the latter.[43] The final result of transformation is then a lasting experience yielding great benefits.

This chapter argues that the *result* of liberating transformation as discussed in both the DDV and ES is necessarily the natural reflex of unified theory and practice, expressed as

[43] We can understand then, what Denis refers to when describing the path of practice in the DDV as a "path of renunciation," in which we progressively divest from that which supports delusion (dualistic fixation) and instead *rely on* that which supports liberation (non-conceptual, non-dual wisdom) (2013, ch. 7 p. 6).

transformative conduct with others and the world.[44] From the perspective of either work, the completion of personal transformation is synonymous with the resultant liberation of that person. Again for both, personal liberation is not accomplished in isolation and is instead directly dependent on interaction and collaboration with others. ES promotes an approach to transformative conduct that seeks alignment within duality—between individual perception and group engagement as informed by patterns of emergence expressed in the natural world, individual mind, and interactions between minds. In the DDV, transformative conduct presupposes some access and familiarity with non-conceptual wisdom, whereby activity springs forth from direct experience of reality now utterly free from delusion—fixation on the imagined duality of subject and object. Whether interested in transforming the dynamic of particular relationships or uprooting the duality of self and other altogether, ES and the DDV offer valuable models and pathways for transformative conduct that afford access to anyone willing to begin with their own mind. I am arguing, however, that the DDV provides a blueprint that can support those interested in collective liberation by addressing suffering on all levels.

Talk of *personal* transformation or liberation at this point becomes misguiding since the result discussed in both works (albeit differently) imply the blurring or sheer absence of such a distinction. Additionally, the conducive premise and process of transformation endorsed by each work directly relies on better understanding our perceptions of, and experience with, others. At no point are self and other treated as independent, rather the difference is on where to place

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[44] At this point the perception of "others and the world" is not the reality of the liberated individual, but rather the perception of those in contact and relationship with that individual. As Makransky comments, "Where cognitive subject and object are no longer separated through conceptual construction, non-conceptual knowledge [wisdom] and its "object" [suchness] are not distinguishable. It is for this reason that Buddhahood's essence is designated in Yogācāra literature through an abstract terminology uniquely designed to point to a non-dual realization that does not fit into our usual epistemological categories of subject and object, while including what we ordinarily call "subject" and "object" within that realization" (1997, 68).

emphasis. Accordingly, distinctions are drawn as a tool to deconstruct distinctions. In this context, the result of transformation does not manifest within an individualized vacuum; just as premise and process did not either. Instead, both ES and the DDV assert that transformation requires one to deepen their understanding of interconnection, which entails an increased awareness of others and an inspired commitment to their freedom as inextricable from our own. This means transformative conduct, even as a result, is accessible to anyone engaged with the premise and process despite alleged progress or differences in respective aim.

Though ES and the DDV both describe how dualistic perception is conditioned by supports that lack truly existent referents (subject and object), in the DDV, non-conceptual wisdom (being both the support and the result of transformation) is to be understood as the non-dual experience of reality, or *suchness*, itself. Access to this wisdom is both cultivated and ultimately revealed to be the nature of experience. The expressed *result* of personal transformation in the DDV is then paradoxically unconditioned and inexpressible[45]—characterized by the absence of delusion (dualistic appearances), which would otherwise support suffering.[46] Since by this point, one's conception of self and other has been exhausted within direct experience, all is shown to be undivided and all beings to be relevant. The conduct of such a person, as supported by non-conceptual, non-dual wisdom, is then the inevitable cause or

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[45] Denis' translation of verse 38 reads: "With this [correct practice], an access [into fundamental non-conceptual intelligence is established] through considering its characteristics. Three of them have to be considered: [Firstly, one has to consider] "what it relies on": the nature of phenomena. [Why?] Because [the fundamental non-conceptual intelligence] rests perfectly on this nature, [so in the same way], it is non-dual and inexpressible" (2013, ch. 7 pp. 52-53).

[46] Stanza 26 defines the result or completion of fundamental transformation as "suchness divested of stains, where all appears simply as suchness" (DTC 2013, 32). To this point Khenpo Shenga comments: "where all appears simply as suchness because the path of cultivation has removed all remaining stains" (DTC 2013, 33).

support for the liberation of others.[47] The liberation of all beings—collective liberation—is then, according to the DDV, a logical outcome of relationships with those for whom non-conceptual wisdom has been contacted, recollected, and fully actualized.

A contemporary reading of the DDV helps one understand how the problems presently perceived on societal and global scales, so aptly identified in ES, are direct extensions of individual delusion. That which ES identifies as the problems and solutions for our modern world, expressed by brown in terms of (in)justice, is in my view thoroughly addressed in the DDV by the implications of transformative conduct rooted in non-conceptual wisdom. ES thus elucidates the criteria for successful transformation by determining the domains and necessary impact of transformative conduct in the modern era, while the DDV presents an ancient solution that is granted new relevance and pertinence through modern application. That is why I argue that non-duality as the guiding ethic for transformative conduct is both the result of personal liberation and the cause of collective liberation.

To better understand how this guiding ethic enriches ES's contribution to collective liberation, the following sections first proceed by investigating how the result of liberating transformation explained in the DDV is successful in liberating the causes and conditions of injustice as outlined in ES, thereby contributing to an understanding of collective liberation that is both radical and natural. This is undertaken through a four-point demonstration of: i. how the result of personal transformation manifests as transformative conduct with others; ii. how

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[47] Although the realization of suchness "is characterized as unconditioned and permanent for all the reasons above, it has another important, and apparently contradictory, characteristic: It gives rise to pervasive activity throughout the universe to assist living beings still trapped there. An unconditioned thing, then, is the source of conditioned activity. This paradox is entailed by the doctrine of nonabiding nirvāna that became normative for classical Indian Mahāyāna and fundamental to it, frequently invoked as a means to distinguish Mahāyāna from non-Mahāyāna Buddhism" (Makransky 1997, 92).

transformative conduct can be approached through both conceptual and non-conceptual understanding; iii. how transformative conduct reinforces the liberation of beings; and iv. how transformative conduct is the cause of collective liberation.

i. The result of personal transformation manifests as transformative conduct with others

From the perspectives of both the DDV and ES, individual perception is the origin and principal domain of liberating transformation. This is true even in the context of collective liberation. Individual perception is also the origin and principal domain of confusion and suffering, whether appearing as seemingly personal or collective experiences. The DDV thus proceeds with heavy emphasis on cultivating transformation as an individual process with collective implications, whereby the completion of personal transformation becomes the gateway to ensuring transformative conduct in and with the world. ES similarly endorses a path of cultivation beginning with one's own minds as a means for empowering sustainable, transformative conduct with others. If individual perceptions are recognized as being mutually and interdependently constructed, then the interaction with others in the form of physical and verbal communication is surely influenced by the degree to which this recognition has transformed individual experience.

