Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying:
An Exploration of Consciousness with the Dalai Lama

Introduction

Before you begin your reading of the book and each of the nine chapters (plus the Coda at the end), take some time to carefully and slowly scan the table of contents as well as the Appendix, Notes, Glossary, and Contributors' Biographies at the end of the book. A look at the Index will be helpful too because you will probably have to consult it as you read, and, certainly, as you review and write. Pay special attention to the Glossary because you will find yourself returning to it again and again as you work your way through the book. It contains key terms introduced by the Western presenters. It also provides essential information about the key terms in English and romanized Sanskrit (the language of most religious and philosophical works in India and Tibetan Buddhism) introduced by the Dalai Lama.

In the Resources for additional Reading I have provided a number of references you might want to consult. But do look at the bibliographic information in the section about each contributor and their publications (pp.243-246) to see if there are items you might find useful in the course now and in your later reflections and thinking.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Each week you will be reading and rereading chapter presentations, reflecting upon what you are encountering, making summaries of the presentations and ideas, taking careful notes. Please begin with the Publisher's Acknowledgment on p. ix, then proceed to the Editor's Acknowledgements, the Forward by the Dalai Lama, and then Francisco Varela's Prelude to the Journey. The Prelude will provide an overview of the Mind and Life Conferences and the current gathering, Mind and Life IV. And please, please use the 15-page glossary starting on p. 227. Consult it frequently. It will help you navigate through the complexities of the presentations and discussions. You will feel like a stranger in a strange land as you move through the presentations and discussions, but slow, attentive reading and reflection will eventually transform you into a Familiar in a strange land. I recommend that
you do a quick reading scan of each chapter and presentation, highlighting words, sentences and passages and making marginal marks and notes where you think you need more work to understand the ideas or have questions. Then go back slowly through the chapter, pausing and reflecting on words you might have underlined, phrases or paragraphs you marked, or passages that you highlighted. Don't be surprised if there are words, phrases, and passages whose meaning you can't immediately penetrate. Just try to comprehend as much as you can, asking yourself questions about what a word or passage means and definitely interrogating yourself about your own capacities and limitations that make comprehension easy or difficult. It's crucial here that bring your own background, views, biases, and commitments to the surface. You can't comprehend and critique another's views until you have made some attempt to acknowledge and examine your own views.

Keep in mind that the Mind and Life participants are exploring Human Consciousness, *Their Own* and *Your Consciousness*! The participants are employing their own consciousnesses in order to explore consciousness. Consciously observing and reflecting on your own consciousness as you are using that consciousness can be exciting but confusing. Also keep in mind that no matter how confused you are as you wade through the material, there is a first-person focal point of view "(I)" within you which is not confused. Even if you are totally confused, you are an observer of your own mind; the part that observes the confusion is not confused. If it were, you'd never find your way out of the mess.

As you prepare to write, reflecting on what you have read, thought, and felt I recommend that you just start by writing what comes to mind in whatever form it takes, however formally or informally, organized or not. Think of the process as having a conversation with yourself. The words you put on the page (screen) are expressions of you and your thoughts. People, including teachers and professor, will often say (if they're honest and self-honest) that they don't really know what they know until they talk it out or sketch it on paper. My own 40-year experience in the university classroom illustrated this daily, especially as I was talking to/with students seated before or with me about some ideas or experiences that became the stuff of the class session. My students almost always came to the same realization. Think about the two worlds you occupied when you were a student: *In class* and *Out in the world* with your friends or playmates (the street). Conversation in the *Outside* (real) world (the street) was free and easy, not conforming particularly to Standard English (SE). But the moment you
entered the *classroom* you became formal, self-conscious, studied and did your best to speak and write in accordance with the rules and forms of standard English. Your writing assignments became formalized and organized, conforming to those rules and standards and organizational styles, sometimes at the cost of what you really wanted to say. On the other hand, scribbling a note or a letter in the *Outside*, for example, was very casual. Stop a moment and think about text-messaging and its abbreviated forms. Or think about Twittering (140 characters), or similar forms of communication. There's a world of difference between the way we communicate on the street and the way we do or must communicate in a formal classroom or work setting.

