

Introduction

Buddhist discussions of memory range from epistemological analyses of the nature of recognition or the mind's ability to store data, to spectacular claims concerning memory of innumerable past lives, memorization of vast volumes, and the reduction of those volumes into highly condensed mnemonic devices. In addition, meditative concentration, which requires that an object be held in mind, has been associated with types of memory by several Buddhist theorists. The special strings of syllables in the Buddhist *dhāraṇīs*, which are used as reminders of philosophical principles, also are associated with kinds of memory. The practices of devotion to, and visualization of, the Buddha involve a variety of memory akin to commemoration. Even the awareness that is enlightenment itself is considered by some traditions to consist in a "mnemonic engagement" with reality, or ultimate truth.¹

Yet, despite this impressive array of phenomena and practices that involve distinctively Buddhist species of memory, many labeled by Sanskrit terms derived from the same verbal root *smṛ* or other roots displaying a similar semantic scope, very little has been written by Buddhologists on memory, with the exception of several articles on the recollection of past lives.² This silence may be attributed to a certain tendency to consider as memory only that which consists expressly in the recollection of previous experience. And because discussion of this sort of memory, at least in theoretical discourse, apparently occurs in but few passages in Buddhist literature, Buddhologists seem to have concluded that Buddhism does not have much to say about memory at all.

But if memory is reduced to recollection, a wide range of mnemonic phenomena that have a central role both in Buddhist practice and thought will be overlooked. Some of these phenomena involve forms of memory that work in concert with recollection; others can be shown to entail types of memory that are not primarily recollective. As several of the studies in the present volume demonstrate, important but hitherto unstudied passages in Buddhist doctrinal literature address explicitly the question of how recollection of past experience is related to some of the other faculties and practices that are also denoted by *smṛti* or other terms. To fail to examine those mnemonic phenomena in the Buddhist tradition that lie at the limits, or on the margins, of what is normally thought to be memory is to miss an opportunity to expand and to deepen our understanding of memory as a whole.

In fact, to restrict memory to recollection would be to reflect a bias that may be associated more with Western strains of thought than with Buddhist

ones themselves. And yet, in several Western academic disciplines and areas of research, including philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, cognitive psychology, and anthropology, increasing attention is being paid to types of memory that do not consist mainly in the recollection of past events, particularly that aspect of recollection associated with the mental representation of an object or episode in the rememberer's personal past. An outstanding example of a type of memory that is not at all recollective is "primary memory," recognized first by William James and Edmund Husserl and since observed in laboratory settings; such memory consists in the initial retention of experience that takes place in a brief stretch of time as the experience retreats from momentary awareness. Also receiving notice is the spectrum of types of memory that are habitual in nature, studied by Henri Bergson and others. Closely related to habit memory is what Edward Casey has called "body memory." The "abstract, timeless knowledge of the world that [a person] shares with others," termed "semantic memory" by Endel Tulving is another form of nonrecollective memory. Well known, of course, are Freud's and his successors' investigations of the vicissitudes of repressed memory traces in psychopathological symptoms; here again, the mnemonic mode is not primarily recollective. Deserving of mention as well are recent anthropological analyses of the embodiment of social memory in cultural processes, material media, and places, in which the emphasis is put upon the performative function of memory in the present, rather than on the mental storage or representation of past events.³

The present volume is in some respects continuous with the growing fascination with the range and manifold nature of memory, of both the recollective and nonrecollective sorts, although the Buddhist traditions treated here are often concerned with mnemonic modes distinct from those that have received the most attention in the West. But even such Buddhist traditions that speak of the commemoration of buddhahood, or that would characterize enlightenment as a memory of ultimate truth, have long had counterparts in Western discussions of memory, from St. Augustine's reflections on human memory of God to Heidegger's discussion of memory as "the gathering of the constant intention of everything that the heart holds in present being."⁴ On another note, a certain mistrust of memory can also be observed to be shared by Western theorists—from Descartes to Nietzsche to Freud—and by Buddhist ones, particularly the Buddhist logicians discussed in Alex Wayman's article in this volume, who consider some types of memory to be unreliable and deceptive.⁵ In the Buddhist case, the devaluation of certain kinds of memory, particularly mundane recollection and the recognition of objects of the past, is to be attributed ultimately to the conviction that these are obstacles to progress on the Buddhist path. Yet once again, when recollection's privileged position as the researcher's paradigm of memory is revoked, it becomes possible to identify other varieties of memory, varieties suggested in

a significant number of areas in Buddhist thought and practice, which are considered beneficial for soteriological development and are deliberately cultivated for that purpose.

The following essays have as their focus the many kinds of memory—they deemed detrimental, beneficial, or neutral—that have been identified in the Buddhist tradition. The sources utilized in these essays include Abhidharmic analysis, sutraic discourse and exegesis, meditation instruction, myth, allegory, and prayer.⁶ One of the striking themes emerging from these essays is the alliance that some Buddhist thinkers forged between types of memory, and the manner in which a present object is noted, identified, and registered during the perceptual process. Such a link is asserted both in theoretical descriptions of ordinary states of mind and in discussions of religious practice in which special sorts of memory are made to inform the act of perception so as to transform it into a salvific experience. Of considerable interest too is the variety of Buddhist traditions in which types of reminders, both linguistic and imagistic, are cultivated in order to engender religiously valued realizations. Commemorative ritual is shown to have a central role in Buddhist practice as well. The issue of how the Buddhists account, or fail to account, for the ability to remember the past also occupies several of the volume's contributors. It is the investigation of these diverse modes and uses of memory in various Buddhist contexts that is the primary aim of this book.

