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Relational Mindfulness

Fundamentals and Applications

Springer

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Foreword

The mindfulness movement may yet become the most significant advance in therapeutic practice of the present century. Yet, the future of this movement remains in question. Much depends on the unfolding dialogues on how we conceptualize mindfulness practices and the resulting implications. The present work catches in full flight an exciting turn in the dialogue. Not only do the contributors challenge the current narrowing of vision, they also draw from the riches of history to offer an orientation of vitalizing potential.

My own interest in practices of mindfulness began before there were such practices, or at least, before they were understood in this way. This was some 50 years ago, while I was on study leave at Kyoto University. There I was invited to participate in a meditation event hosted by a Japanese Zen master. For me it was an experience steeped in history, philosophy, aesthetics, and cultural symbolism. It also launched a life-long interest in Buddhism and its potentials for human well-being. In my academic work this interest first helped me to understand how psychological science, as I had come to know it, was indeed an outgrowth of Western assumptions. One might say that it was an indigenous practice of knowledge making, without foundations for its claims to universality. Later such ideas entered importantly in framing my work in social constructionism. Indeed, I could see that achieving a state of *no-mind* in Zen meditation was much like deconstructing a text. It was a means of escaping the grip of the otherwise dominant discourse in which one lived. This work led to generative explorations with Maurits Kwee, on the intersection of social constructionist ideas and Buddhist-inspired therapy.

Perhaps the most relevant outcome of this interest in the Buddhist tradition emerged in my attempt to develop an alternative to the Western conception of the individual self and its corrosive effects on society. This alternative centered on relational process, as fundamental to the creation of all forms of life. In developing these ideas I found both support and inspiration in the Buddhist concept of *interdependent co-arising,* which essentially means that all is related and nothing exists independently. As I could begin to glimpse, meditative practices were immersions in co-arising and as such a realization of what I had called relational being.

During these same decades, there developed in the Western therapeutic circles a steadily increasing interest in meditative practices. I recall in the late 1990s asking an audience of narrative therapists how many of them included such practices to their narrative therapy. Over half responded affirmatively. However, it was also clear – and wholly normal – that such practices were being culturally appropriated. Most prominent were attempts in the mental health profession to give them scientific credibility. At the outset this meant removing possible traces of spirituality and religion. In this attempt at purification, "mindfulness" practices were born. By giving prominence to "the mind," the outcomes of meditative practices could then be traced to "cognition." And it is here that the cognitive behavioral movement in therapy began laying claim to mindfulness practice. Indeed, I recall an international CBT conference at which the Dalai Lama was featured as the keynote speaker. Soon enough, because the study of cognitive function had become allied with neuroscience, mindfulness was being reconstructed as a brain state.

It is true that the metaphor of mindfulness has been enormously fruitful in its invitation to innovate. By removing meditative practices from their ancient roots, practitioners were free to create practices especially relevant to context. A cornucopia of new and promising ways toward well-being have resulted. At the same time, there was also a recognizable loss in the profoundly rich heritage that was left behind. For many of us, the greatest loss resulted from the absorption of such practices into Western individualism. What had once been an orientation to practice emphasizing our fundamental inter-being had become a gateway to silent separation. It is in this context that the present volume bursts into significance. With special appreciation to the editors of this book, we are treated to a multi-dimensional exploration into the relational dimensions of mindfulness practices. Bringing ideas, experience, and wisdom from across professions and across continents, the contributors open an exciting path to the future.

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Kenneth J. Gergen

Preface

The field of mindfulness interventions[1] has grown steadily since its introduction with the Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program (Kabat-Zinn 1979, 1982, 1990; Mc Cown 2013; Moscoso 2018). Since the early 1970s, research on meditation has developed greatly. Thus, the number of scientific publications in English in "2014, 2015, 2016, was 1.098, 1.135 and 6.838 respectively" (Goleman Davidson 2017). Although, the initial emphasis was placed on the field of health in medicine, it quickly spread to mental health after the creation of the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program and onwards to countless programs in psychotherapy, organizations, and personal development (McCown 2013).