So my suggestion is that you do your initial drafting in the ordinary speak of the street, then begin to progressively tighten it up, organize it, and build the flow of ideas and themes into a coherent stream of organized presentation. This way you will be expressing yourself initially in a genuine, individualized way and then creating the more formal character that will be different from the "street" but will, at the same time, embody what you really want to say. Another example of this process that I'm sure you can relate to is: the struggle to find just the right word to express something. We all do it all the time and we intuitively know what words are wrong and what words are right for capturing what we know we mean. Let your words mean what you want them to mean.

**Course Description**

Learning occurs only in the presence of contrasts. Our Lebenswelt (*life-world; leben=life; welt=world*) is a dynamic matrix of contrasts. Contrasts compel attention, sustained attention generates reflection, and reflection, coupled with wonder, creates the quest for understanding so that one may live a better and more satisfying life. These are the roots in conscious human experience of Philosophy, the various Sciences, and the Science of Consciousness. But philosophy, psychology, and the sciences always occur in the matrix of a civilization and culture, which creates and exemplifies historical and institutional patterns of action and thought. Each culture constructs its distinct Weltanschauung (*world-outlook; welt=world, shau=view, insight, anshauen=look, intuitive knowledge, opinion*) and Lebensanschauung (*leben=life; anshaunen=approach, intuition*). A civilization's philosophers, scientists, and sages both create and reflect these
Anschauungen as they ponder human experience in order to discover and disclose inhabitable views of reality.

It is vitally important that you keep these insights and perspectives in mind as you work with *Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying*. This book emerges from one (No. 4) of numerous *Mind and Life* conferences hosted by the religious, philosophical, and political leader of Tibet and Tibetans, His Holiness (H.H.) The Dalai Lama. The conferences included a few select participants who gathered with the Dalai Lama at the Tibetan community in exile in India at Dharmsala. The participants were outstanding researchers in the neurosciences, psychology, medical anthropology/psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, neuroscience and cognitive Science, and religious studies. All of the participants brought to the meetings their interest in consciousness as well as their cross-disciplinary orientations and a familiarity with Buddhist Psychology, Philosophy, and Science of the Mind. The participants included:

**Jerome Engel**, M.D., Ph.D. in Physiology and Neurology who has studied the states of consciousness arising from brain disorders.

**Jayne Gackenbach**, Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology who is an expert on Lucid Dreaming and higher states of consciousness.

**Joan Halifax**, Ph.D. a medical anthropologist/psychologist who focuses on Death, Shamanism, and Buddhism. She is a Buddhist practitioner and a lineage holder in the Tiep Order of Vietnamese Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

**Thupten Jinpa**, who received his training at Zongkar Choede Monastery in India and holds the degree of Lharam Geshe, the Tibetan equivalent to a doctorate in divinity. He is the Dalai Lama's principal translator. He has received honors for his study of Western Philosophy at Kings College.

**Joyce McDougall**, D.Ed. is a psychoanalyst who has devoted her career to the clinical study of dreams, consciousness, and psychosomatic illness.
Charles Taylor, Ph.D. He is a professional philosopher. He provides Western ideas and views about self, mind, and society.  
Francisco Varela, Ph.D. in Biology who has researched and written extensively on neuro- and cognitive science.  
B. Alan Wallace, Ph.D. who has degrees in physics, philosophy, and religious studies. His studies of Tibetan Buddhism have made him an authority on the subject. His knowledge has led him to translate key Tibetan texts. He has acted as translator and counselor for all Mind and Life conferences.