An essay by Edward Casey, author of a recent book entitled *Remembering* that studies memory from a phenomenological perspective, has also been included in the collection.⁷ In *Remembering* Casey contends that memory, once investigated in its philosophical, literary, psychological, and social manifestations, turns out to be far from univocal; hence his treatment in separate chapters of the phenomena of recollection, reminiscing, recognition, reminders, body memory, commemoration, and what he calls "place memory." Casey's response to the papers in the current volume was invited not only because his treatment of the varieties of memory in the West complements the exploration of the multiplicity of the phenomenon in Buddhist terms. It was also thought to be valuable to have a Western philosopher, one who has worked on the subject of memory at length, respond to the distinctive meanings that notions like *smṛti* have in the Buddhist context, notions that might point to some fundamental peculiarities about Buddhist philosophy and religion. Comparative reflections are needed all the more insofar as Buddhologists are still very much engaged in the project of arriving at satisfactory translations and interpretations of primary texts, where the problem of which Western word should render a Buddhist technical term is frequently a vexing one: the translation of many of the most foundational concepts is still not standardized. Sustained investigation of divergences between basic assumptions in Buddhism and other traditions is critical if one is to assess the appropriateness of a given translation. Such investigation is also important if

scholars of Buddhism are to engage in the larger and even more challenging project of entering into genuine conversation with other traditions on philosophical, religious, psychological, or social issues. It is with these various concerns in mind that, in addition to Casey, several of the Buddhologists writing in this volume have considered non-Buddhist Indian and Western traditions in a comparative mode.

Two Meanings of *Smṛti*?

The primary discrepancy obtaining between Buddhist concepts denoted by *smr*-derivatives and Western senses of memory revolves around the significance of the two basic meanings that *smr*-derivatives can have: recollective memory (or more generally, memory of the past), and what is most often rendered as “mindfulness.” The nature of this distinction, and particularly the question as to whether mindfulness should be considered a type of memory at all, are attended to in several of the chapters here. A variety of positions on these issues is represented, with a corresponding range of ways of handling the technical Sanskrit terminology and its translation into English. Several authors have chosen to leave *smṛti* and cognate terms untranslated to avoid adjudicating between the alternate meanings. Both Padmanabh Jaini and Alex Wayman distinguish carefully between the contexts in which *smr*-derivatives (and other terms) mean mindfulness and those contexts in which they mean recollective memory of past objects and experiences. Paul Harrison opines that *anusmṛti*, like *smṛti*, has a range of meanings, finding that its primary sense in the traditions he studies implicate a species of “commemoration” that exceeds personal recollection. Matthew Kapstein has adopted English terms based on the Greek root *mnā*, which, like the Sanskrit *smṛ* (Tib. *dran*), can mean recollection as well as mindfulness. In this Kapstein is asserting that the two senses of *smṛti* (actually Kapstein identifies three distinct senses) are continuous and that the use of the same word for such various meanings in Great Perfection texts is deliberate. He is joined in asserting a close linkage between the varying uses of *smṛti* by Collett Cox, who translates all instances of *smṛti* as “mindfulness,” and who attempts to demonstrate that recollection of the past as such is in fact understood in some schools of Buddhism to be a subtype of mindfulness. Interestingly, Paul Griffiths also finds that the various Buddhist uses of *smṛti*, which he often leaves untranslated, represent what is by and large a single semantic set, although he is in accord with Jaini and Wayman in maintaining a critical distinction between memory of past experiences and mindfulness. For Griffiths, *smṛti* mainly denotes active attention in Buddhism, whereas advertance to the past as this is understood in the West is a quite different matter. Although remem-

bering the past is sometimes discussed in terms of *smṛti*, Griffiths maintains that it is not essential to the meaning of the word as it manifestly is to *memory* in the West. Finally, Gyatso, discussing not *smṛ*- related words but *dhāraṇī*, tends also to employ a single word, *memory* itself, to refer to the variety of types of content of the literal formula, as well as to the types of ways those contents are held in store.

It will be noted that the decision to use the word *memory* (along with the adjective *mnemonic*) in a broad way for the purpose of discussion in this Introduction, so as to accommodate recollection, reminding, mindfulness, holding in mind, memorization, recognition, and commemoration, reflects the position that these various phenomena have features that qualify them for a single general label. However, it is undebatable that important distinctions are to be drawn between types of mnemonic practices and faculties, as is recognized even by the authors who attempt to establish a link between them. Cox, for example, differentiates religious praxis from mundane psychological functions; Kapstein draws distinctions between various types of “mnemonic engagement” in cosmogonic and soteriological terms; and Gyatso distinguishes several kinds of contents of *dhāraṇī* memory.

Meditative Mindfulness and Mnemonic Engagement with Enlightenment

The classic instance of what is usually translated as “mindfulness” in Buddhism would be the practice of the four applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*). The history and operating principles of this practice are traced out in some detail as the starting point for Cox’s study. In this instance *smṛti* is what is normally thought of as meditation: the mind is focused, concentrated, fastened on a mark. In this mindful observing of the objects of meditation, the practitioner observes their impermanence, lack of self, and so forth. Because mindfulness comes to be associated closely with insight (*prajñā*), which for Buddhism performs the critical function of destroying the defilements, and because that destruction is synonymous with enlightenment, mindfulness is in these cases affiliated with the realization of enlightenment itself.

