



# La mente despierta

*Dalai Lama XIV*

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## **La mente despierta** Dalai Lama XIV

Por primera vez, el Dalái Lama presenta al público general una visión en conjunto de las enseñanzas más importantes del budismo. Quizá la principal diferencia del budismo y las demás religiones del mundo radique en su original comprensión del núcleo de nuestra identidad. La existencia de un alma o un “yo”, que es un aspecto esencial al hinduismo, el cristianismo o el islam, es negada en el budismo. Es más, se considera la creencia en un “yo” la principal fuente de nuestros problemas en la vida. Un conocimiento profundo de esta enseñanza no porta a ninguna visión nihilista o cínica del mundo que nos rodea. Por el contrario, una auténtica comprensión de nuestra mente e identidad nos conduce a la verdadera felicidad individual y a una mayor compasión por los demás. A la vez que el Dalái Lama ofrece en este libro una presentación muy completa de sus enseñanzas sobre estos aspectos filosóficos fundamentales, también muestra a los lectores cómo integrar esta sabiduría de una forma activa en la vida cotidiana.

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# From Reader Review *La mente despierta* for online ebook

## Robin Friedman says

### The Dalai Lama Teaches Shunya

Many of the Dalai Lama's books are directed to questions that engage readers of all religious persuasions rather than only practitioners of Buddhism. This new book of the Dalai Lama's, "A Profound Mind: Cultivating Wisdom in Everyday Life" (2011) belongs in a smaller group of books which expound a specifically Buddhist teaching: the doctrine of shunya or emptiness. This is a teaching that is central to many, if not all, forms of Buddhism. Readers familiar with the Dalai Lama's other writings will find this book difficult. The book is based on lectures that the Dalai Lama gave in New York City in 2003 and 2007 on the Buddhist understanding of selflessness.

In the book, the Dalai Lama explains the several different Buddhist understandings of emptiness and the importance of this teaching. But the path leading to his exposition is almost as important as the result. The Dalai Lama makes two important opening observations that deserve to be noticed. First, the Dalai Lama stresses the difficulty in understanding the teaching of emptiness. With his usual modesty, he claims that his own understanding of the subject is "mediocre". As a result of his claimed "mediocre" understanding, the readers of the book "can only hope to gain an understanding that will be half knowledge and half ignorance." But even such knowledge is better than none at all.

The second important preliminary involves the relationship of Buddhism to other religions or what the Dalai Lama calls "Diverse Spiritual Traditions". As in many of his other books, the Dalai Lama stresses that his goal is not to convert. To the contrary, he urges his readers to remain within their own faith traditions if possible. I thought about the relevance of this point to a book in which the Dalai Lama expounds a specifically Buddhist teaching. The Dalai Lama suggests that non-Buddhist readers can incorporate portions of the teaching on emptiness that they find valuable into their own religious practice or that they can read the book simply to become aware of and to learn to respect a religious system in addition to their own. It seemed to me as well that the stress on religious diversity was a way of emphasizing the character of the teachings and the struggle many Westerners will have with it. There are many ways to spiritual paths. Emptiness may not be for everyone.

In early chapters of the book, the Dalai Lama explains basic teachings of Buddhism on such matters as the nature of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and nirvana and on the Four Noble Truths and on Karma. He discusses the broad divisions of Buddhist teachings into the Theravada school, which teaches individual enlightenment, and the Mahayana school which teaches the doctrine of the Bodhisattva -- practitioners vow to delay their own enlightenment and to work towards the enlightenment of all beings. Tibetan Buddhism is part of the Mahayana school. I have been studying Theravada Buddhism and its texts in a study group for many years and found it valuable to hear the Dalai Lama's explanation of the relationship between these two Buddhist "vehicles".

The teaching of emptiness is critical, the Dalai Lama, explains in understanding the cause and cure for pervasive human suffering. Suffering, craving, aversion, and ignorance, results by thinking that there is a substantial self and that the self desires objects, be it money, a car, or a sexual relationship, that also are substantial. Buddhism tries to develop the sense in which the self and the things it desires are "empty". "Emptiness" does not mean "unreal". But what it means is hard, and in fact it means different things to different Buddhists at different times.