One's ability to be influential in the liberation of others is directly linked to a personal intention to be an agent of transformation in this way. The necessity for intention persists even if one's temporary focus is on personal well-being. This is because intention requires the capacity to envision the result of transformation, which is informed by understanding the premise and process by which this result can be actualized. As has been discussed, such understanding is

most strengthened by the direct experience of non-conceptual wisdom—the liberated alternative to a reality characterized by suffering. Interestingly, both works investigate the role of imagination in being either a support of delusion and bondage or of wisdom and liberation.

Both the DDV and ES suggest that transformative *conduct*, an intrinsic expression of personal transformation and a cause of collective liberation, relates to one's ability to imagine a liberated world, either through conceptual comprehension or direct experience free from concepts. In the DDV such conducive imagination is discussed in terms of aspiration, a required aspect of the supreme fundamental transformation attained by *bodhisattvas*.[48] As a Mahāyāna text, this aspiration is subsumed within the concept of *bodhicitta*—the altruistic intent to actualize one's own enlightenment in order to help others do the same. In the DDV this aspiration is explained as a *requirement* or *prerequisite* (Tib. *dgos pa*) for giving rise to the final fundamental transformation. Since *bodhicitta* is the chief motivation behind all engagement in Mahāyāna Buddhist study and practice, this speaks to the soteriological value of imagination as aspiration by suggesting a correlation between the intent and experience of freedom, even before directly experiencing this through contact with wisdom on the path.[49]

In ES, brown encourages the fostering of radical imagination that is reflective of a reality conducive to the liberation of all. To introduce this discussion, she poses the question, "What are the ideas that will liberate all of us?" (2017, 19). This is radical in being informed by, and in opposition to, experiences of a shared reality presently characterized by disparity, exclusion, and

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[48] Mipham's commentary explains, "Accessing the realization, or understanding, of those factors that are requirements, or prerequisites, to this extraordinary fundamental and complete transformation refers to the following. First are the distinct aspirations that one makes with the wish to attain great, unsurpassed enlightenment…" (DTC 2013, 39).

[49] In an article entitled, "Buddhist Styles of Mindfulness: A Heuristic Approach," John Dunne adds that the "personal transformation that occurs through contemplative practice is thus not just a matter of what occurs 'on the cushion,'" but also hinges "heavily on the way the world is imagined before and after" (2015, 268).

injustice. For brown, this requires the formulation of a shared vision that is decentralized, collaborative and inclusive of those who have been historically disenfranchised in societies.[50] She clarifies such collective ideation as guided by a conviction that "we are responsible for each other's transformation," as well as the intention to take up this responsibility (2017, 150). She claims that this is a natural outcome of the process of individual transformation, a 'success' of the "deep, slow, intentional work" of transforming ourselves (2017, 114). In other words, this felt responsibility for the liberation of others is a natural outcome of insight into interdependence on the path, whereby "as we transform, we see more things that need transformation, within ourselves and the world" and are motivated to be liberating agents in that process (2017, 115).

Inspired by the settings and agents of liberation depicted in the science-fiction novels of Octavia Butler, brown deems our work to change the world 'science-fictional behavior'—"being concerned with the way our actions and beliefs now, today, will shape the future, tomorrow, the next generations" (2017, 16). Quoting from Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, brown reminds her readers that "all that you touch you change; all that you change, changes you," and encourages us to unite around the intention to increase love (2017, 14).[51] By increasing love one expands their individual spheres of concern and responsibility. By cultivating one's conceptual understanding and embodied awareness of interdependence on the path, the experiences of all are revealed as relevant to one's own, and the ability to exclude some in one's goal for liberation is rendered powerless. If then one also follows the trail of practice left by the DDV, the implosion of

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[50] "It is so important to cultivate our patience, our thoughtfulness, our willingness to slow down and seek the wisdom of those not already part of our movements—not to get them in step with our point of view, but because we need their lived experiential wisdom to shape solutions that will work for the majority of living beings" (brown 2017, 115).

[51] "If the goal was to increase the love, rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression" (brown 2017, 10).

subject-object duality as facilitated by non-conceptual wisdom removes any conceptual support for drawing lines of separation and promoting abstraction. The DDV is in definite agreement with brown's statement that "what you pay attention to grows," yet clarifies this point further through presenting the soteriological function of understanding in its two aspects (2017, 133). These two aspects—conceptual comprehension and non-conceptual knowledge— correspond neatly with giving rise to the resilience brown says is the means for recovery and transformation (2017, 123). This resilience is a necessary aspect of transformative conduct for brown, who is interested in justice. I am arguing that this resilience so essential to brown's framework, is a natural byproduct of spiritual liberation, the aim of fundamental transformation in the DDV.

ii. Approaching transformative conduct with and without concepts

Although the DDV and ES both point to liberation as the intent and result of successful transformation, there is significant difference in how these works discuss transformative conduct. The DDV expresses transformative conduct in terms of awakened activity, which spontaneously emerges from the permanent and unconditioned experience of wisdom once stabilized in the mind. While spontaneous, this conduct is also precise in being in perfect accordance with reality unfettered by dualistic fixation, thus invoking this universal capacity for wisdom in others. Alternatively, ES expresses transformative conduct in terms of transformative justice—"justice practices that go all the way down to the root of the problem and generate solutions and healing there, such that the conditions that create injustice are transformed" (brown 2020, 212). For brown, the efficacy of transformative justice practices involves reversing trends of abstraction

and separation, which she says can only be successful in "real time."[52] Both works identify knowledge or understanding as the supreme foundation for transformative conduct, which both works frame as actions conducive to the liberation of ourselves and others.