According to Kapstein’s analysis of the Great Perfection tradition, soteriologically beneficial mindfulness may be divided into that required for study and meditation and that which forms the noetic content of enlightened awareness. The latter thus constitutes a special type of mnemonic engagement, consisting in the reflexivity of primordial awareness as such. According to the Great Perfection exegetes, this awareness is at the ground of our existence as well as at the apex of the Buddhist path. Because it has been forgotten by deluded sentient beings, its recovery through meditative practice is a sort of

memory, despite its nonintentional character. But it is also the very self-referentiality of this awareness that makes it mnemonic in nature, and the Great Perfection's thematization of such reflexivity constitutes a distinctive contribution to Buddhist discussions of the nature of memory.

As is evident in a number of studies in this volume, including those by Harrison, Gethin, Kapstein, Cox, and Gyatso, the realizations engendered through various Buddhist practices of mindfulness and retention of teachings are preceded by the learning of doctrinal principles, memorization of linguistic formulations and images, and cultivation of meditative skills. However, it is not on the ground of such a temporal sequence alone that the resulting realizations are sometimes characterized in terms of memory. The Buddhist practitioner is not thought merely to be recollecting his prior religious training when he "holds in mind" or "remembers" the Dharma, or emptiness, or awareness, or when he commemorates buddhahood. Rather, the sorts of memory operative in such cases are akin to what have been called "semantic memory" and "habit memory" in the West, where previously learned categories and skills inform present experience without being recollected as such.⁸ But in the Buddhist varieties, even more pertinent than the role of previous training is the sense of "recognizing" the ultimate truth of what is realized, and of gaining personal mastery and an internalized, thorough-going identification with it.⁹ Additionally, in those Buddhist traditions that call upon some notion of "buddha nature" (best represented in this volume in Kapstein's study of the Great Perfection), the practitioner may be said to be remembering buddhahood, or emptiness, or self-reflexive awareness, because he is felt in some sense to have been already imbued with such realization anyway, independent of all training. In such a view, learning and memorization of techniques are but aids in recovering what has been lost track of or obscured due to adventitious defilement.

Connections Between Mindfulness, Perception of Present Objects, and Recollection of the Past

Cox is interested in a link that was explicitly established between meditative mindfulness and mundane recollection in the Sarvāstivāda tradition. Although mindfulness in the early Abhidharma was classified exclusively as a virtuous factor, implying that it occurs only in those states of mind that are religiously valued such as meditation, mindfulness came to be reclassified by the Northern Abhidharma school of the Vaibhāṣikas/Sarvāstivādins as present in all states of mind, be they good, bad, or neutral. This reclassification reflects the view that every mental event consists in a conglomeration of simultaneous factors, instead of the serial view of mental functioning,

whereby only one factor operates at a time. *Smṛti*'s inclusion in the group of ubiquitous factors proves for Cox first of all that it is now being understood not exclusively as an occasional meditative state, but rather as one of the basic elements of all mental functioning. This is the basis of an assertion by the Sarvāstivādin exegete Saṅghabhadra that it is mindfulness's fixing, directed at a present object, that makes that object's later recollection in memory possible at all. Further, he claims that this same fixing is what functions to retain the object over time so that it can be recollected later. Here then is forged a connection between mindful fixing upon present objects, and recollection, which also functions by virtue of such fixing.

A related point is made by Nyanaponika Thera on the basis of the Theravāda tradition. Nyanaponika's contribution is the only one in the volume reprinted from a previous publication; it was originally written as part of the author's subcommentary to the *Dhammsaṅgaṇi*, and was meant to be in conformity with the Theravāda tradition.¹⁰ The essay suggests a critical dimension of the early Buddhist understanding of memory of past objects. Nyanaponika's discussion focuses not on the Vaibhāṣika notion of dharmas present in all states of mind, but on a category from one of Buddhism's oldest doctrinal strata, namely, the skandhas, or aggregates. He argues that memory was not listed as one of the dharmas because it was already included in the aggregate of *saṃjñā* (Pāli *saññā*). It should be noted that Nyanaponika, influenced by a Buddhological convention no longer current because it is not sufficiently precise, renders *saññā* as "perception," in the broad sense of this term that connotes the perception of an object in light of a conception or notion (indeed, the other contributors to this volume translate *saṃjñā* as "conception," or occasionally, "recognition.") Nyanaponika's discussion shows that *saṃjñā* is what might be termed *perception-as*; it consists in assigning an object a label, classifying it in a category, seeing it *as* something and so forth, and it is to be distinguished from the Buddhist logicians' understanding of *pratyakṣa* ("direct perception") discussed below that lacks conceptuality altogether. Nyanaponika identifies two types of *saññā* that are suggested in Theravāda sources, and both involve kinds of memory. One consists in the explicitly memorial act of recognizing an object that has already been noticed previously; such recognition occurs on the basis of the object's distinguishing mark. The other is the "making" or identifying of such a mark itself; this occurs in every act of "fully perceiving" or conceptualizing an object, according to Theravāda doctrine, even a new object never noted before. But as Nyanaponika points out, this fixing upon and registering of an object's marks already involves a rudimentary type of memory: the object must be maintained in mind, or "remembered," over several [sub-] moments in order for the identifying and registering of the mark to take place; further, the label or category by virtue of which such a mark is identified is itself remembered

from previous acts of conception. And finally, this mark will be what is grasped later when the object is recognized again. Thus Nyanaponika finds that it is the process of fully perceiving/conceiving a present object that memorializes it and is central to the occurrence of memory, even though the Buddhist sources he cites do not call this *smṛti*.

Another link that Cox locates between mindfulness and recollection emerges in a dispute about the relationship between meditative insight and mindfulness, concerning whether they occur simultaneously or whether one precedes the other. Vasubandhu, in his influential *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, asserts that mindfulness follows insight, functioning to retain and fix what was first penetrated by insight. Cox understands this assertion to imply that even in the flow of meditation itself, a retention akin to that in mundane recollection of the past is already occurring, this retention being the same principle that allows an object to be held for years.