Please don't feel intimidated by these researchers and their credentials, nor by the Dalia Lama himself. The conference presentations by the Westerners as well as the discussions were structured for the Dalai Lama and for the intelligent layman. You will find some of the material challenging, but careful and repeated readings will be stimulating and rewarding. You will also discover that the Dalai Lama can more than hold his own in discussions about the sciences and human-embodied consciousness.

The Dalai Lama is perhaps one of the foremost authorities on and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism has explored consciousness in theory and practice for over 2500 years (Gautama Buddha--approximately 563-483 BCE), evolving and yielding some of the most profound insights into consciousness in all its states and forms in the human being. The following statements reveal the character of the Buddhist and Western approaches to consciousness, but also illustrate the idea of contrasts mentioned in the initial paragraph:

For example,  

Consciousness Is! How can matter arise out of consciousness?  
Matter is! How can consciousness arise out of matter?

These questions display the fundamental difference between Buddhist views of man in the world and Western views of the world and man. The first question illustrates the Buddhist approach. Buddhism gives us a Science of Man and consciousness out of which the world arises. The second question exhibits the essence of philosophical and scientific development in the West. The West provides a Science of the World out of which arises man and consciousness. The Buddhist Philosopher asks: What does it mean to be conscious human being in this world? The Western Philosopher, particularly with the emergence of modern science, asks: What
does this world of which we are conscious mean? Both Buddhism and the West address three fundamental questions:

1. What is there?
2. How is it known?
3. Who are we who know it and how do we fit in?

But, as revealed above, the responses to the questions are radically different. This book and course will help you understand these differences as well come to some intellectual and personal understanding of answers to these questions.

The book will also show you how the East and West find common ground and create a fruitful dialogue that advances our understanding of human consciousness, our world, and the possibilities of world peace.

**Course Objectives**

This course is intended to help you find within yourself the attentivity (attentivity=awareness of all that occurs in your consciousness at all times), the sensitivity, the skillful means (using all the dimenions and tools of your awareness with focus and precision), and the heart necessary to comprehend and incorporate useful elements from the philosophical and religious traditions of Tibetan Buddhism as well as Western science and philosophy.

This course endeavors also to open you eyes and mind to the profound comparative process of exploring science, philosophy, and culture together without which you cannot understand the significance of questions and answers about human consciousness.

Since philosophy and science place a premium on learning how to learn as well as learning itself, a further objective of this course is to create an environment and tools in which both levels of learning become simultaneously possible for you. Your mental concentration and even-mindedness in all areas of your life depend on the cultivation of learning how to learn as well as learning itself.

: **Sources:**

I've included a number of resources and references, including many web sites. You might find a lot of them interesting and instructive now and in your later independent explorations of the subjects. For each contributor there is at least one web site that contains a picture of that person. I
recommend that you look at those sites because it's always nice to have a face to attach to a name and to the contributions of each person. I've indicated which sites contain pictures.

First of all, check out http://www.mindandlife.org/current.conf.html. It will give you detailed information about the Dalai Lama's conferences going back to 1987.

**H. H. Dalai Lama**

A good biography of the Dalai Lama can be found at http://www.tibet.com/DL/biography.html.


A list of all of the Dalai Lama's publications can be found at http://www.tibet.com/dl/book.html

Snow Lion publications has a number of books by and about the Dalai Lama as well as books on related topics. http://www.snowlionpub.com/

**Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism**

There's a nice overview of Tibetan Buddhist beliefs at http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/sects/tibetan.htm. Other sites that present good summary information are:
http://www.doinga360.com/Buddhism-Beliefs.html. This is an especially rich site for information, theory, and practice.

http://dl.lib.brown.edu/BuddhistTempleArt/buddhism.htm. This is Brown University's site for **Basic Concepts of Tibetan Buddhism**. It covers the essentials in five short pages. The site also contains links to a photographic survey of Tibetan Buddhist Wall paintings.
http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/society/A0861547.html. This site contains short pieces on Tibetan History, Beliefs, and Tibetan Theocracy that are accurate and useful for a quick look.

