This reflective, scholarly work was written during the aftermath of World War II, following the author’s return to Sri Lanka, after having spent the years 1941 to 1946 in a civilian internment camp at Dehra Dun. The present edition is the fourth and reflects what Bhikku Bodhi, the editor, considers to be a clearer explication of the first three editions. It should be noted that the manuscript was written in Pali rather than Sanskrit, so words like kamma, sutta, and dhamma may need to be transposed in the reader’s mind into spelling that may be more familiar; that is, karma, sutra, and dharma, respectively.

Bhikku Bodhi begins this edition with a review of fundamental Abhidhamma philosophy. While these introductory remarks are primarily descriptive, the editor terminates his introductory chapter with an apologia for the value of the author’s work and profundity of thought. Bhikku Bodhi argues that the author has made salient contributions to understanding the Buddha’s teachings (the Abhidhamma) and that even though these teachings were born so long ago, they are, nonetheless, extremely contemporary in their explication of philosophical psychology.

The book’s treatment of consciousness and time is thoroughly Buddhist; however, as readers make their way through the work, they may readily recognize aspects of contemporary Western psychological thought and theory. Phrases like “phenomenal field,” for example, bring to mind the work of phenomenological-humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, and the emphasis on self-knowledge reminds us of Jungian self-realization. The mind is the chief determinant of human destiny in Buddhism, the author instructs us, so the focus on consciousness and its contents is vital to the fundamental knowing of an object in the world. Careful isolation of the object, together with a simultaneous recognition of its relatedness to everything else, is reminiscent of Husserl’s bracketing of objects in the phenomenal field together with the notion of interdependence so thoughtfully propounded by a number of Western psychological thinkers.
Readers can see, while reading this work, that all manner of associations with the work of others arise. It is in this sense that Buddhist Explorations of Consciousness and Time can be rightfully considered synthetic as well as expository of the uniqueness of Buddhist thinking.

Fundamentally, the Abhidhamma argues that the ultimate goal of the Buddha’s teaching is freedom from suffering and craving. The Buddhist system is practical, not utilizing metaphysical concepts such as “soul” to explain the human relationship to a “divine” ontological principle. Buddhist psychology suggests, in fact, that human beings have the capacity to reach enlightenment without recourse to an external divinity. But we must understand the correct methods of behaving and thinking in order to progress toward liberation. We must free our minds from such notions as soul, ego, self, and anything else that we conventionally consider a relatively permanent entity, since no such permanence or “individuality” exists.

At the heart of liberation is the realistic recognition of anatta, the doctrine of the “non-self.” Not only does this doctrine reinforce the idea that nothing is permanent and that nothing is separable from anything else, it also flies in the face of our usual way of thinking about ourselves and others. We must come to understand that there is, in reality, no separation between or among elements in the world, and holding on to the language of “self,” “mine,” and “me” flow in the opposite direction of right thinking. Today’s psychologists might say, in this regard, that it is necessary to “reframe our perceptual sets” in order to release ourselves from false conceptions (Adler’s “fictional finalisms”). Insight comes when we become capable of “seeing” that everything is one—that there is no separation at all. Separation is illusion.

Ultimate insight is not, however, gained primarily through cognitive understanding of these truths; rather, we are set free fundamentally through our experiencing of life as we live it in the moment. Thinking “about” anything is to abstract from that “thing” by putting into verbal abstractions (i.e., words) elements of experience. To know, in the higher sense, may very well mean to not know in the usual sense. At the very least, we must keep cognitive knowledge in its proper place in our lives. Ultimately, the reality of anything is in the experiencing of it. Everything else is illusion.

Everything, it has been said, is related to everything else. It is very important, therefore, to understand the nature of these relations. The social interaction patterns and relationships between people are conditioned upon the internal relations of these persons. By this, Buddhists mean that how we behave externally is a reflection of the degree of balance between and among the elements of our personalities. Hence, the way I treat another mirrors what is going on inside myself and speaks to my degree of balance and psychological development. Moreover, when I am thinking about another person, the mere intention of my consciousness also reflects my inner reality and is, by definition, kammic, affecting the balance of energies in the universe.

The author discusses, at some length, a list of mental constituents, including the spiritual factors. Some of these constituents, such as joy, might arguably fall into the contemporary category of psychological affects, or emotions, rather than strictly mental factors. However, one must recall that, in Buddhism, the mind determines everything, including emotional reactions; hence, the mind is the beginning, or the foundation, of all human experience. Because life is constituted of sometimes complex and diverse realities, we must keep our minds flexible in order to deal appropriately with the demands life places upon us.

Buddhist thinking suggests that, when we are not sufficiently developed, we may become slow to adapt, our thinking may become rigid, and we may take refuge in dogma. Basic habits may begin to rule our lives and behaviors as we fail to respond adequately to life’s complexities. At times, a single faculty may dominate the personality while other valuable faculties are left undeveloped. These problems speak to disharmony in the personality from the Buddhist perspective, but they also have contemporary psychological implications. If one were to synthesize these Buddhist ideas with contemporary psychology, one might argue that, in the first instance, rigidity of thinking, conceptual simplicity, and inflexibility are common components of certain anxiety disorders (i.e., neuroses), and that in the second instance, if the single faculty that is overdeveloped is dysfunctional (e.g., manipulativeness, lying), we are bordering on a discussion of certain personality disorders. Venerable Nyanaponika Thera appears to be discussing aspects of what we today call “abnormal psychology.”