The idea that holding on to the thread (to use one of Nyanaponika's metaphors) is critical in many mental acts is also evident in other Buddhist doctrines. For example, Jaini, whose article introduces the problem of memory of the past in the Abhidharma literature as a whole, suggests that the "having the same object" moment of the Theravāda "mental series" could also perform the function of registering and consigning the object of perception to memory. However, it is only in Northern Abhidharmic analyses that the object of *smṛti* is stated explicitly to be of the past. Griffiths supplies several critical Yogācāra passages from Sthiramati and other sources on this issue. Here the reader will note an interesting suggestion of ambiguity in Sthiramati's position, whereby Griffiths and Jaini are able to read the same statement in a different way than Cox. Whereas for Cox the holding and nonloss (*asampramoṣa*) of a past object mentioned by Sthiramati is an element of mundane psychological states, Griffiths and Jaini understand this nonloss to be primarily a matter of meditation; that is, as referring to a lack of distractions from the appointed object of concentration. Another difference in interpretation concerns the implications of the Vaibhāṣika classification of *smṛti* among the mental factors that occur in all mental states; although Cox sees this development as evidence of the increasingly psychological orientation of Abhidharma analyses, Jaini maintains that since memory of the past does not always occur, the *smṛti* that is a ubiquitous mental factor cannot be identified as memory of this sort.

Cox, Jaini, and Griffiths are in agreement that meditative categories provide the overarching framework for Buddhist psychological analysis. Indeed, not only did the Buddhist virtuosi recommend meditative concentration as the optimal condition for reaching buddhahood, they also investigated the nature of mundane mental states while *in* meditation. Thus it is perhaps to be expected that meditational terminology would have influenced their descrip-

tion of all mental states, even the mundane mental states of those who are far from ever having attempted meditation themselves.

A final point concerning the relationship between the various sorts of memory in Buddhism emerges in many of the studies here; namely, that they affect each other. As already suggested, Harrison's study of the commemoration of the Buddha would indicate that memorization of attributes of the Buddha must precede the salutary effects that the act of commemoration itself is thought to engender, especially the personal identification with those attributes. Similarly, the use of the *mātikās* discussed by Rupert Gethin requires an initial memorization of mnemonic lists in order to achieve the more profound memory needed to preach the Dharma. The realization of *dhāraṇī* memory also involves an initial learning of conventions. Sometimes the direction of influence goes from the meditative to the more mundane: as both Donald Lopez and Alex Wayman demonstrate, the feat of remembering large sections of one's personal past require meditative mindfulness as a necessary condition; in Cox's article it is shown that doctrines associated with meditative concentration historically led to doctrines describing ordinary psychological states; the Gyatso reports the Tibetan exegete Rdo Grub-chen's claim that remembering emptiness clears the head so as to allow for memory of specific texts. Griffiths shows how meditative mindfulness serves as an antidote to the deleterious self-absorption that memory of one's personal past is thought to entail. We can also see the flip side of this point in Kapstein's findings concerning the Great Perfection, where the loss of primordial awareness of the ground constitutes the first of all mnemonic phenomena, a loss that leads to the sort of discursive memory that in turn can obstruct salvific mnemonic engagement.

Interestingly, the Buddhist tendency to subordinate recollection of the past to profound mnemonic awareness may be contrasted to Lopez's analysis of the Buddha's night of enlightenment: here an act of diachronic memory par excellence, that is, a recollection of infinite past lives (albeit of a special, valued sort and itself already conditioned by meditative mindfulness) in fact sets the stage for buddhahood itself. Thus it would appear that some personal memories of the past have substantial soteriological benefits. Lopez meditates on this issue at length in the opening essay of this volume, noting that here "it is not a case of memory but of the mythology of memory." As Paul Demiéville and Gregory Schopen have already demonstrated, the Buddhist tradition itself has not assigned sacred status to the memory of past lives as such, but Lopez maintains that as part of Buddhism's founding myth its significance needs to be explored. Lopez critically reviews several theories concerning this significance, especially that of Mircea Eliade. More suggestive for Lopez is Freud's notion of "screen memories," which can account for the flat and formulaic quality of the Buddha-to-be's recollection noticed also by

Griffiths. In accord with this notion, Lopez memorably suggests, perhaps the Buddha “needed to remember in order to forget.”

Remembering the Past: The Paucity of Buddhist Analyses

The first Buddhist analysis of the mechanism of memory of the past as such seems to occur in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, an early North Indian collection of Abhidharma texts. The analysis was developed by Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*; it is summarized here by Jaini and also considered by Griffiths. But recollection as well as other types of memory already had long been implicated in several domains of Buddhist practice, if not discussed or described theoretically. A variety of types of Buddhist recollection is surveyed in Wayman’s chapter, including the already-mentioned recollection of past lives.

Griffiths finds the descriptions of memory of past lives disappointing. Indeed, one might expect such passages to explore self-consciousness and subjectivity, but they do not, at least not in Indic literature. Griffiths is correct in noting that a systematic phenomenology of remembering as a whole is almost completely absent in Buddhism, despite Sthiramati’s use of a suggestive phenomenological category, *ākāra*. Even those passages that may be discovered in Buddhist literature that discuss recollection in most cases are terse, dwarfed by other concerns in Buddhist epistemology and psychology.