Based on evidence-based research, its impact has simultaneously led to increasingly rigorous scrutiny of its benefits and contributions to subjective human well-being, as well as, more recently, questions about the validity of methodological designs, to address claims that needed further examination. However, despite the well-founded scientific attitude that is systematically promoted to validate it, it is also recognized that much more is unknown about its effects (Goleman, Davidson, op. cit). So, interest in research remains open and growing.

This has also led to an effort to provide different definitions in the area, which can circumscribe the phenomenon under study and clarify its foundations and applications in the domains included in the understanding and extension of the concept. In this context, there is also an active discussion about the scientific definition itself[2], operational with respect to the components. However, both from the foundations of

[1] In meditation a deep path is distinguished (Goleman, Davidson 2017) and a broad path. In turn, in the deep, two levels are recognized: the first is linked to the meditation traditions of the Theravada and Tibetan Buddhist lineage and the second where the practice is assimilated without the Buddhist nuclear component, for its assimilation to Western culture. On the broad path, mindfulness appears at level 3. Although there is a level 4, of massive application and even the development of a level 5 is expected, where it focuses on brief health practices, the interest in scientific research at all levels is maintained, due to the relevance for both development human as to alleviate suffering and increase health.

[2] The discussion about definitions, in Moscoso (2018).

the “deep path” and from the application programs developed in the “broad path” limited to mindfulness, there is a convergence in considering the practice of mindfulness meditation in an individual framework (Gergen 2006; McCown 2013)

We believe that the substantial development of mindfulness today implies considering a dialogue between (individual) mindfulness based on neuroscience and the perspective of relational mindfulness based on social science. Consequently, unprecedented opportunities have emerged for exploration of the close links between individual processes and interpersonal cultural phenomena. These developments prompt consideration of an overarching issue: To what extent can knowledge from neuroscience and social sciences foster real progress in the field of mindfulness as a relational dimension?

The priority of this book is to introduce the relational perspective in the field of mindfulness, as a way of expanding the foundations and applications that are currently presented with the modern, individual conception of the discourses of the self. It should be noted that the epistemological assumptions at the base of the current conception refer to empiricism, and that the relational alternative rests on a pragmatic approach anchored in the notion of the vocabulary of social constructionism, and not in the assumption of an absolute truth. We, therefore, propose openness to construct horizons of conversation and dialogue, rather than epistemological confrontation. This requires respect for the different positions as expressions of an active process of generating knowledge in progress.

The text offers different perspectives across different domains. In Part I, it provides a reflection on the foundations on which the visions of social constructionism have mainly been developed and, at the same time, introduces the perspective of enaction and neurophenomenology, which in itself represents an alternative in the transition towards the relational dimension. This opens possibilities for dialogue at the meta-theoretical and methodological level, largely because of the attempt to complement the third person perspective with the first person and the second person – understood as relational.

Part II is a more open space to describe and provide detailed examples of different developments in the same field, applied to the clinical setting, organization, and education. The action mindfulness programs based on empiricical methodologies, as well as approaches from neurophenomenology and developments from social construtionism - in different approaches addressing the embodied relational dimension - are put into action at different levels of application.

More specifically, Part I will focus on the basic theory and scientific research in the domain of relational mindfulness, with relevance to social science and social neuroscience. In Chap. 1, Roberto Arístegui examines the fundamentals of relational mindfulness. The relational mindfulness project is strongly based on the perspective of relational being in social constructionism, as an alternative to the conceptions of self that are anchored in the mechanical self. In Chap. 2, Maurits Kwee proposes relational mindfulness as the art of wakefulness and heartfulness in everyday life. Buddhism 4.0 is a fourth-generation interpretation of the Buddha’s discourses as a psychotherapy and a metapsychology of social constructionism for which Kwee has coined the name relational Buddhism. In Chap. 3, Sheila McNamee

proposes the concept of radical presence as a relational alternative to the mindfulness practices that have emerged within a primarily self-contained, individualist philosophical stance. Radical presence – as a form of relational mindfulness – challenges us to coordinate multiplicity, embrace complexity, and formulate ways of going on together in a world of differences. In Chap. 4, David Martínez-Pernía, Ignacio Cea, and Andrés Kaltwasser introduce a methodology that incorporates the subjective experience through the neurophenomenological program that provides a more comprehensive view of the effects of the mindfulness practice. In Chap. 5, Claudio Araya presents enaction and neurophenomenology as a research program that questions the representational perspective of knowledge. He proposes the enactive relational perspective as relevant to understanding relational mindfulness. In Chap. 6, Jorge Leiva explores Francisco Varela's contribution to the emergence of a new paradigm in the social sciences and the practice of relational mindfulness, in the understanding that neurophenomenology proposes contributions to relational mindfulness.