The Dalai Lama describes four understandings of emptiness, two from Theravada and two from Mahayana, with an emphasis on the latter, together with some further divisions of Mahayana teachings. It is tempting to associate these teachings with what in the Western philosophical tradition is known as idealism, but ultimately, I think, that parallel is only marginally useful. The teaching focuses on the lack of substantiality in self, especially, and in things. There is a strong denial of independence. People in the West are accustomed to understanding themselves as independent and autonomous individuals and to cherish these qualities and their sense of personal identity as they understand it. Buddhism denies these qualities and finds that stressing their importance and existence leads invariably to sorrow. I have found these Buddhist teachings and the nontheism which is closely related to it valuable over the years. Others may disagree.

Rather than independence and autonomy, Buddhism teaches a doctrine called dependent origination, closely related to emptiness, which teaches that everything is interconnected by causality. Expanding this teaching, the self, and things, consist of parts rather than on something concrete, separate, eternal, and somehow different from the parts.

The four schools the Dalai Lama discusses differ about the precise nature of emptiness in important ways. The Dalai Lama's explanations are short. He tries to be clear but the subject resists easy understanding. I have read other material on the nature of emptiness and on dependent origination over the years. The Dalai Lama helped, but if his own understanding is "mediocre" as he asserts, the average lay readers will have great difficulty, with close and several readings, in understanding this teaching. That is a necessary and not a bad thing. Some readers will want to pursue the subject further while others may respectfully wish to pursue their own religious approach.

Following the exposition of emptiness, the Dalai Lama offers meditation practices to pursue it and bring it to life. He stresses that this is not a short-term project. The Dalai Lama also emphasizes that the best course for lay practitioners is "to remain involved in society while leading a spiritual life." This is wise advice, especially for an audience in New York City. The Dalai Lama's approach in this book does not involve simply sitting on a cushion. He stresses "analytical" meditation or thinking through the nature of emptiness. He also ties in a developing understanding of emptiness with working for the realization of compassion towards others and towards oneself.

This is a short book that resists easy reading. His modesty notwithstanding, the Dalai Lama is a spiritual master. This book will be of interest to Buddhists trying to deepen their practice and to people with an interest in religion or spirituality in understanding their own practices and beliefs.

Robin Friedman

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## **Brad McKenna says**

Another introductory book by the Dalai Lama. I've read most of what he's talking about (the empty nature of everything and how to practice meditations) but there's always something new for me. This time it's his venture into the different schools of Buddhism, like Hinayana and Vajrayana. Since he's a Tibetan Buddhist it was interesting to read his take on other school. Particularly, the Mind-Only school. That division believes that nothing exists, everything is a projection of the mind. Taking this one step further: the act of perceiving, say, a table, brings said table into existence since there is no inherent table-ness to the table. Interesting stuff.

I keep reading books by His Holiness because the Dharma (read: teachings of The Buddha) is so

confounding, I figure repetition is the only way to let it sink in. As with all Dalai Lama books, this is a great read for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. Don't be afraid if you get confused by some of it, that's common for everyone!

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## **Marjorie says**

Anything the Dalai Lama writes is worth reading, but I found this particular book rough going. It deals with the idea of "dependent origination" -- or "emptiness" of the self. I've been puzzled by this idea in other reading I've done -- and it's still unclear to me after reading this book. I probably shouldn't beat myself up about that as, according to the Dalai Lama, it takes many years, or many lifetimes, of analytic meditation to fully grasp this point.

Buddhists themselves don't all agree on how dependent origination works, and the Dalai Lama discusses how the different schools of Buddhism approach the question. This section of the book is philosophical and abstract.