Griffiths suggests a number of reasons why recollective memory in particular never received the interest that so many other phenomena did in the Abhidharma. One such reason is related to his intriguing theory that the purported memory of past lives in Buddhism should be described more properly as consisting in active contemplative attention; the fact that the events attended to in this contemplation occurred in the past is not a central component of the active attention involved. According to Griffiths, buddhas don’t engage in remembering their personal past as this is understood in all of its phenomenological richness in the West. (And further, as he has argued elsewhere, they can’t).¹¹ And since Buddhists are interested only in emulating buddhas, they are not interested in studying recollective memory. There is merit in this point, and yet it does not fully explain the absence of sustained discussion of the topic, because, for example, buddhas also do not have defilements, yet there is a considerable amount of investigation in Buddhist literature into the nature of defilements.

A different reason for the paucity of Buddhist accounts of memory of the past is also considered in this volume, concerning which Jaini, Griffiths, and Cox each make valuable contributions. This has to do with the widely held conviction that memory of what is past can be possible only if there is some

sort of enduring subjective substratum; the fact that memory occurs at all would, according to this theory, prove that such a substratum exists. This constitutes a serious challenge to the Buddhist doctrine that a substratum or enduring self is an illusion, and it is explicitly raised by several non-Buddhist Indian schools and by some Buddhist sects as well. Jaini shows that it is just this challenge that is the principal occasion for the Buddhist account of memory of the past in the first place. But the Buddhists did not give such an account often, and the suggestion is clear: perhaps they shied away from considering the issue of how the past can be remembered because its discussion would give their critics an opening to attack the central Buddhist theory of no-self.

The Buddhists, however, do not concede that the occurrence of memory of the past proves that there must be an enduring self. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* account describes a memory in which both the remembered content and the rememberer are causally connected and part of the same stream as their past identities, yet are not identical with those past identities. Griffiths points out that Vasubandhu's theory does not supply an explanation of how, and where, the traces of objects that are as yet unremembered persist; such traces would have to be available so as to provide the basis for the resemblance or relation to the original object that Vasubandhu claims is noted when the remembering occurs. Recourse to the metaphors of the "store consciousness," "seeds," and "perfuming tendencies," which reach full development in the Yogācāra texts, would provide such an explanation, both of the place, and the mode of persistence, of latent memories. But as Griffiths indicates, the store consciousness would seem to amount to an enduring substance with attributes, and hence a surrender of the Buddhist theory of no-self; indeed, Yogācāra theory has been critiqued at some length by the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosopher Candrakīrti. According to Cox, the problems entailed by the Yogācāra's store consciousness and unrealized potentialities are circumvented in the Sarvāstivāda account of memory of the past. The Sarvāstivādins claim that actualized, instead of latent, mindfulness of the past object continues to be repeated in successive moments, as part of the entire mental "bundle." This mindfulness then provides the basis for a particular act such as recollection, which, as in Vasubandhu's theory, occurs only when the right combination of conditions obtain, some of which are external to the rememberer. At issue here would be the hallmark Sarvāstivāda doctrine that everything always exists; since the Sarvāstivādins also are laying claim to the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, they are invoking a pair of doctrines that are difficult to reconcile. Still another possible place for a theory of remembering the past in Buddhism is ingeniously devised by Jaini, based on the Theravāda "mental series" doctrine—albeit with the addition of a few modifications that contradict that doctrine's central presuppositions!

Ultimately, the issues at stake for a Buddhist account of memory are not limited to memory, but pertain to any aspect of personal identity, since Buddhism's no-self doctrine does not allow for an essential, enduring element of any sort. Yet, given the problems that a theory of an enduring substratum entails (for example, how could a substance that is subject to change with respect to its parts or properties be said to endure?), its proponents also encounter difficulties in accounting for the occurrence of memory of the past, difficulties a Buddhist such as Vasubandhu does not hesitate to exploit.

Finally, a further proposal as to why memory of the past as such receives little attention in Buddhist epistemology deserves consideration. According to Nyanaponika, if the primary distinguishing feature of memory is that its object is of the past, it would not be of particular interest to the authors of the *Dhammasaṅgāṇī*, who did not classify states of mind according to the temporality of those states' objects. If the issue of time is not of central importance, it follows that memory would be considered in terms of its mode of operation, which for many Buddhists is closely aligned with mindfulness, rather than in terms of its occasional manifestation as recollection of particular past objects.

Critiques of Memory

Even if not sufficient to explain why Buddhists rarely discuss memory of the past as such, there are reasons, emerging in this volume, as to why Buddhists do not value mundane recollection. One such reason is articulated in Rdo Grub-chen's dhāraṇī theory: recollection, which in this case refers to the memory of specific verbal statements that one has heard, is not only limited, but also superficial, failing to come to grips with the "profound situation" that is the content of the most enlightened type of memory. The basic premise of Rdo Grub-chen's argument is more fully formulated in terms of Kapstein's Great Perfection study (and this is no accident, as Rdo Grub-chen was deeply influenced by the Great Perfection tradition): the most authentic mnemonic engagement is that which engages the ground of primordial awareness; any other sort of mnemonic activity/cogitation is a distraction. But even if such a primordial ground is not admitted, as it is not in the so-called first and second "turnings of the wheel" in Buddhism, memories of particular things are widely perceived to be distractions from soteriologically beneficial praxis; this is seen as early as the scriptural references to "remembrance and intention rooted in ordinary life" that need be abandoned in order to practice mindfulness.¹²

That certain sorts of memory are classified pejoratively as types of discursive thought (*vikalpa*) is evident in many Buddhist texts. Wayman's essay in this volume draws attention to several important passages that explain why

some sorts of memory are excluded by the Buddhist logicians from the category of “authoritative source of knowledge.” One variety of memory so excluded is mundane recognition, which involves the identification of something perceived in the present with something perceived in the past. Since the Buddhists believe that everything is in flux, and therefore different from moment to moment, such an identification must, strictly speaking, be false. In fact, it is precisely the act of ignoring this flux that makes possible the superimposition of an essential, enduring identity such as “I” onto a “stream,” this in turn leading to misguided emotions such as the “conceit that I am.” This is the principal error pinpointed by Griffiths as the danger, from the Buddhist perspective, attendant upon recollection; yet for Lopez the perception of this error would give memory of past lives educational value.