Part II will deal with social perspectives in mindfulness research, with insights from the clinical application of the relational mindfulness perspective, in both medicine and mental health care. It is also devoted to social perspectives on mindfulness research, with insights from the applications of the relational mindfulness perspective to productive organizations and educational organizations. Through this wide-ranging proposal, we hope to promote novel reflections on this much-needed complement, while opening opportunities for relational mindfulness to be introduced into the core of social life. In Chap. 7, Erik Van den Brink and Frits Koster describe the Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL) practical training program that was developed by the authors for graduates of foundational mindfulness-based training programs, such as MBSR, MBCT, and equivalent courses. In Chap. 8, Joseph Loizzo, based on a neuropsychological framework, surveys the clinical applications of basic mindfulness, relational mindfulness, and embodied mindfulness to cognitive insight therapies, social emotional therapies, and transformational somatic therapies. In Chap. 9, Joaquín Gaete and Roberto Arístegui propose to understand mindfulness, or what Thich Nhat Hanh (TNH) refers to as "looking deeply," as a kind of ethical knowledge inherent to the condition of being a person and, by necessity, "relational." In Chap. 10, Marcelo Demarzo provides a narrative review of the conceptual foundations of mindfulness and clinical practice in healthcare to present contributions of the mindfulness practice to the development of relational therapeutic skills among health professionals. In Chap. 11, Edgardo Morales examines how mindfulness can serve as an embodied relational resource in psychotherapy. He presents a view of mindfulness that highlights its transformative potential when applied to the relational domain. In Chap. 12, Javier García Campayo shows the remarkable interest in the application of mindfulness to interpersonal relationships in different fields, from work to family and social life. Interpersonal relationship styles are intensely influenced by so-called attachment styles. He also intends to reflect on the interpersonal relationship model after the practice of deconstructive and nondualistic meditations. In Chap. 13, Miriam Subirana explores the practice of relational mindfulness, introducing practices that

awaken the awareness of how we relate to one another, how we listen, and which language we use, which not only improve the relational atmosphere in organizations, but make them flourish. In Chap. 14, Dora Fried Schnitman considers the generative imprint of mindfulness as a space of dialogical connection with oneself and with others and how it is possible to reformulate the communication model that uses mindfulness toward a model linked to generative dialogue, understanding its practice as a dialogue

We would like to thank all the authors who have collaborated, opening new worlds to us. Above all, we would like to acknowledge each of them for their contributions, innovations, as well as their understanding and experience, and highlight their coordinated spirited collaboration, considering they come from different continents. We put special emphasis on the fact that the last period during which the texts were written coincided with the sustained global pandemic situation. We thank the authors for their ability to create this book that broadens borders on an innovative mindfulness project. We are also grateful for the contribution of the editing team that has worked under conditions and context of social emergency. Many thanks to Bruno Fiuza for his constant support and coordination in the development of this project.

In addition to their cultural and geographical differences, we highlight the targeting of different groups in considering the emerging phenomenon of mindfulness that consists of moving from the individualistic perspective towards an incarnate and relational conception of knowledge and self-care, dimensions that intersect in the vision of mindfulness as a project of being in the world of life with others. Our position is that this involves living to one's greatest potential.

We hope all readers enjoy this book about human development.