http://www.near-death.com/experiences/buddhism04.html. This excellent site is linked to near-death.com, one of the better sites on the topic. It's one page and accurate. Near-death Experiences (NDE), Conscious Dying Experiences (CDE), and Conscious-out-of-body (COOBE) enter the book's discussions and presentations. All three classes of Experiences are vital parts of Tibetan Buddhist beliefs and practices. The Benito Reyes books and one book by Kenneth Ring cited below offer great detail about these experiences.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism. This is an excellent, comprehensive site written by scholars in the field. It covers everything you might want to know at this point about Buddhism. As I pointed out above regarding search engines, Wikipedia has to be used carefully. There are scholarly inclusions that I have vetted like this one, which can be referenced in your work, but many others are suspect and their claims have to be vetted. The 193-item list of Footnotes here verify the scholarly character of the site. This list contains references you might want to use. The 38 items in the references list might be useful too. There is also a list of suggestions for further reading.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan_Buddhism. This is also an excellent, comprehensive site written by scholars in the field. The detailed coverage will introduce you to the most important concepts. It also has a glossary at the end which you can add to the glossary in the book. This site also has an extensive footnote list as well as a list of references and suggestions for further reading.
The Encyclopedia Britannica has numerous articles on the topics covered in the book. The online Britannica does require you to register and pay for articles.

**Sites about the Western Contributors:**

**Francisco Varela**

http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/varela/varela_index.html. A better, short entry with a picture and information. Varela died in 2001. This site provides his piece on "Emergent Self", published as Chapter 12 in *The Third Culture* by John Brockman (a marvelous book)!

http://www.enolagaia.com/Varela.html. This is a comprehensive site on Varela's background and work. It contains what universities call a *Curriculum Vitae (CV)* that covers all the work of a professor and/or researcher.

**Jerome Engel**

http://faculty.bri.ucla.edu/institution/personnel?personnel_id=8124. This one-page site has a picture and bibliography.

**Jayne Gackenbach**


http://www.angelfire.com/ak/electricdreams/jgackcv.htm. This contains Gackenbach's full CV.

http://www.dreamtree.com/inside/?tag=jayne-gackenbach. This is a fascinating site devoted to Lucid Dreaming.

http://www.asiaconsciousness.org/TSC/speaker_gackenbach.html. This site is one of many announcing participants in **Toward A Science of Consciousness 2009**. It contains a nice picture of Gackenbach. The conference was one event in the large **Asia Consciousness Festival**.

**Joan Halifax**

http://www.upaya.org/roshi/. Roshi Joan Halifax is the abbot at the Upaya Zen Center. She is a Buddhist teacher, Zen priest, anthropologist, and author. She is founder, abbot, and Head Teacher of Upaya Zen Center, a Buddhist monastery in Santa Fe, N.M. This site has a number of great links and photos, including one with the Dalai Lama. She is listed on http://jhalifax.gaia.com/blog/2009/2/big_sit, a site you might like to explore independently. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Halifax;


**Thupten Jinpa**

A good site is http://www.snowlionpub.com/pages/jinpa.html;


**Joyce McDougall**

Here's a link for **Bookstores** with a list of her books, as well as other resources: http://www.allbookstores.com/author/Joyce_McDougall. html

There's a lot of great photos from periods of her life at http://www.images.google.com/images?q=joyce+McDougall&oe=utf-8&rls-org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-
There's a great large pix of her here: http://www.commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joyce_MDougall.jpg.

**Charles Taylor**


Another Wikipedia site I vetted. Good information. This site contains an article on Taylor's **Source of Self**.

**B. Alan Wallace**


There is another book that might be of great interest to some of you. The author's work on Near Death Experiences (NDE) has a great deal of relevance for the topics in **Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying**. The book is: **Lessons From The Light: What We Can Learn From the Near-Death Experience** by Kenneth Ring and Evelyn Elsaesser Valarino.