To the degree that language is viewed as inaccurate and misleading in Buddhism, the fact that some types of memory are connected with verbal articulation becomes another reason for the denigration of mnemonic phenomena. Mundane recognition, for example, often entails the articulation of the semantic or conceptual identity it imputes. Even mindfulness comes, in some readings, to be associated with verbal noting or chatter, one of the senses of *abhiḷāpana* that Cox documents as contributing to the secularization of mindfulness. In a set of verses from the *Pramāṇavārttika* presented here by Wayman, recollection is contrasted with “direct perception” (*pratyakṣa*), which for the Buddhist logicians does not involve language or discursive thought, but attends instead to unarticulable and unique characteristics. Direct perception, unlike recollection, is considered in this tradition to be an authoritative source of knowledge. Wayman also discusses a difference between recollective memory and sense perception that is indicated both by Dharmakīrti and by Śāntarakṣita: the senses perceive things that are real and possess efficacy, whereas recollective memory concerns an object that is gone, or is merely a sign, both of which are deprived of efficacy. Because of memory’s engagement with signs, language, and general categories, its mode of operation is more like that of inference, the second type of authoritative source of knowledge for the Buddhist logicians, than like direct perception, although memory is not admitted as a valid type of inference either. The Buddhist logicians compare several types of memory with direct perception, from which category they adamantly exclude memory, reserving direct perception as a source of knowledge completely devoid of discursive thought and language.¹³

The Conjoining of Memory and Perception in Buddhist Practice: Mindful and Self-Reflexive Looking; Commemorative Visualization; Reminders

Whereas the Buddhist logicians are at pains to distinguish mundane recognition and memory-as-discursive thought from what they consider to be

authentic perception, certain discussions of Buddhist practice recommend a drawing together of mnemonic engagement and perception in the larger sense of this term, so as to make possible a mode of perception that is indeed informed by memory, albeit a sort of memory that is not vilified but valorized. Perception is the mode in which the applications of mindfulness operate; the meditator is instructed to observe (*anu-paś*) the four objects of that practice while maintaining mindfulness and awareness. Great Perfection instructions also use the verb *to look/regard/perceive* (*lta*) for what is optimally a non-intentional perception that takes on a reflexive character: here perception and mnemonic engagement with the percept's primordial nature are simultaneous, each reflecting the other as in a mirror, a common metaphor in this tradition albeit not mentioned in the texts Kapstein discusses here.

Types of perception seem to be especially critical in practices where a special image or sign is formulated as a mediating device. This is the case in *buddhānumṛti* practice, which, as documented by Harrison, began as a calling to mind of the abstract virtues of the Buddha, but increasingly came to involve the visualization of an image of the Buddha's body. In his reflections on the nature of this cultivated and constructed sort of perception, Harrison invokes anthropologist Lawrence Babb's study of the Hindu practice of "glancing" (*darśana*), which consists in a kind of interchange whereby the viewer comes to take on the qualities that he perceives. Harrison shows that this interchange occurs both for the *buddhānumṛti* practitioner who imagines himself receiving teachings in a buddha-field and for the tantric sādhana adept who identifies subjectively with a visualized buddha. It leads Harrison to conclude that *buddhānumṛti* practice is a form of commemoration, which he compares with the types of commemoration identified by Casey in *Remembering* as largely communal in their enactment. *Buddhānumṛti* also is sometimes practiced communally, but even when it is not, it involves a process of "psychical incorporation" of another person or identity, and it is mediated by text and ritual, all of which Casey has shown to be central elements of commemorative remembering. The ultimate goal of *buddhānumṛti* practice is the transformation of the viewer, who comes to identify himself with the sublime buddha image that he views.

In the "forebearance dhāraṇī" practice examined in my essay, perception is directed upon letters or other linguistic signs, which are perceived as reminders of Buddhist philosophical principles. This "perception-as" ultimately has similar effects to those of *buddhānumṛti* practice, in that it engenders an identification of the perceiver with the sublime content exemplified and embodied by the perceived letter. This ultimate identification is preceded by the establishment of the letter as a sign, which can then function in a variety of ways to remind the practitioner of that sublime content. I am particularly interested in the semiotics of this reminding, and find

that the role of the sign in Rdo Grub-chen's and other Buddhist analyses of dhāraṇī practice can be usefully analyzed in terms of the semiological theory of the influential American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Semiotic features of memory in Buddhism are also clearly evident in the "making of marks" mentioned in Nyanaponika's Theravāda passages on conception and recognition, and in Dharmakīrti's and Śāntarakṣita's characterizations of the object of memory as a sign, as discussed by Wayman. In the case of dhāraṇī practice, it emerges that the iconic sign, which resembles that of which it reminds, is the most efficacious type of reminder when the content to be remembered is emptiness. It will be observed that *buddhānusmṛti* commemorative visualization also employs icons, albeit by virtue of other sorts of features than those of the dhāraṇī letters.