The last two chapters of the book ("The Method Aspect of the Path" and "How to Practice") were clearer and, to me, more inspiring. One of the things he mentions is how we should cultivate appreciation for having been born into this human life (he says because we could have born as an animal or, worse, as a hungry ghost unable to appease its appetite -- but even a non-Buddhist like myself can think of how many different events had to have come together for me to have been born at all, and how the odds were so strongly against it). He also urges reflecting on death and impermanence so that we will become concerned that we not die without having made use of the opportunities afforded by this rare human existence.

This is a short book, 148 pages with wide margins and large type. With a list price of \$23, I'd suggest getting it at the library.

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## **Mavromou says**

Quede sorprendido por la cantidad de escuelas y enfoques que tiene el budismo y que son enumerados y genéricamente descriptos en este libro.

Hay muchos puntos interesantes del budismo algunos que coinciden con el cristianismo y demás religiones que son con lo que mayormente concuerdo.

En lo particular no coincido con el rechazo de plano al deseo (lo entiendo como algo antinatural), pero si comparto que el egoísmo, la ira y demás emociones negativas tengan su base en un deseo incontrolable (o mal dirigido), lo que no estoy seguro es si el camino para no tener esas emociones negativas es eliminar todo deseo.

Desde el enfoque de la creatividad, que es la materia que estudio, los problemas (generales de la vida y específicos de una profesión) se definen en base al propósito y actitud que tenemos ante las diversas situaciones en las que estamos involucrados. Las situaciones no son ni buenas ni malas, el hecho de "eliminar el deseo" que propone el budismo lo asemejo (quizá de una manera muy llana) al eliminar el propósito para que de esta forma podamos tener una actitud distinta. Cuando en realidad creo que es mejor (y

más natural para el ser humano que vive en sociedad) trabajar sobre nuestra actitud hacia los objetos y las situaciones (y hacía las personas también), para revisar nuestros propósitos y así redefinir nuestros problemas (deseos).

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## Rian Nejar says

An easy to read book that is simultaneously illuminating and revealing; while it sheds light on Buddhism as a compassionate, religious and spiritual path, it also brings up inconsistencies and limitations of this ancient belief system.

For instance, whereas the author (His Holiness The Dalai Lama) states that "*The existence of the soul or self...is not only firmly denied in Buddhism, belief in it is identified as the source of all our misery,*" he goes on to indicate, a few pages on, his belief in 'past lives' in his explanation for variations in our constitution: "*...but our tendencies...which Buddhists believe to be inherited from past lives...*" He admits that such beliefs came about through "*...incorporating helpful elements [into Buddhist spiritual practices] that had their origins elsewhere [presumably, in ancient Hinduism]...*" and attempts to explain that belief by: "*It is also at conception [in sexual congress] that, according to Buddhism, our mental aspect or consciousness--not being physical--is caused by the previous moment of that consciousness, the momentary stream of which goes back through the experiences between lifetimes, to our past life...*" With all due respect, your Holiness, our 'mental aspect,' that you liken to 'consciousness,' cannot conceivably be said to exist in millions of wiggling sperms and an egg present at conception, absent the neural networks that are acknowledged to facilitate such ("mental") aspects.

While acceptance of non-existence of a 'self' or a soul, called 'Selflessness' in Buddhism, may be considered radical and differentiated by its adherents, it is well known and acknowledged by many throughout history that the soul, and the "I" or such symbolic references (split into *buddhi* or intellect, and *ahankara* or ego, with positive and negative connotations, in ancient Hinduism), are mental constructs that help differentiate between one integral entity and another. Again, not everyone grasps at this philosophical straw - of the existence of a **soul** - for orientation in existence. The author wonders, in his book, whether adherents to the ancient Indian philosophy that held **nontheistic** (no omniscient, omnipotent soul or spirit in other words) views exist; I can assure him that many do [this reviewer is among them], for that is the freedom of thought and philosophy offered by such ancient and less advertised pathways in life.