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Contents

Part I
Theoretical Fundamentals of Relational Mindfulness

Chapter 1
Fundamentals of Relational Mindfulness

Roberto Arístegui

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the following article is to develop a relational perspective on mindfulness. Considering that mindfulness has been understood primarily as an individual practice, I would like to investigate the epistemological and self-conception assumptions that lead to this type of understanding and also inquire in relation to the epistemological assumptions of the self-discourse in which it is presented. My approach refers to making explicit the tradition of the discourses of the self that arise in the transition from modernity to postmodernity so that we can situate the position that is held in mindfulness.

When addressing and introducing the problem of mindfulness reduction in a modern and individual setting, the consequent limitation of the understanding of the practice appears. That arises when circumscribing the experience to the internal psychic domain of an individual mind, in which there is a limitation to the development and realization of the meaning of the practice itself, which is framed in an internal observer domain. This also implies assumptions linked to the computational cognitive approach, which is rooted in the modern development of psychology. This commitment to the cognitivist conception leads to a distancing from experience, at the same time to a communicative distortion and the introduction of a theoretical and reflective framework that does not access the experience or the position of the interested and situated in the world with others; rather, it proposes a distancing and abstraction under the idea of a supposed neutral observer. Therefore, this situation opens the following questions: Is it possible to conceive mindfulness

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from a relational perspective? How do we do so? What are the implications? Is it only necessary to add some relational exercises to the practice established in current protocols? How to add an additional chapter to an already established "text"? Is it correct to ask about the epistemological foundations of practice and the individual construct of mindfulness contrasting these with being relational?

This is how I propose to examine the canon of definitions of mindfulness and ask if it is inherently individual or if it can be conceived from the relational being.

As an alternative, I will approach the problem of the foundation of a relational conception of mindfulness, developing as a central axis the approach to the problem of the self, from a relational perspective. This shows a convergence of mindfulness (its codependent origin) with the perspective of social constructionism. It also implies making the perspective of the relational self-discourse explicit, aimed at developing the relational being considering mindfulness in a social context. Given that the differentiation of being in the world with others implies a multiple conception of being in relation to others and not only of being delimited limited to the same. This raises the question of the need to distinguish or articulate both dimensions and ways of behaving, referring to understanding mindfulness practice. So, if only the sameness is assumed, it will be thought that the denial of aspects of identity (not me) will be the access route, but in what sense of the meaning of the term identity shall we say it? Returning to the notion of an individual, delimited being, with a state of mind as its "essence," or what is most characteristic of its identity? Or, in the dimension of being relational, being able to be in coordination with others?

In this same domain of explicitness of the conceptions of the self in the modern-postmodern transit, it is clarifying to visualize the movement towards relational social identity in postmodernity – framed in the classic distinction pointed out by Reisman et al. (2020), self-directed and hetero-directed. Following this direction of analysis, in this essay I will focus on examining in depth the perspective of Gergen (1992), exposed in the saturated Self, assuming the visions of the self as the context in which the identity of self with others is posed, specifically in the conception of discourses of the self, according to this author.

It is in the dialectical tension between these two modes of being (delimited and relational) that, in my opinion, it is possible to discuss the notion of not-self as a type of response to the question of identity raised at the roots of mindfulness, relative to the reconfiguration of the self, as a central "mechanism." Assuming the distinction regarding the self, from the relational discourse itself, it is possible to differentiate from the Cartesian tradition identified by the I-think that gives rise to a reflective position of the self. On the other hand, from the dimension of the relational self-discourse, it appears possible to articulate the experience of finding oneself in language with others, without manipulating a separation between mind and body, associated with the position of the I-think.

On the contrary, it is possible to pose the questions: how to provide a reflection of the implicit foundations in the proposal of mindfulness in an individual setting? Is it possible to develop an alternative conception of mindfulness as being relational