Kenneth Ring is acknowledged as one of foremost experts on (NDE). He is the founding editor of the **Journal of Near-Death Studies** and the author of several previous books on NDE's, including **Life at Death** and **Heading Toward Omega**.

There are numerous books, articles, journals, and other publications on the topics covered in the Dalai Lama's book. Please feel free to query me about other sources on this and on a great variety of topics. The mentor's job is to help you advance in the kind of education that will assist you in your
adventures on the path toward becoming a fully conscious human being on this planet, one who exemplifies all human traits and qualities and who can serve their humans.

If you have access to a good public, college, or university library, check their catalog listings to see what's available.


twelve thought questions to help you with reading and writing assignments

Here are some exploratory thought questions to help you (1) read with a learning focus, (2) take better notes, and (3) get started putting your ideas on paper (or on screen). By consistently using these questions to guide your studying, you will find that you are never at a loss for something to write when asked to write a response paper.

**Reading:** Whenever you read an assignment, we recommend that you read with the following questions in your mind and a pen in your hand to start sketching out your understanding of the material.

**Writing:** Many writing assignments have specific questions, others simply ask that you respond to what you have read. When writing an open-ended response paper, please start by addressing the aspects covered by Questions 1, 2 and 3, in any sequence you wish, and then continue with any one or more of the other questions.

**Thought Questions:**

1. Each contributor went to great lengths, expending time, energy, passion, and money to participate in this enterprise: Mind and Life IV. Why do you think that the Dalai Lama and the other participants came together to explore these topics? Do you think it was important and worthwhile?

2. Each of the eight participants made presentations of their work and the work that has been done in the West, often with interjections of questions and comments from the Dalai Lama. Can you broadly summarize the contributions of each participant and make an attempt to broadly describe the Dalai Lama's contribution?
3. Carefully read the final entry in the book, **Coda: Reflections on the Journey**. Read and reread it as you work your way through the book. Do the same for the **A Prelude to the Journey**. These two sections will provide a larger context and will assist you in keeping track of the discussions. How would you begin to summarize the overall subject and meaning of the conference?

4. Were you convinced of the truth and relevancy of the many claims made in the course of the presentations and discussions? Are you just intrigued by some of claims without judging truth or relevancy?

5. If you were skeptical or critical about some of the claims made by any of the participants, what are those claims and why are you skeptical or critical? What is your own particular point of view or experience on the basis of which you are skeptical or critical?

6. Of all the ideas and discussion in this book, can you pinpoint some that you find truly interesting and perhaps meaningful in your life and in your way of looking at the world and living in it?

7. As you reflect on the book and your experience and background, do you find connections between your life and the ideas presented in the book? Also, do you find that the book contains some ideas, views, or claims that are at odds with your experience, beliefs, life, or ideas about the yourself and the world.

8. I have stressed the importance of self-observation in several parts of this document. Self observation is vital in your relationship to this book and conference because the presentations and discussion were consciously and self-consciously about consciousness. What did you observe in yourself about your responses and reactions to the book?
9. Does the book leave you with unanswered questions about sleeping, dreaming, and dying in your own life and experience? Does the book answer questions about those topics that have been on your mind for a long time?

10. Take a few minutes (or longer) to recall events, experiences, and memories of sleep, dreaming, and death in your own life that resemble the features of living consciousness addressed in the book. What are those events, experiences, and memories?

11. Are there ideas, descriptions, and/or stories in the book that seem alien to you and are at odds with what you have experienced, or believe regarding sleeping, dreaming, and dying states of consciousness?

12. How would, or how does, the content of this book change the way you think, act, hope, feel and/or relate to others? Has the book expanded your awareness and self-awareness? Do you have a better or fuller sense of what you are as a conscious human being on this planet at this time as a result of studying the book?