While the DDV privileges non-conceptual wisdom as the supreme knowledge and support for transformative conduct, brown suggests an approach to conduct which relies on understanding in 'real time.' She outlines the praxis of transformative justice in chapter 23 of *Beyond Survival* with three questions: i. Why?; ii. What can I/we learn from this?; and iii. How can my real-time actions contribute to transforming this situation (versus making it worse)? (2020, 214). For brown, the success of transformative conduct depends on understanding why circumstances of injustice appear and persist, a willingness to learn about ourselves and others in all situations, and to consider what is required of us to help transform situations in the direction of justice and liberation. These considerations are clearly conceptual in nature, relying on dualistic paradigms of right and wrong, just and unjust. However, a closer look at these three questions enriches this discussion of transformative conduct by highlighting the liberating potential of action supported by a conceptual understanding. While these questions appear rooted in dualistic assumptions about what is and why with respect to beings and the world,

[52] "Real time is slower than social media time, where everything feels urgent. Real time includes periods of silence, reflection, growth, space, self-forgiveness, processing with loved ones, rest and responsibility. Real-time transformation requires stating your needs and setting functional boundaries" (brown 2020, 214).

when approached as practical guidelines embraced within a praxis of study, reflection, and application, they actually invite one into experience that challenges dualistic perception.[53]

Rather than look solely at the DDV, where the definition of transformative conduct requires the support of non-dual wisdom, this research argues that brown's version of transformative conduct inspires the possibility to approach justice and liberation within present contexts and relationships. She is guided by the belief that "transformative justice could yield deeper trust, resilience, and interdependence," within the experiences of individuals and communities (2020, 215). For brown, these three qualities are thus indicators of the kind of knowledge conducive to transformation. Experiences of trust, resilience, and interdependence are compatible with the DDV in being both reflections and approximations of reality as experienced through non-conceptual wisdom. Therefore, here I am treating brown's three questions as a method for enacting transformative contact through the use of concepts—lifting up trust, resilience, and interdependence as qualities of transformative understanding. Although this criteria is supported by both works, a switch to the language and context of brown invites a contemporary and accessible reading of the DDV bringing it closer to home.

Transformative justice, for brown, is a liberating alternative to the "fear-based adherence to reductive common values" expressed in modern 'cancel-culture,' whereby one identify individuals and/or groups behaving in ways that go against one's values before publicly

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[53] It is beneficial here to recall that the DDV begins with a universally accessible schema of reality situated within a dualistic framework of perception—self and others; beings and the world—before presenting a progressive analysis of interdependence that challenges the assumptions underlying this perception. Through the use, and eventual exhaustion, of conceptual analysis, readers are invited to experience reality (suchness) free from concepts through persistent recollection. In contrast, brown makes use of a dualistic structure of reality throughout, continuing to highlight invitations from ordinary experience to take a closer look at the role of our own perception in our assessment and evaluation of reality. In turn, while greater emphasis and textual content is given to non-conceptual wisdom as the infallible premise for transformative conduct in the DDV, brown offers a model of conduct that begins with duality as a means for understanding and enacting interdependence with similar results. In both cases, transformation entails a subversion of dualistic experience that stems from shifts in individual perception.

condemning them in a way that affirms their values (2020, 211). In his book titled *The New Social Face of Buddhism*, Jones referred to this social and historical means of self-affirmation two decades ago in terms of 'antithetical bonding,' and suggested a reversal of this as the main building block of a Buddhist social theory (2003, 54).[54] Similar to Jones in assessing that such practices are reductive in maintaining divisions between people, as well as fractals of the very process that gives rise to conditions of injustice, brown is interested in conduct arising from "deep shifts in our own ways of being" (2020, 214). The first of her questions—Why?—is thus described as a 'game-changing, possibility-opening question.' This is because, she says, "the answers rehumanize those we feel are perpetuating against us" by making it impossible to "ignore that we might be capable of a similar transgression in similar circumstances" (2020, 213). This shifts the assumed arena of justice and liberation from the enemy outside to the enemy within.

Tying this to the framework of the DDV, I suggest that brown's statement that "demonizing is more efficient [easier] than relinquishing our worldviews" strengthens the DDV's assessment of suffering being the result of dualistic views misaligned with reality (2020, 213). In other words, it is easier to blame other(s) than to recognize our role in the proliferation of suffering and transform ourselves. And rarely in movements of transformation has this divisive premise and process resulted in lasting change, hence the call for personal transformation reverberated through the DDV, ES, and Jones' work.[55] Here the work of Jones is an important

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[54] Jones writes, "A collective belongingness identity is more deeply established and exalted by subordinating another group or competing with it. Thus bonding tends to be *antithetical*. Acquisitiveness, aggression, and the whole complex of self-affirming compulsions require "others: if they are to satisfy the visceral appetite for being top-dog; this appetite is satisfied better still if the others can be put down in some way. Thus collectivities commonly require another collectivity to oppress, exploit, and victimize" (2003, 55).

[55] The subtitle of Jones' book is 'A Call to Action.' (2003)

conversation partner because it marks a nexus between the DDV and ES in term of content and context.[56]

Again, in *The New Social Face of Buddhism*, Jones echoes the Buddhist diagnosis of suffering as espoused in the DDV, and relates it to modern assessments of injustice akin to those cited in *Emergent Strategy*. In so doing, he also draws from Buddhist scriptures and communities to model how transformation has been, and can be approached in the direction of both spiritual liberation and social justice using the Buddhist path. Jones sheds further light on the vast benefit Buddhism can offer in discourse such as this, in being "essentially a tool of inquiry and an ideological solvent, open to untidy complexity and suspicious of fixed conclusions," which typically proliferate within assumed and reinforced binaries (2003, 57).

In brown's second question—what can we learn?—brown asks her readers to consider what they can learn from situations that appear misaligned with their values, challenge their identities, and trigger righteousness in themself. She argues that there are lessons leading to transformation in every situation, and it is the responsibility of all interested in transformation to adapt to understanding as it clarifies (2020, 213). The third question, regarding how intentional and adaptive solutions can be enacted within such situations, requires individuals to be in connection with the present moment, or 'real time' (2020, 214). Navigating these three questions in real time involves trust in the presence and potential of interdependence, both in one's evaluation of a situation and one's capacity to transform it. Such invitations to *contact* the nature of reality are essential to the DDV's content.