It is vital that we recognize our capacity to become whole, says the author. Non-greed, non-hate, and non-delusion form the anchoring principles for this wholeness. Tranquility, undisturbed by nervous restlessness, is important for a clear mind and flexible interactions. Spon-
taneous and intuitive living are limited when we become enslaved to
close, opinionatedness, and the obstruction of free-flowing energy
through tension. Tranquility is essential for true happiness, peace of
mind, and enlightenment itself. Meditation practice is a primary vehi-
cle for achieving this tranquil state. In fact, anything that disturbs
the mind’s tranquility with agitation should be avoided. With a calm
mind, then, we should embrace the Middle Way, which transcends the
extremes of thought and behavior as well as forms our character in
healthy ways.

Consciousness and time cannot be separated, first of all because
nothing can really be separated from anything else. But, in addition,
this is the case because consciousness occurs in time. Further, the
universe knows no disconnected events, and humans experience “past,
present, and future” in the present. Time, then, is a human construct
that allows us to artificially separate mind-consciousness into units,
but finally, time is an illusion. Everything occurs simultaneously, and
only the present is reality. In the final analysis, consciousness means to
be aware of an object, and the experience of time means being aware
of the apparent movement of an object that we are aware of in
consciousness.

Readers may have noticed that, as I have summarized the
content of this book, I have drawn some parallels between Buddhist
Abhidhamma thinking and contemporary psychological theory
and conceptualization. Venerable Nyanaponika Thera’s work is
appropriate for today’s students of world religions, philosophy,
and psychology since it is, as the editor Bhikku Bodhi has said,
interestingly contemporary. Parts of this book are complicated and
only the present is reality. In the final analysis, consciousness means to
be aware of an object, and the experience of time means being aware
of the apparent movement of an object that we are aware of in
consciousness.

This is a thorough, thoughtful, and respectful treatment of
Buddhist psychology that will benefit those who are willing to
devote the time and energy to understanding not merely what it is
actually saying, but also the numerous connections to Western
thought that are embedded in the text. I would recommend it
especially for those who have already had some background in
philosophical or psychological thought; hence, I would consider the
book appropriate for college sophomores and above. It could easily
be used as a secondary text in any course whose goal is to teach the
fundamentals of Buddhist psychology either primarily or as an
adjunctive epistemology within a broader context. Careful guidance
of students through the more technical and complex parts of
the book may be required, and a general overview of Buddhist
psychology, prior to reading the work, may be helpful. I would
expect most instructors to find that their students will be readily able
to apply any number of Buddhist ideas to their own lives.

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cross-cultural psychologies.

BOOKS RECEIVED
Books listed here were recently received by the editors. Normally,
we do not plan reviews of titles on this list.

ASIA GENERAL
Bhatti, Ghazala. Asian Children at Home and at School: An
Lee, Yok-shiu F. and Alvin Y. So. Asia’s Environmental Move-
ments: Comparative Perspectives. Armonk, New York: M. E.
MacPherson, Kerrie L. Asian Department Stores. Honolulu: Uni-
Morley, James W. Driven By Growth: Political Change in the
Asia-Pacific Region. Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.,
1999.

CHINA AND TAIWAN
Ch’ing-wen, Cheng. Three-Legged Horse. New York: Columbia
Gardella, Robert, Jane K. Leonard and Andrea McElderry, eds.
Huang, Ray. Broadening the Horizons of Chinese History: Dis-
courses, Synthesis, and Comparisons. Armonk, New York: M. E.
Landstrom, Elsie H. Closing the Circle: An American Family in
Lu, Hanfiao. Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the
Early Twentieth Century. Berkeley: University of California Press,
1999.
Yun, Chi. Shadows in a Chinese Landscape: The Notes of a Con-

SOUTH ASIA
Jaffrelot, Christophe. The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India.

SOUTHEAST ASIA
Schafer, John C. Vietnamese Perspectives on the War in Vietnam:
An Annotated Bibliography of Works in English. Yale University

JAPAN
Graham, Patricia J. Tea of the Sages: The Art of Sencha. Hono-
Kita, Sandy. The Last Tosa: Iwasa Katsumochi Matabei, Bridge to
Martin, Peter. The Chrysanthemum Throne: A History of the
Princess Chichibu, Dorothy Britton (trans.). The Silver Drum: A
Winter, Kazuko. Dear Ken-chan: A Letter to Japan. Folkestone,
Kent: Global Oriental, 1996.
Yoshida, Yuki. Whispering Leaves in Grosvenor Square,
Abhidhamma Studies rigorously maps out the inner landscape of the mind to be crossed through Buddhist meditation.

Research News and Opportunities in Science and Theology. "I am greatly honored to welcome this new English edition of Nyanaponika Thera's brilliant work, rendered even more valuable by the addition of an instructive and lucid introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi." - - Prof. P.S. Jaini, UC Berkeley, Buddhist Studies.