The early Buddhist *mātikās* also serve as reminders, yet in a different way from dhāraṇīs. In his essay in this volume, Gethin corrects certain misconceptions concerning the *mātikās'* relationship with the first formulation of the Abhidharma Piṭaka. His analysis of the function of the *mātikās* shows that they evoke a type of memory more akin to the realization of basic Buddhist principles seen in dhāraṇī practice than to a memory of particular items, even if memorization of lists forms the basis of their mode of operation. Gethin finds that the list is not merely to be learned by rote; it also teaches the practitioner about the Dharma's inner structure. It is a creative source, a pregnant word, as it were, according well with the maternal metaphor that *mātikā* itself suggests. Not only does the *mātikā* "give birth to various dhammas," Gethin cites Kassapa of Coḷa as claiming, it also "looks after them and brings them up so that they do not perish."¹⁴

Further Directions

This brings me to several areas that might have been studied in this volume, but, for reasons of space, were not. The essays here draw primarily on Sanskrit, Pāli, and some Tibetan sources, with very limited use of East or Southeast Asian materials. This in itself suggests the array of still other Buddhist traditions that could be explored to carry the work of this volume further. Additional topics and themes that might be considered include, for instance, the role that memory plays in the formulation of the Buddhist scriptures. It was Ānanda's purported recitation by heart of the words of the Buddha at the so-called First Council that served to legitimize those scriptures as canonical; and his emblematic testimony to recollection—"thus have I heard at one time"—continues to be repeated as the introduction to later canonical materials and/or apocryphal texts.¹⁵ We might contrast here *smṛti's* usage in

Vedic traditions, where it is distinguished from revelation that is “heard” (*śrūti*) and denotes instead received tradition that is not revelation.

A type of Buddhist memory that only has been touched on in this volume is associated with the practice of tantric *sādhana*s. Harrison establishes here an important connection between sūtraic *buddhānusmṛti* and tantric visualization; we can add that the act of visualization is sometimes itself called *smṛti* (Tib. *dran-pa*) in Tibetan sources. In this regard there is the Tibetan technical term *dag-dran* (“memory of purity”), referring to the practitioner’s appreciation of and identification with the elements of the “pure realm” of visualized deities and maṇḍalas, which has been noted briefly in my essay on *dhāraṇī*.

Contemplative “non-memory,” or oblivion to worldly distractions marked by freedom from discursive thought (i.e., Kapstein’s *E dran-med*, to which he pays minimal attention, as the term barely occurs in the material he covers here), is an important notion in Mahāmudrā and related traditions, and deserves study. For example, toasts to such non-memory are preserved among the various collections of songs of the Zhi-byed “fifty-four male and female siddhas,” allegedly translated from an Indic language by the eleventh century Indian master known in Tibet as Pha Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas.¹⁶

I would also submit that we need to consider the practices related to relics in Buddhism in terms of the sort of memory they make possible. Anthropologist Stanley Tambiah has already thematized the function of relics as reminders.¹⁷ But once we remember anthropological data we can think of a host of ways in which memory plays an important role in Buddhist rituals and practices, only adumbrated in the present volume and deserving of detailed study.

Finally, I would draw the reader’s attention to the copious hagiographical and especially auto/biographical literature produced by Buddhists. The fact that these genres became popular in Buddhism—from the life stories of the Buddha and the *Jātakas* to the many accounts of masters in Tibet and East Asia—attests to the value attached to remembering the lives of exemplars, be these accounts fact or fiction. Autobiographies in particular have been produced in exceptional quantity by Tibetan Buddhists, some of which present not idealized didactic stories, but critical and self-aware explorations of the nature of their authors’ personal identity.¹⁸ These autobiographers engage in, even if they do not analyze, a type of reminiscent and nostalgic recollective memory missing in the writings of Indian Buddhist scholastics. The continuing popularity of autobiography and biography, along with the several other modes of Buddhist memory uncovered in this collection, suggest that even if the Buddha needed to remember in order to forget, many Buddhists want to remember in order to remember.

Notes

1. A general terminological note for the purpose of this introduction is in order here, the rationale of which will emerge in the following paragraphs. *Memory* is used in a broad way to encompass a variety of phenomena discussed in this volume. Because no sufficiently general adjective exists (*memorial's* principal connotation concerns the commemoration of the dead), I have adopted the adjective *mnemic*, following the lead of Matthew Kapstein who uses *mnemic engagement* and other phrases based on the Greek root *mnā* for certain Tibetan terms formed on *dran* (= Skt. *smṛ*) in his chapter in this volume. (*Mnemic* was coined first perhaps by Richard Semon to refer to an even broader set of psychological phenomena; see *The Mneme*, translated from the German by Louis Simon, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921; and *Mnemic Psychology*, translated by Bella Duffy, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923.) *Recollection* refers to the mental representation of particular objects, events, and experiences of one's personal past, to be distinguished from the special meaning the term has when it translates the Platonic *anamnesis*, as well as from the sense in which it is sometimes used in English for memory as a whole.

2. Most notably Paul Demiéville, "Sur la mémoire des existences antérieures," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* 27 (1927), and Gregory Schopen, "The Generalization of an Old Yogic Attainment in Medieval Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature: Some Notes on *Jātismara*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 6, no. 1 (1983): 109–147; both are summarized in Donald Lopez's chapter, along with other treatments of this subject. A recent discussion of the memorization of texts and its role in the preservation of Buddhist teachings is to be found in R. Gombrich, "How the Mahāyāna Began," in *The Buddhist Forum, Volume I: Seminar Papers 1987–1988* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1990), pp. 21–30.