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[56] From Kenneth Kraft's forward to *A New Social Face of Buddhism*: "Ken Jones' 1989 book *The Social Face of Buddhism*, was one of the very first attempts to synthesize Asian spirituality and Western social thought. *The New Social Face of Buddhism* is based on its predecessor but has been almost entirely rewritten. Returning to the same central issues with greater clarity and maturity, Jones draws upon—and exemplifies—the remarkable growth of engaged Buddhism in recent decades" (Jones 2003, ix).

iii. *Transformative conduct reinforces the liberation of beings*

In chapter 28 of *Beyond Survival*, brown proposes a treatment of trust not as something earned, but the conviction with which we begin transformative conduct. There she writes, "Learning to trust is returning to beginner's mind, returning to our nature" thereby describing trust as both a factor of conducive imagination as well as an intrinsic expression of wisdom (2020, 275). 'Learning to trust' thus requires some compass by which one can distinguish projection from reality. In that context, brown is clear that successful transformation requires resilience, which in turn requires a shared vision of those cocreating that vision (2017, 132).[57] It is difficult to know what brown means by "our nature," but through this comparative study one can refer to the DDV to expand and enrich such discussion.

The DDV provides not only a clear definition of the nature of phenomena, the nature of the mind, but also a pathway to gaining access to it such that trust in its presence and qualities is facilitated. While this is on the level of individual mind, this nature is non-dual, meaning accessing the nature of one's mind *is* accessing the nature of phenomena (Skt. *dharmatā*). This is deemed supreme knowledge (Tib. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*), wisdom (Tib. *ye shes*), or also referred to at times as fundamental intelligence (Tib. *rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*) in being both the culmination of individual potential and a clear reflection of that potential in others. Thus, first through a recognition of perception and reality as interdependent, one's experience of interconnection is facilitated. Then, by considering non-duality and the innate wakeful potential,

[57] "How do we shift into a culture in which conflict and difference is generative? One place to turn to with a transformative justice lens is our shared vision. When we imagine the world we want to shift towards, are we dreaming of being the winners of the future? Or are we dreaming of a world where winning is no longer neessary because there are no enemies?" (brown 2017, 132).

equality is also realized. For those concerned for the benefit of beings in today's turmoil, this is a recipe for resilience in transforming the perception of separation responsible for burn-out.[58]

In ES, the result of transformation is a dialectic; it is exemplified by fractals, the microcosmic representation of macro reality. Quoting Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, brown reminds her readers that "civilization is to groups what intelligence is to individuals," and "what happens at the interpersonal level is a way to understand the whole of society" (2017, 14; 22). Therefore she defines civilization as "a means of combining the intelligence of many to achieve ongoing group adaptation," an interpersonal practice requiring great trust in ourselves and each other. Through these statements, I suggest that any individual's capacity for such a practice is greatly benefitted by a combined reading of ES and DDV, as their pathways of liberating transformation both begin and end with trust.

In the beginning of ES, brown exhorts her readers to: 1. "Trust the people;" and 2. "move at the speed of trust" (2017, 42). Could one consider that these sentiments shed light on the way trust itself is strengthened and clarified on the path? By trusting in one's own capacity for transformation as made evident through cultivation, can they more naturally trust others? The study of Buddhist texts shows that the notion of trust, conviction, faith, and confidence are intricate, complex, and essential. Yet, linked to the primacy of perception in one's experiences of reality and the notion that 'what we pay attention to grows,' brown then assures her readers that by trusting others, they become trustworthy, and the pace of transformation unfolds naturally as a result.

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[58] With respect to interpersonal relations, brown advises: "Acknowledge the dynamics, then keep growing. Have an understanding on the front end of the race, class, gender, ability, geographic, and other power dynamics that exist between you. And also remember that these are constructs. Be in the complexity of living inside these constructs while evolving beyond them through relationship" (2017, 143).

brown describes transformative conduct as a combination of radical, collective ideation and collaboration, posing the question, "How do we turn our collective full-bodied intelligence towards collaboration, if that is the way we will survive?" (2017, 9). This is a question about how to steward a transformation characterized by resilience, sustainability, lasting change—the endurance of humanity. While I am arguing that the DDV's answer to this question is profoundly timeless, precisely timely, and potentially sufficient, it benefits this discussion to bring in other thinkers bridging the apparent gap between the secular and spiritual; dual and non-dual. Toward that aim, John Dunne's works on reflexivity (2015) and cooperative cognition (2018) in collaboration with scientists demonstrate the potential for Buddhist theory and practice to transform social interactions through self-investigation and self-regulation.

Dunne's research is then comfortably situated between the DDV and ES in applying a Buddhist model of consciousness and meditation to collective goals in a worldly context. In particular, he speaks to the success of human cooperation when individuals and groups rely upon reflexive awareness (Tib. *rang rig*), a preeminent and persistent non-dual feature of mind, as the support/ground for self-investigation and self-regulation within the group.[59] In seeming agreement with the DDV, Jones, and ES that transformative, if not liberating, collaboration with others requires a practice of self-inquiry, Dunne's chapter entitled, "Reflexivity in Buddhist

[59] "Another crucial philosophical tool that arose in support of Non-dual contemplative approaches was the notion that, even in ordinary consciousness, a form of non-dual awareness is already occurring. Known by the technical term "reflexive awareness" (*svasaṃvitti*), this aspect of consciousness is non-dual in the sense that when information is obtained through reflexive awareness, it does not mean that a phenomenal sense of subjectivity is focusing on that information's source as an object" (Dunne 2015, 261).

Epistemology: Implications for Cooperative Cognition,"[60] contributes greatly to this conviction (2018). Engaged in collaborative work with cognitive neuroscientists, Dunne speaks in the introduction to humans' "very capacity for robustly cooperative action—rooted in key features of cognition that no other primate managed to develop" and are "central to the evolution of humans" (2018, 82).[61]

While these 'key features' center around the preeminence of reflexive awareness, Dunne warns that "it seems unwise to simply expand models of individual cognition and apply them to cognitions distributed across individuals" as "phenomenal forms vary across individuals" (2018, 85-86). This is consistent with the discussion in Chapter 1 of the present research, where both the DDV and ES were shown to analyze the shared and unshared aspects of one's experience. Chapter 2 then began with the resolution of what is most truly shared across individual experiences of reality: individual process of perception and universal capacities of mind. Thus, through this sequence, the process and result of transformation must clarify the former and access the latter in order to be liberating for oneself and others.

To this point, Dunne also speaks to the convergence and consistency of pattern-recognition across species beyond humans in a way that extends access to the prospect of collective liberation. This is because, he explains, within cognitive experience, the phenomenal

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[60] "Before exploring some implications that the Buddhist theory of reflexivity may hold for cooperative cognition, it will be helpful to clarify what is mean by 'cooperative cognition' in this context. As noted earlier, the term 'cooperative cognition' is used here to pick out some common themes in a range of theoretical accounts that overlap significantly, while diverging in ways that are not relevant to the current discussion. All these various approaches, such as 'distributed cognition' and 'group cognition', concern the way that human minds may interact to produce cognitive events together. This perspective stands in contrast to the notion that cognition occurs just 'in the head' of individual humans" (Dunne 2018, 96).