Many of the concepts in Buddhism appear congruent to, and reflect, ancient thinking about cause-effect, and modern thinking about the continuum of *spacetime*. For instance, "*...each moment of their existence causing the next, which then in turn causes the next.*" The Wisdom Sutra, in particular, contains this noteworthy statement: "*Form is not empty of emptiness; Form itself is that emptiness.*" Albert Einstein believed that "*Objects are not in space, they are spatially extended.*" While such concepts may be true **in the abstract**, their further development into: "*...each moment causing our next moment of existence, which then causes the next moment, a process that proceeds from day to day, month to month, year to year, and maybe even lifetime to lifetime...*" is an ill-derived, impermissible extrapolation.

Other "Lesser and Greater Vehicles" such as Hinayana and Mahayana described by the author resemble ancient Hinduism's Karmayoga and Gnanayoga. While such concepts borrowed are no doubt helpful, they are simply variants on extant ancient learning with nomenclature and practice modified to suit practitioners. The author admits that the diversity (read inconsistency, or conflict?) of the Buddha's teachings are a reflection of his "*skillful ability to address the great variety of mental inclinations of his diverse followers.*"

Sounds like good marketing practice, yes?

Surprisingly, selflessness is strongly identified by the author with its literal meaning, the negation of any mental construct of a 'self,' rather than with the quality of altruism and compassion for others that it implies in contemporary parlance. As a lifelong student of philosophy, I find other incongruities as well: the author states that "*...our misery...is caused by our afflictive emotions...*" and some chapters thereafter also states that "*I believe, however, that most of us prefer the idea of continuity, as it suggests a fullness of our experience and emotions.*" Is the author admitting that emotions are an aspect that completes the human experience? Perhaps the author wishes to indicate that one must find a balance between life's aspects and the 'spiritual path' propounded by his belief system.

While there is much that is admirable in such ancient schools of thought, I think renewal and rejuvenation of such belief systems, as discussed in *Humbling and Humility*, is also essential. Dogmatic adherence to beliefs such as "*...the thought 'I am' is the mind of the demon...*" may not assist in clearer comprehension of these mental constructs and their useful application as put forth in **HnH**. The author is understandably constrained by an inability to combat such dogma; the book, therefore is accordingly limited to being an exposition of concepts of the Tibetan Buddhist belief system.

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## Catalina says

Sunt absolut convinsa ca nu sunt in momentul potrivit al vietii mele pentru a citi aceasta carte. Voi reveni la ea cu drag atunci cand voi deveni un pic mai matura.

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## Marla says

I picked this book up mainly because it was mentioned again and again in another book, *The Good Luck of Right Now* (completely silly fiction which I am liking more and more as I look back, may have to change my rating up a star). I've read some of the Dalai Lama's work and I have to say that sometimes I consider it "Buddhist fluff." It's informative for basic concepts and great for getting someone initially interested. This is not one of those books. **THIS IS NOT FOR THE BEGINNER**. This is a book that could be studied a lifetime. It's like one big ass koan. The Dalai Lama is channeling Alan Watts here. It's very esoteric at times. "DL" (no disrespect) has chapters that are titled deceptively simple..."Karma", "The Four Noble Truths", "The Middle Way"...and he proceeds to mess up your understanding of these things but good. I looked at the table of contents and sighed...just another book on Buddhism covering the same old stuff, the same old way, ho hum. Boy was I wrong. One of his first chapters on self/no self made my head spin.

There is sooooo much to be learned in here. So much. Lots of new ways of looking at concepts I thought I understood. And isn't that what Buddhism is meant to do? Challenge you...ask questions...keep studying...evolve. This book does that. DL "explains" the difference between Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism (in quotes, because I thought I understood the difference and am now more confused than ever). He covers dependent origination, karma...all the way to how to practice.

DL is truly a scholar. I didn't jump on board with everything in this book, but it surely gave me a lot to think about...new avenues to study. It's hard to reconcile the intellectual DL who wrote this, with the DL who has that silly little giggle that cracks me up. One reviewer said you had to "ruminate" this book. Very true. These mere 150 pages contain a lifetime of wisdom and study. I'm so glad I bought this book as opposed to getting it from the library (very rare I purchase); it's already highlighted and completely scribbled in. I will study chunks of it again and again. I've found a new friend. I repeat, don't let this be your first book on Buddhism, it will only frustrate you.