3. On primary memory, see William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1890), I.646 et seq.; Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), sections 11–29 and 34–45; Robert G. Crowder, *Principles of Learning and Memory* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1976), Chapter 6 and throughout; see also Casey's article *infra*. On habit memory, see Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 80 et seq.; note that Bergson does not consider habit memory to be "true memory" (p. 151). For body memory, see Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), Chapter 8. Regarding semantic memory, see Endel Tulving, *Elements of Episodic Memory*, Oxford Psychology Series No. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), brief definition on p.v; see Chapter 2 and especially p. 35 for a summary of the principal differences between semantic memory and what he calls "episodic memory," which is the recollection of concrete, dateable experiences. Freud's principal thinking on the fate of repressed memories may be seen in "The Unconscious" and "Repression,"

The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953–74), vol. 14; and Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria, Standard Edition*, vol. 2. An influential work in anthropological circles, which focuses on bodily performative memory as distinct from personal and cognitive memory, is Paul Connerton, *How societies remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Examples of anthropological studies that take into account the embodiment of memory include Nancy D. Munn, "Constructing Regional Worlds in Experience: Kula Exchange, Witchcraft and Gawan Local Events," *Man* (N.S.) 25, no. 1 (1990): 1–17; and Debhora Battaglia, "The Body in the Gift: Memory and Forgetting In Sabarl Mortuary Exchange," *American Ethnologist*, in press.

4. For Saint Augustine's thoughts on memory of God, see *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), Book 14, Chapter 12, and Book 15, Chapters 21–23. Some of Martin Heidegger's reflections on memory may be found in *What Is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); see p. 141, and discussion pp. 138–153.

5. On Descartes and memory, see Dalia Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 58 seq. One example of Nietzsche's views on memory may be had from Matthew Kapstein's chapter herein, p. 259. An example of Freud's skepticism concerning memory of childhood is expressed in "Screen Memories," *Standard Edition*, vol. 3, p. 332; see Casey, *Remembering*, p. 8.

6. An earlier version of some of the chapters in this volume were read at a panel on memory in Buddhism that I, with the enthusiastic encouragement of Donald Lopez, organized for the American Academy of Religion meeting held in Boston in December 1987. Volume contributors Padmanabh Jaini, Lopez, and myself, in addition to John Keenan whose paper is not published here, and Edward Casey as respondent, participated in that panel.

7. Casey's book *Remembering* is cited in note 2.

8. Some of the relevant sources for semantic, habit, and related types of memory are cited in note 2.

9. Identification is particularly thematized in Harrison's study; see p. 230 for a suggestive quote from anthropologist Lawrence Babb, who notes that certain practices, in this case in the Hindu tradition, create "possibilities for self-transformation that are, whatever their origins in social experience, already internalized as part of his personality structure." My use of the term *recognizing* in this sentence should be distinguished from the mundane recognition of persons and things that is critiqued by the Buddhist logicians, as discussed below. In the mundane variety of recognition, a specific object perceived now is identified with a specific object perceived previously. In contrast, recognition of the "ultimate truth" of something, in Buddhist terms, would entail the perception of that thing in light of a principle such as no-self or emptiness, which the Buddhist practitioner endeavors to see in all things. See Wayman's chapter

for Buddhist usage of the term *pratyabhijñāna* to mean recognition of the mundane sort. *Pratyabhijñāna* also occurs in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*; but here it refers to the recognition of reality in the special sense that such a notion would have in the Buddhist *tathāgatagarbha* and related traditions, where the idea is that the reality being recognized is innate to all sentient beings, an idea that may be connected to certain Brahmanical traditions: see David Ruegg, *Le traité du tathāgatagarbha de Bu ston Rin chen grub* (Paris: École Française D'Extrême-Orient, 1973), p. 78, n. 1; and *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), p. 139.

10. *Abhidhamma Studies: Researches in Buddhist Psychology*, 2d. ed. (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965), pp. 68–72. See also his Introduction.

11. Paul J. Griffiths, "Why Buddhas Can't Remember Their Previous Lives," *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 4 (October 1989): 449–52.

12. See Cox, p. 91, n. 9.

13. According to Masaaki Hattori, *Dignāga, On Perception*, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 47 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 81, n. 17, the object of recognition is viewed by Buddhist logicians as a particular, not a universal. This suggests some ambivalence concerning the classification of at least one type of memory, i.e., recognition, which on the grounds of the nature of its object would have a significant affinity with perception. Hattori remarks, "Dignāga's theory of a sharp distinction between the objects of *pratyakṣa* [direct perception] and *anumāna* [inference] is hardly applicable to the case of re-cognition."

14. See Gethin's chapter, p. 161.

15. I argue that memory becomes synonymous with revelation of scripture in the Tibetan Gter-ma tradition in my "Signs, Memory and History: A Tantric Buddhist Theory of Scriptural Revelation," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9, no. 2 (1986): 7–35.

16. *The Tradition of Pha Dam-pa Sañs-rgyas*, ed. Barbara Aziz. Reproduced from a Unique Collection of Manuscripts Preserved with 'Khrul-ñig Rin-po-che of Roñ-phu Monastery at Diñ-ri Glan-skor (Thimphu: Druk Sherik Parkhang, 1979), 5 vols. See, for example, vol. 1, pp. 351–58, for a collection of songs sung "over a full container of wine" by thirty-five *dākinīs* after a *gañacakra* ceremony at Śitavana, especially the songs of Ral-pa'i Thor-lcog-can, Ye-shes Rdo-rje, Pad-ma'i Zhabs, and Gzi-brjid-kyi Rgyal-mo.

17. Stanley Tambiah, *The Buddhist saints of the forest and the cult of the amulets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 200 et seq.

18. An initial study of these matters can be found in my "Autobiography in Tibetan Religious Literature: Reflections on Its Modes of Self-Presentation," to be published in the proceedings of the Fifth Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies (Narita, Japan: Naritasan Shoji, 1992).