[61] "Whatever one might think of this evolutionary story, the end point is clear: modern humans can cooperate in highly complex and flexible ways to produce farms, markets, highways, and trucks, and they do so by developing and transmitting elaborate cultural practices and social structures that facilitate cooperative cognition" (Dunne 2018, 83).

form of a subject is "reflexively presented" in a way that renders individuals (turned communities) "available for regulation or other deliberate actions" (2018, 87-90). This is possible through reliance upon the preeminence of reflexive awareness as well as practices that enhance the 'salience'[62] of others' experiences, as centered upon orientation toward a shared goal amidst differing individual experiences. This is a beautiful harmony between the DDV and ES in approaching transformation through reliance on a combination of innate, conceptual and non-conceptual capacities of mind and intentional collaboration with others.

Citing a 2018 study (see Hutchins and Tove Klausen 1998) regarding flight crew cooperation, Dunne echoes brown in explaining the importance of intention, vision, and interconnection within successful cooperation. In particular he writes, "Cooperative cognition of this type requires a sense of 'shared intentionality' among the humans involved," and paves the way for how "intersubjectivity, shared intentionality, and cooperative cognition enabled thereby can also emerge in contexts that are far less scripted than an airline flight crew" (2018, 96-97).[63] Through this work, Dunne is successful in modeling the potential of widespread application of Buddhist principles in contexts of both material and existential challenges, positioned between the worlds of spirituality and science; happiness and liberation.[64] It serves as a model for comparative works such as the present study.

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[62] "In general terms within cognitive science, 'salience' in this context refers to the way that an object emerges as significant in perceptual cognition" (Dunne 2018, 92).

[63] In a section of her book titled 'Liberated Relationships,' brown suggests: "Relinquish Frankenstein. You are not creating people to be with, or worth with, some idealized individuals made of perfect parts of personality that you discovered on your life journey. You are meeting individuals with their own full lives behind and ahead of them. Stop trying to make and fix others, and instead be curious about what they have made themselves" (2017, 143).

[64] While Dunne's chapter (2018) concludes with further possibilities for research and engagement with cooperative cognition as rooted in implications drawn from Dharmakīrti's presentation of reflexivity, this present research draws on a cognitive framework, methodology, and textual foundation that is both connected to and similarly ripe for such cooperation-turned-liberation.

Borrowing from Gerry Stahl's notion of 'group cognition' (see Stahl 2016), Dunne clarifies an added aspect of cooperative cognition relevant to collective liberation, "namely, that it [collective cognition] is marked by an intersubjectivity that enables individuals to contribute to a process whose result exceeds their own cognitive capacities" (Dunne 2018, 98). This is yet another example of how a deepening recognition of interdependence, endorsed in the DDV and ES, softens the perception of separation and competition, opening the doors to transformative collaboration by facilitating deeper trust in the capacities and vision of oneself and others. This is likewise a recipe for the resilience brown claims necessary for our theories and application of liberating transformation.

Despite these being conceptual and dualistic approaches to conduct with others, they become productive for Dunne, and transformative for our purposes, when supported by innate and universal aspects of mind, bridging the conceptual and non-conceptual; dual and non-dual. In this way, whether returning to so-called 'reflexive awareness,' 'non-conceptual wisdom,' or one's own 'nature,' these authors agree transformative conduct must result from a premise and process of transformative knowledge that unfolds in one's own perception and reality.[65] Whether the goal is collective liberation or cooperation, transformative conduct as such must and can challenge the dualistic structures of both individual perception and shared external circumstances

[65] It is important to note here that the language of 'reflexive awareness' (Tib, *rang rig*) became popularized in the 8th century with Dharmakīrti, while the language of 'non-conceptual wisdom' emerged in the 4th century with the DDV. By the 8th century, it is widely acknowledged that non-conceptual cognitions are not inherently non-dual, which may be the source of this refreshed terminology. Though these terms display uncanny similarities in being both non-conceptual and non-dual innate aspects of mind, a discussion of whether or not these are to be treated identically is beyond the scope of this work. Rather than suggesting a synonymous relationship between these and brown's notion of 'nature,' I am instead interested in how these three iterations of support can mutually enrich each other and the potential impact of diverse efforts.

responsible for suffering and injustice.[66] This is hopeful in being intrinsically possible and universally beneficial.

While Dunne's focus on implications may be expressed in terms of an individual and groups' capacity to remain reflexively aware of themselves as part and apart of group dynamics in order to regulate and succeed in shared objectives, the dead-ends of this kind of practice when engaged in incorrectly are directly aligned with the DDV. Such dead-ends are predicated on confusing reflexive awareness of this kind with treatment of one's inherent subjectivity as an object itself, which is false in such subjectivity being "by nature not an object; it is the standpoint from which objects are known" (Dunne 2018, 100). Instead, he explains that productive inquiry into one's state of subjectivity requires that "one must drop the conceptualized 'recognition' of an objectified subjectivity and once again allow reflexivity to do its work by making implicit features of subjectivity become explicitly apparent" (Dunne 2018, 99). Transformative conduct according to the DDV and ES are thus united by Dunne's work in a dance "between the implicit awareness provided by reflexivity and the explicit awareness that occurs with a moment of recognition" i.e. mindfulness (Dunne 2018, 99). It is by dancing between personal accountability and group engagement that individual transformation benefits the whole.

iii. *Transformative conduct is the cause of collective liberation*

If transformative conduct is intended to benefit others, it must necessarily include their experiences and thus demands cooperation and collaboration. As Dunne describes, successful cooperation will require enhancement in "empathy and perspective taking" rooted in a

[66] On both a personal and group level of practice, these works each suggest that an infallible support for transformation does not require the creation of something new, but as Dunne explains, "enhancing and innate feature of consciousness while also using techniques that make dualistic structures subside" (2015, 261). We have seen this bi-directional approach to transformation echoed through the DDV and ES.