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### **Autumn says**

I've been practicing/studying Buddhism on my own for about six years. I have read many different books on Buddhism and have had a particularly difficult time grasping the ideas of emptiness and dependent origination on both an intellectual and spiritual level. I have much more studying and meditating to go before I fully understand these topics, but for some reason while reading this book, something just clicked in my head and those topics started making more sense. While there was some difficult material that I didn't really grasp, I think the Dalai Lama did a really good job presenting Buddhist teachings and various Buddhist philosophies in this book. Though this book is geared for general readers, I would not recommend this to someone who is just starting to study Buddhism. It's not particularly difficult, but I know that I would have walked away frustrated if I had picked up this book six years ago.

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### **Roger Morris says**

Not profound. Rather confusing, conflicting, contradicting and counter-intuitive. One moment he is stressing the non-existence of self and the illusion of the existence of self. The next moment he's talking about the existence of the conscious self in the infinite past and infinite future. Very annoying. Not a good advertisement for the coherence and practical live-ability of Tibetan Buddhism.

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### **Debbie Reschke Schug says**

A clear, but dense delivery of the what, why and how of Buddhist practice. I'm still grappling with many of the concepts in here (how exactly do I contemplate emptiness?), but there's definitely not a dearth of books on Buddhism.

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### **Sinn says**

Es ist nicht so, dass dieses Buch furchtbar schlecht wäre. Aber es ist auch nicht gerade ein Meisterwerk.

"Die Essenz der Lehre Buddhas" ist weniger was ihr Titel verspricht als mehr ein Überblick über verschiedene Interpretationen von Lehren, die der Buddha erteilte. So hängt sich der Text meist an einigen Kleinigkeiten auf und versucht sie so detailreich zu erklären, dass es stellenweise völlig unübersichtlich wird.



Natürlich ist es, besonderes im Buddhismus, schwer die "Quintessenz" zu finden. Warum? Weil sämtliche Lehrmeinungen tatsächlich als gleichwertig gelten. Man kommt deshalb nicht umhin ein philosophisches Problem aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln zu betrachten und die wichtigsten Schulen zu Wort kommen zu lassen, wenn man es zu lösen versucht. Und genau da hackt es meiner Meinung nach mit diesem Buch.

Während bei den Meditationen kaum auf die Unterschiede eingegangen wird (gut so!), wird die Lehre der Leere zig mal interpretiert. Manchmal hatte ich sogar das Gefühl, dass diese Passage beinahe das ganze Buch einnimmt.

Sei's wie es sei. Dieses Buch empfehle ich Einsteigern jedenfalls nicht, wenn sie sich kurz über den Buddhismus informieren wollen. Dazu ist der Text zu komplex und der Schreibstil zu verkopft. Wer sich allerdings davon überzeugen möchte, dass der Dalai Lama sämtlichen Lehrmeinungen zu bestimmten Thema aus dem FF beherrscht, dem sei es ungenommen es zu lesen. :)

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### **Rosa says**

Pensé que sería una buena introducción al budismo, me había estado llamando la atención desde hace un tiempo y lo cogí. Realmente es un buen libro pero tiene tantísima información tratando de introducirte en todas las escuelas de budismo y en palabras con las que no estás familiarizado que quizás termines algo confundido.

Pero tranquilo, a pesar de conocer las palabras y a pesar de todas las escuelas y sus respectivas diferencias es realmente un libro claro en lo más general. En los cambios que puedan llegar a ser más aplicables en el día a día occidental. Porque no se trata de convertirse en budista, sino de conocer y, por medio de ése conocimiento, mejorar. Hay algunas ideas sobre las que, sin duda, me faltan muchas cosas que leer y mucho que razonar antes de digerirlo (o conocerlo). Como la idea del vacío, creo que este mundo vamos buscando justo lo opuesto del vacío y esta noción se nos hace... absurda, ilógica, imposible.

