

This book argues for the central role played by absorption in the functioning of the human mind. The importance of absorption makes itself felt in different ways; the two studies combined in this book concentrate on two of them.

The first study, *The Symbolic Mind*, argues that, largely as a result of language acquisition, humans have two levels of cognition, which in normal circumstances are simultaneously active. Absorption is a (or the) means to circumvent some, perhaps all, of the associations that characterize one of these two levels of cognition, resulting in what is sometimes referred to as mystical experience, but which is not confined to mysticism and plays a role in various “religious” phenomena, and elsewhere.

In the second study, *The Psychology of the Buddha*, Prof. Bronkhorst provides a theoretical context for the observation that absorption is a source of pleasure, grapples with Freud, and illustrates his observations through translations of ancient Buddhist texts from the Pali and Sanskrit languages along with his psychological commentary.

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