heightened awareness and receptivity to "intersubjective connectivity" as unfolds experientially as a true-er reality of interdependence (2018, 101). In other words, even cooperation with others begins with one's own mind, stemming from a cooperative *cognition* that blurs the lines of self and other. As was mentioned by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, this where Buddhism can be an indispensable tool for ensuring the success of global thriving, by highlighting the role and potential of individual perception in our experience of reality. I suggest, together with scholars like Denis, that the DDV in particular can serve as a powerful Buddhist representative within contemporary discussions of liberation and justice, and play a pivotal role in recalibrating modern efforts to actualize this. Buddhist tradition and the DDV can do this by placing the onus on the individual to enact the transformation within themselves that they seek in the world, recognizing that this is the premise and process by which the world transforms (ex. Gandhi). Harkening back to brown's conviction that transformation at any level is transformation on every level, my argument is two-fold: that the result of transformation depicted in the DDV is all-inclusive and in that context acts as the cause of lasting and collective liberation; and thus that its insights can likewise unite and support the diverse aims of beings long before divergence.[67]

Support for employing the DDV in this type of synthesis can be found in Brunnhölzl's remark that the DDV's presentation of fundamental transformation as supported by non-conceptual wisdom is "the most detailed discussion of this topic in Buddhist literature"

[67] This second point stems from a panel I attended in 2018 regarding prison abolition. There were self-identified abolitionists and reformists on the panel discussing the ethics of incarceration. At one point an abolitionist on the panel said something along the lines of "whether or not we disagree about the end goal, we agree that the present situation needs to improve. I feel we can work together for lifetimes before needing to disagree." Here I am refreshing this perspective, particularly persuaded by the potential of transformative frameworks in the DDV and ES to: unite people in solidarity around the universal reality of suffering and the wish for happiness, the perception of others as comrades rather than enemies, and the perception of ourselves as capable and responsible agents of change.

(2012, 50). The DDV further fortifies the potential of this preeminent, non-dual, and universal aspect of mind as a support for collective liberation by asserting that the final fundamental transformation delivers one beyond all dichotomies.

> […It] refers to suchness divested of [dualistic] stains, where all appears simply as suchness," a reality in which the perceived dichotomies responsible for suffering—'the shared and unshared abodes'—are utterly and completely transcended (DTC 2013, 32).[68]

Though Dunne and brown both describe conducive shifts in perception and conduct to be a direct outcome of clarified knowledge, the DDV proposes a framework even more radical and natural—namely, that transformative conduct is an intrinsic and effortless feature of irreversible wisdom. Since the result of fundamental transformation in the DDV is in fact, the direct experience of reality devoid of conceptual and emotional fetters, it is uncompounded and so is its activity.

In sum, in the DDV there is no aspect or characteristic of perception and experience left untouched by the fundamental transformation. This speaks to the unlimited capacity of understanding—whether mistaken or purified; perceiving *saṃsāra* or *nirvāna*; accompanied by suffering or the transcendence of suffering. Maitreya attests to this in the initial verse summarizing the subject matter in its inclusivity, and Mipham reiterates this in writing, "there are no phenomena whatsoever that are not included in the basic field of phenomena" (DTC 2013, 36). "Therefore," he continues, "when this fundamental transformation takes place, there is an

[68] Dharmachakra Translation Committee's translation of the commentary by Ju Mipham, in the section commenting on the above section of verse reads, "To arrive at the identity of suchness, the way all phenomena truly are, refers to suchness being divested of all adventitious stains. Once this has taken place, the way things appear completely matches the way they actually are. In other words, all phenomena appear as nothing but suchness. Moreover, at this time, fundamental transformation has reached a point of completion. Though this fundamental transformation is indeed present from the first ground onward, on this final ground this transformation is final and complete" (2015, 33).

inconceivable range of qualities within the undefiled basic field, corresponding to the totality of subjects in all their variety" (DTC 2013, 36). Here, the result of transformation includes knowledge of both appearance and reality, everything and everyone, from which activity is inherently skillful in embodying and evoking liberation.[69]

From the perspective of a perception bound by dualism, this may seem like a grandiose account of fantastical experience, an experience radically different from one's own. At the same time, the unfolding of wisdom predicated on understanding in its two operative aspects logically demands such a totality of transformation. This suggests that there is a promise. Gradually, felt choices about what to believe and what to do will inevitably disappear with the progression of understanding on the path—whether dominantly informed by the DDV or ES. This shift can occur as the perceived chasm between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāna*, self and other, is traversed by the bridge of knowledge itself. Great hope, relief, and resilience can thus be found in realizing the preeminence and innate capacity of knowledge through the Buddhist path of transformation. As we have seen, this framework of transformative knowledge is not limited to the domain of the DDV and its closest-considered contexts. Since the result is expressed through transformative conduct with beings in the world, then in fact there is no limit to relevance. Through reliance on conceptual understanding transformation can be envisioned. But is through reliance on non-

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[69] This is discussed in detail in the DDV in terms of accomplishing the three enlightened dimensions, or *kayas*, of Buddhahood, whereby the initial grounds of self, other, and the world are experienced in their purified reality together with the unfolding of perfect qualities. Mipham's commentary summarizes this experience in terms of accessing the pure realms/domains of enlightened beings, beholding all phenomena through unsullied awareness, being perfectly equipped to guide beings to freedom, and possessing a complete knowledge that affords one the ability to benefit others (see DTC 2013, 38-39). In other words, one's body, speech, and mind become conduits of liberating truth. To avoid the risk of an incomplete digression that may lead readers to a materialist reductionist interpretation of the three kayas as yet another 'Buddhist' iteration of duality, or encourage argument amongst Buddhists about the correct definition of enlightenment, I instead encourage further research regarding ways to translate the three *kayas* to non-Mahāyāna and non-Buddhist audiences that avoid these pitfalls.

conceptual wisdom that we are able to embody and co-create what brown deems “the just and liberated worlds we long for” (2017, 3).

Conclusion

In the foreword to Ken Jones' *The New Social Face of Buddhism*, Kenneth Kraft writes, "As we grope our way through the maze of modernity, just to see things more clearly would be a blessing and a source of hope" (2003, ix). I am in agreement with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and others that Buddhism and its ancient scriptural traditions can be invaluable tools toward arriving at this clarity. Through emphasizing universal aspects of experience rooted in individual mind, the resonance of Buddhist texts like the DDV is not muted by space and time. To demonstrate this, the present research draws primarily from frameworks of transformation offered in Maitreya's *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, a 4th century Indian Buddhist text, and from adrienne maree brown's book *Emergent Strategy*, to explore the potential of collective liberation as a result of embracing our true interconnectedness within a world of perceived and reinforced binaries.