Antes de terminar el libro, se nos hace un introducción a la meditación que el mismo Dalai Lama practica. Una meditación algo compleja que te hace pensar que este no es un libro para empezar a meditar pero tranquilo, sigue con lo general que también sales con una idea de lo que se trata. Todo se andará, al fin y al cabo si tienen razón, quedan unas tantas vidas para lograrlo.

En definitiva: si sientes curiosidad, como yo, por este modo de vida y creencia a la que frecuentemente se alude de forma tan genérica, es un buen libro y te recomiendo que lo leas. Si no tienes ni idea de budismo, igual es mejor buscar otro sitio por dónde empezar.

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### **Cornerofmadness says**

I do enjoy reading the Dalai Lama's works and this is no exception. It is, however, hard to review. It is, according to the dust jacket, a comprehensive overview of the most important teachings in Buddhism and that is exactly what it is.

Being raised Catholic and growing up in a culture a world away from Buddhist teaching, it is sometimes hard

and yet delightfully challenging, to try and wrap my head around these teachings. The idea of emptiness, for example, the thing the Dalai Lama holds as the most important, is mind blowing to me. I felt mind blown through much of this and it will take several more readings I'm sure to really grasp what is being said.

I'm not reading this in order to change beliefs (something the Dalai Lama doesn't find prudent by the way) but rather to understand other ways of thinking and believing. I do find some Buddhist tenants far more in line with my own thinking and others are so different that I'm not entirely sure I understand them completely. That said, the book isn't hard or inaccessible at all. It's just learning to think in new ways isn't always easy. I did like this book a lot.

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## **Juan de Dios Reyes says**

En realidad no sé si debiera calificarlo. En este caso las tres estrellas son más que nada porque estimula mi curiosidad por el tema aunque, la verdad, creo que entendí muy poco...

Hace mucho aprendí que el lenguaje no sólo es un instrumento que nos permite comunicarnos (bien o mal), sino que se construye (y traduce) según nuestra visión del mundo. En ese sentido, me queda muy claro que el lenguaje usado por el Dalai Lama y sus traductores es algo que no entiendo, que no comparto desde lo más profundo pues vemos el mundo y nos hemos desarrollado desde una posición distinta. Eso no es bueno ni malo, sino diferente y por tanto aunque podamos usar las mismas palabras, éstas tienen un significado diferente lo que dificulta el (mi) entendimiento.

Tengo mucho que aprender aún para poder entender lo que los budistas dan por obvio.

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## **Ci says**

This is a concise introduction to the Buddhism as a life philosophy. It is largely based on lecturing expositions by Dalai Lama during his trips to US. It is best service as a reference book for key points of doctrines.

Buddhism is non-theistic, practiced at different intensity and understanding first in the East then to the West. There may be a diffusive narrative of creation, but it is not emphasized as much. The overall philosophy hinged on the premise that Life is Suffering, and build up this baseline point (one may say, not very optimistic), to remove the elements of suffering and achieve a state of "luminosity" -- enduring happiness. The approach is laid out through Four Noble Truths, and Eightfold Paths. As the author said: "Given that our future well-being is in our own hands, it is we— by our own behavior—who determine whether or not our future will be happy."

In the teachings, we heard the emphases on detaching us from our "grasping" and "attaching" to sensations and desires, cultivating a sense of detachment from "self", then progressing Compassion toward others.

I can see how Buddhism had gained such strong influence after WWI and WWII in West as the traditional Christianity faced a significant challenge from the horrors of trench warfare of WWI and the Holocaust of WWII. The natural pacifistic inclination would find more resonances in the Buddhist's more unambiguous teaching of no-harming principle. The advance of science and technology has turned people away from the problematic theistic doctrines of Creator God, miracles and ancient doctrines and toward the accommodating

and spaciousness of Buddhism. Along the line of self-regarded enlightenment, it feels closer to the individualistic impulses.

I think that Buddhism fills the Gaps of modernity's need for spirituality while making peace with one's individual drive and ambition in society.

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