in a relational conception of knowledge? To address these questions,[1] it seems to me that it is necessary to delve into the epistemological assumptions of psychology in a modern paradigm that determine a conception of knowledge as an individual, which leads us to the epistemological dimension according to which knowledge supposes the representation of a reality. External, that there is no an external-internal reality reference, as well as to come up with an alternative from the knowledge conceived as a socially articulated pragmatist. For this, I adopt a position of holism as a framework, from which it is possible to examine the epistemological assumptions of mindfulness, according to which, it would be possible to separate beliefs from meaning, which refers to the traditional empiricist position committed to analyticism or cartesianism. Before continuing, it should be noted that to examine the path of relational mindfulness we assume that it is necessary to explain epistemological assumptions that compromise the position of mindfulness as a delimited, modern individual discourse of being anchored in epistemological assumptions of psychology in a modern paradigm frame as normal and critical science. Such assumptions lead to the conception of truth as correspondence with external reality that is based on the notion of knowledge as a reflection of external reality. The language conceived as a reflection, and the pictorial theory of language, plays a central role as the foundation of mindfulness focused on the individual. In order to make this position explicit, we assume a perspective of social constructionism from holism, where pictorial theory is questioned and language is conceived in a frame that proposes that there is no external-internal reality to reflect, but that we construct reality in language, in a vocabulary, through which we coordinate our actions, which brings convergent consequences between the claims of social constructionism and mindfulness practices derived from Buddhism.

To develop this perspective, I will now address the following points:

(1) Mindfulness: operational definition
(2) Relational perspective and discourses of the self
(3) Paradigms in psychology and epistemological core of intelligibility
(4) Metatheoretical reflection

1.2 Mindfulness: Operational Definition

We will address what seem to us to be two central domains of mindfulness, the definitions that specify Kabat-Zinn's (2011, 2009) position at the origin, and the assumptions of the epistemological foundation, derived from the definition's commitment to the discourses of the modern self and the meta-theory of the modern

[1] A previous study (Aristegui, Araya-Veliz 2019) addresses the dimension related without connecting with the epistemology underlying the discourses of the self. What is addressed in this study.

science paradigm that supports it. This is what we will address in the following successive steps.

Next we begin with the explanation of the definition in a framework of modernity and the contrast from a position of social constructionism.

Different definitions of Mindfulness[2] are recognized. In the context of this inquiry, I will focus primarily on the widely accepted scientific definition. The operational definition is given by the central statement given by Kabat-Zinn (1994, p.4), who maintains that Mindfulness consists of "Paying attention, in a particular way, intentionally, in the present moment, without judgment."

Different authors have deepened and commented on the statement, both to specify the components and to explain or criticize some of them. Delving into the components of this definition, three elements are recognized, according to Shapiro and Carlson (2014). There are Intention, Attention focused on the present, and Absence of judgment. In this area there has been an active discussion, with variations, considering two components (attention and non-judgment) and finally the three other components (attention, intention, and non-judgment). Criticism of the notion of non-judgment has also been present (Dreyfus 2017), showing that a working memory is needed to access deep states of mindfulness. In the same sense, the role of judgment to elucidate more complex (deep) states in therapy has also been emphasized from clinical psychology, appealing to the classical conception of meditation, which does include it. Recently this definition has been addressed from a review of meta-analysis studies (Moscoso 2018). An alternative definition has also been proposed following Bishop et al. (2004) pointing out the self-regulation of attention and the attitude of acceptance to experience the present moment, as a metacognitive process.

Although our interest is focused on reconfiguring the perspective of the self, the authors agree that the central aspect to highlight as a psychotherapeutic effect is emotional regulation. The main observation that arises when exposing and examining the context of the definitions of mindfulness is that they are focused at the individual level,[3] pointing to either trait or state. The operational definition appears in the same sense, pointing to three processes that refer to operations within the person.

As a question to the tradition of defining mindfulness in an individual setting, taking as a background the social constructionism focused on the relational being, McCown (2013) has contrasted a conception from the relational perspective. Looking for an ethical space of the mindfulness clinic, which he understands as relational, he proposes a comment that accounts for the emergence of a mindfulness moment located in the space of sharing, which follows the realization of a form of joint care in the community: "There is no "one" experience are definition of mindfulness. There is, rather, an infinite number of unique experiences are definitions, shaped by the language, gestures, comportment, as well as the assumptions, inten-

[2] I closely follow the McCown (op.cit) exhibition and Moscoso (2018).