The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* offers an understanding of the binaries of dualistic perception, regarded as a symptom of ignorance and the root cause of suffering. *Emergent Strategy*'s understanding of binaries further focuses on the ways binaries are both institutionalized and reinforced by practices of separation and abstraction, specifically within movements of social justice. Both frameworks offer a diagnosis of bondage as stemming from assumptions and habitual efforts misaligned with reality. Both works also offer prescriptions of liberation that presuppose the innate capacity of freedom once engaged in the work of better understanding and uniting with reality. Until now this research has explored the asymmetric natures of bondage and liberation, inviting readers to consider how an understanding of their

shared and unshared predicaments have fecundity for cultivating practices of fundamental transformation and actualizing collective liberation.

The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and *Emergent Strategy* together suggest that any attempt to transform outer circumstances is best ensured by attending to one's own perception, first and foremost. This is because of the influence of individual perception on one's experience of reality, shared and unshared, and their innate capacity to transform these experiences through better understanding their own individual process of perception.[70] Engagement with individual perception as prescribed in these these works reveals the interdependent relationship between outer-perceived objects and the inner-perceiving mind; the interconnectedness of self and others. Both works are firm in expressing that a clarified understanding of reality as mutually constructed is then the most fertile ground for efforts of liberating transformation, regardless of scale (ex. fractals). The DDV and ES in partnership, demonstrate how modern assessments of reality, as well as current attempts at improvement, can be informed and strengthened by ancient works dealing the universality of suffering and liberation as sourced in mind. Together they demonstrate our world's capacity for collective liberation—complete freedom from the inner and outer causes of suffering—here and now.

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[70] It has been discussed in Chapter 1 how habitual assumptions about the way things are, typically based on how they appear to individual consciousnesses, is ordinarily dualistic. If uninterrupted, such dualistic perception (self vs. other; good vs. bad; us vs. them) can only reinforce a stronger sense of self, separation, scarcity, and competition as it struggles to re-affirm itself through even supposedly collaborative aims. When closer investigation of individual perception reveals no referent by which to substantiate duality, direct experience of reality is possible such that the distinction of self and other is blurred or else absent. Therefore, all are included in this experience, and knowledge of this becomes the support for transformation. Stanza 48 of the DDV summarizes this understanding of the absence of duality. Denis' translation reads: "The comprehension [of the changes of "what one relies on" is gained] through the use of a reasoning mind. Any bodhisattva, [defined here as] one who longs to enter into fundamental non-conceptual intelligence, uses a reasoning mind in this way: without the recognition of suchness, there is elaboration which is without reality. [These elaborations gather in] what is called the "collection of seeds'' and this produces the appearance of duality which is devoid of existence. [This collection of seeds then] serves as a base and causes a diversity [of experience]. This is how [phenomena which] depend on causes and their effect manifest in spite of the absence of existence" (Denis 2013, ch. 10 p. 1).

Readers are encouraged by both the DDV and ES to look closely at their own perception, and to discern appearance from reality as the premise and pathway of transformation. This involves becoming familiar with one's own assumptions about the way things are, and beginning to infuse space between that initial assessment and their otherwise habitual responses. Through the process of cultivating our two-fold capacity to know appearance and directly experience reality, the result is that one's existence becomes increasingly transformative for oneself and others. Both works are aligned in asserting: i. It is possible to know reality better than individuals currently do; ii. One's misalignment with reality ensures suffering; iii. Coming to better understand reality allows individuals to transform experience for the better; iv. A better understanding of reality is defined by the perception-turned-experience of interdependence and interconnection; and v. Reuniting with one's innate capacity to know reality (wisdom) ensures provisional and lasting transformation. This research is then focused on uniting a few past and present voices who have identified the mind as the true basis of transformation.

This present work attempts to join discussions bringing specifically the Buddhist scriptural tradition to frontiers of social justice and collective liberation. Inspired by global cries for peace, justice, and liberation, this research is lifting up two voices harmonized by the assessment that we have all we need to have all we need; we are just mistaken on both fronts. Both the DDV and ES therefore set forth a premise, process, and result of transformation that aims in the direction of collective liberation while placing the onus on individual perception, recognizing self-inquiry as the source of lasting benefit for oneself and others. The DDV's discussion of non-conceptual wisdom in particular offers nuance to the notion of 'collective,' whereby individuals do not acquiesce to a collective perception but rather apply individual

efforts for the success of the collective. The DDV offers a living pathway to accessing this wisdom as the ultimate support for transformation, one that necessarily includes the Mahāyāna goal of enlightenment but also brown's vision of justice.[71] It is for this reason, that the DDV has been echoing outside monastery walls and gaining traction in present discourses around policy and justice.

The implications of transformation as mapped in the DDV are limited only by a lack of application across other disciplinary fields and movements of collective liberation. In an article published in 2021, Diane Denis utilizes the DDV's framework of fundamental intelligence to explore possible implications on international humanitarian law (IHL), specifically in situations of armed conflict. Interested in the potential for Buddhism and its ancient texts to aid in reevaluating the underlying 'universal' principles of IHL, she argues that IHL has historically failed to address the inner workings of individual consciousness as a premise of universality.[72] In response, Denis explores the potential of the DDV in particular to provide "universal principles in the workings of the mind and in human interactions" by which to reformulate

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[71] In the concluding section of *Emergent Strategy*, brown lists some "Tools for Emergent Strategy Facilitation," offering concrete practices of trust, principles for organizing, protocols across community and formation, efficient consensus decision making, as well as facilitation tools for the various principles of emergent strategy: adaptation, non-linear/iterative, increasing interdependence and decentralization, fractal, transformative justice, and creating more possibility. While each of these is entirely deserving of further study, reflection, and cultivation, I am arguing that the goal and result of transformation in the DDV supports the validity and efficacy of these methods. In return, brown's work offers an indispensable blueprint for translating the Buddhist language of the DDV into contemporary and secular spheres. Therefore, it is through the language of brown, once unpacked through the model of perception presented in the DDV, that both her words and those of the DDV are revitalized such that that we can begin to articulate experiencing the nature of reality in modern contexts.

[72] The quote reads as follows: "The formulation of international humanitarian law (IHL) was influenced by a socially oriented intellectual culture that has often failed to address the inner workings of the individual consciousness. Buddhism's contribution here may be just that: its insistence on the process of cognition as the ground for both the creation of and the liberation from suffering" (Denis 2021, 164).

approaches to conflict (2021, 164).[73] Recalling an earlier statement from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama regarding the capacity of Buddhism and its scriptural tradition to be of universal benefit, Denis is in seeming agreement in writing, "many such ancient texts have something important to contribute to our contemporary world" (2021, 164).

Recalling also His Holiness' assertion that peace will not fall from the sky and must be developed in individual minds, Denis' article fortifies the unique utility of the DDV in this day and age as a blueprint for this development. Citing core principles of the IHL including *distinction*, *proportionality*, and *precaution*, Denis adds that the "exemplary conduct informed by Buddhist principles would possibly require an even greater sense of individual responsibility, for which inner training is necessary" (2021, 165). We have seen this emphasis on personal responsibility along with protocols for inner training in the DDV, brown, Jones, and Dunne, each of them pointing to the liberating promise of interdependence/non-duality from various angles.

Yet here Denis is developing an argument in line with Australian philosopher Chadha, namely that the view of interdependence associated with non-duality "is not only a logical conclusion to analysis, it is *the* preferred ethical stance" (Denis 2021, 172-173). This statement lends support to the perspective of result in the DDV, where transformative conduct is inherently ethical in being inseparable from non-conceptual, non-dual wisdom.[74] By positioning non-duality as both a truer and ethically preferable viewpoint, Denis and Chadha's work also

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[73] The quote reads as follows: "Whether accurate or not about the origin of IHL, the argument against the idea of 'universality' is that although this notion creates possibilities for common-sense agreement, it also triggers culturally specific disagreement. In other words, on the one hand, we have complementary bodies of law such as IHL and the human rights law, which are seeking a universal ground and which should apply to every human being, and on the other, we have the idea that no 'moral' or 'ethical' principles can be made to apply to all cultures" (Denis 2021, 166).

[74] To this point, Denis adds, "In non-dualistic terms, ethics is understood as the actual embodiment of wisdom. From an ideal way of being in the world, it progressively becomes a natural lived embodied experience in action" (Denis 2021, 173).

strengthens brown's vision of transformative justice, which brown agrees stems from the nature of mind and believes "can yield deeper trust, resilience, and interdependence (brown 2017, 150).[75]

Denis thus redefines ethical conduct along Buddhist lines using terms consistent with both the DDV and ES, as "the willingness and commitment to be there with what appears"—without rejecting, fixating on, or being fooled by appearances (2021, 173). In this way, the onus is again on the individual, as assessment of one's own situation is pivotal in the reduction of harm and the creation of liberating circumstances.[76] Yet this mustn't be omnidirectional. Additionally, Denis argues that the views, values, rules, and protocol of humanitarian entities must not exist "simply to impose a particular behavior, but to inform the inherent process of discrimination, the innate capacity for liberation" (2021, 176).

In other words, such entities must appeal to both aspects of understanding—knowledge and wisdom—in order to be successfully transformative. Despite the endless diversity of experiences and aims, shared goals of harm reduction and the creation of liberating circumstances are thus seen to hinge on the co-creation of values and practices that reflect and foster our innate, universal capacities of mind. Situating the process of individual perception as more than just a modicum of universal truth, Denis' work models how a re-centering of individual experience and engagement according to the DDV can contribute to collective aims and universal benefit. This present study would benefit greatly from further research that brings

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[75] We have much to look forward to in the wake of brown's upcoming release, *Loving Corrections*, which promises to be a more detailed exploration of transformative conduct framed around revolutionizing relationships. To be released August 20, 2024 by AK Press.

[76] Drawing from the DDV, Denis adds, "In the best scenarios, this presentation can bring light to one's responsibility in participating in the creation of the best conditions in any situation by recollecting a view of the situation that is conducive to virtue—in other words, manifesting an exemplary conduct, particularly important in difficult, conflicted situations" (Denis, 2021, 173).

knowledge of ancient Buddhist philosophy and practice to modern landscapes, specifically to entities focused on humanitarian aid, government policy, conflict and resolution.

In sum, Denis argues that fundamental intelligence is the soundest support for the reduction of suffering because it is logically coherent, ethically sensible, and ultimately groundless.[77] Though she is speaking specifically to the context of armed conflict, her implications extend far beyond temporary cease-fires, and demonstrate the profundity of consulting ancient wisdom in the face of modern crises. Using the DDV as a guidebook by which individuals can come to know and access innate wisdom, Denis explains how modern efforts can be transformed through an acknowledgment of our own capacity as inseparable from that of all.[78] We are left with the hopeful horizon of a future that is directly benefitted by a syncretic look at past and present perspectives on suffering, liberation, and the process of transformation—as detailed in books and experienced in minds.

This work has been inspired by a conviction that Buddhism and the DDV open the doors to universal benefit through identifying suffering as a fertile ground of solidarity across beings. Despite individuated perceptions, Buddhism asserts that there is similarity in our processes of consciousness and capacities of mind. This unifies beings in terms of both premise and potential, affirming a universal capacity for liberation as sourced from within our individual

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[77] To this point, she writes, "From the DDV's perspective, fundamental intelligence is accessible at all times. It may not be noticed, yet this unconditioned realm of suchness is never beyond reach. Non-duality is the ground from which duality manifests, just as one can say that the infinite embraces finiteness. So, if one is to rely on something conducive to reduce suffering, one needs to rely on this sound and sensible groundless ground. Fundamental intelligence is sound because it can be logically coherent (interestingly resonating with (Francisco) Varela's research); it is sensible because it is conducive to ethical conduct; and it is groundless because it doe snot rely on apparent duality" (Denis 2021, 178).

[78] To this point, she writes, "In practical terms, this means that with appreciation and confidence in one's own capacity to respond adequately to situations, one is already better equipped to face the chaos in one's environment and in one's mind. And with the sense that everyone around is endowed with this same basic nature, dignified conduct becomes evident" (Denis 2021, 178).

delusion. By engaging in a praxis of learning, reflection, and application that increasingly reveals these processes and capacities, beings are afforded an opportunity to transform their individual and collective realities.[79]

[79] Admittedly this research began with a curiosity regarding the relationship between individual processes of consciousness and the creation of social/political structures. Specifically I was interested in exploring parallels between Buddhist notions of cyclic existence (Skt. *saṃsāra*; Tib. *'khor ba*) and capitalism. Though I maintain the importance of such an investigation, I found it an increasingly cynical starting point. In following the asymmetrical relationship between suffering and liberation as developed in the DDV, it became equally valid to approach collective liberation as our birthright; namely, the unification and revelation of individual capacities of mind. In this way attention is shifted from the predominance of confusion and suffering to the preeminence of wisdom and lasting happiness, thus providing a more hopeful version of the here and the horizon.

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