[3] This is a central position in McCown (op.cit.) in its ethical proposal on mindfulness from social constructionism.

tions, and dispositions of those at work at the moment."[4] This formulation gives a first-person voice to those who are practicing in a mindfulness community of practice and redefines the scope of individual-centered definitions. This formulation is aligned with the perspective of relational mindfulness as coordination of action, joint action, what is developed on the sections that follow.

In the following section, we will address the dimension of self-discourses as a context for discussing definitions of mindfulness.

1.3 Relational Perspective and Discourses of the Self

The context of understanding the vocabularies of self-discourses is developed in Gergen (1992), who describes three discourses of the mime itself in the transition from modernity to postmodernity. I will focus on certain characterizations related to the vocabulary of the self that he proposes, which are relevant to establish a reflection on the assumptions they involve.

By adopting the perspective of the romantic self, a set of terms are put into action that attribute traits and states to people, including in the vocabulary expressions such as soul, creativity, and moral mettle. At the same time, the use of certain terms entails ways of life, such as friendship canons where the concept of time involves shaping permanent commitment, or to the uniqueness of a relationship, as well as the establishment of certain transcendent ends beyond immediate goals.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, modernism entered contemporary life radically questioning the romantic vocabulary and the internal dimension of mysteries, establishing the primacy of reason and observation oriented to the conceptual dimension and conscious intentions, eliminating notions such as soul and spirit from the scientific vocabulary. The new terminology was based on objective referents and that of meaning as a way of presenting referents. This is how Freud represents the transition from the romantic to the modern period, guiding healing towards the ability to name and generate awareness before the force of the dynamics of unconscious processes. Later, in psychology, a development appears that leads to the rethinking of interiority, which is accessible through measurements and validatable tests using an operationalized language. The development of modernity allows the emergence of a cognitive language, of internal formal representations conceived as a computational theory of mind. It is the colonization of the mind by the concept. The explanatory power comes to reside in beliefs and its degree of rationality in correspondence with reality. This stage allows a synthesis of behaviorism and cognitivism in psychology. The explanatory power comes to reside in beliefs and its degree of rationality in correspondence with reality. This stage allows a synthesis of behaviorism and cognitivism in psychology. The explanatory power comes to reside

[4] Op. cit, pp.88.

in beliefs and its degree of rationality in correspondence with reality. This stage allows a synthesis of behaviorism and cognitivism in psychology.

At the same time, the discourses of the modern self come together in a faulty description of people. For example, to describe the person's mental state, it is common to refer to the use of terms such as low self-esteem, exhaustion, bulimia, depression, anxiety, obsession, and a long list of etcetera. This coincides with the fact that a vocabulary of anomalies and defects is generated as normal.

However, if we now return to the discussion of Gergen, regarding the substantial, internal, essential being, of the romantic discourse of the self, we see that it has been replaced by the advent of the modern self-discourse. We find ourselves in turn with the modern self-stressed and confronted by social saturation, where the postmodern approach of the multiplicity and disappearance of the self appears.

Gergen (1992) has faced the dissolution of the self and colonization under the saturation of the self, in the movement from modernity in conflict with the emerging postmodernity. He has described the breakdown, fragmentation, and dissolution of the modern self in the face of social saturation due to communication technologies. It provides a description through the clash of vocabularies where coherence is missing and relativity appears confronting the discourse of modern truth with multiplicity. In this context, where change is described as permanent in people's lives, the need to articulate the different ways of living in time has been raised, whether in the perseverance of character or in the openness of promise (Ricoeur 1996). In the transition from the internal to the external (Riesman et al. 2020), a first approximation towards the social constructionist position, I consider it situated in the perlocutionary effect[5] (the unwanted in the use of language, due to the relations oriented to instrumental purposes) of the communicative distortion produced by social saturation.

Regarding this context of social saturation and self-colonization, Gergen's proposal opens a possibility of facing the development of a new modality of being multiple in the face of fragmentation. As a response to the suppression or validity of the discourses of the romantic and modern self, Gergen poses a relational self. In the first stage, there is a transition from the modern conception. He adopts the instrumental form as someone who maintains a contact according to the essence, avoiding showing himself authentically. Strategic manipulation dominates in social saturation, because the relationship with the world is maintained in continuity from a substantial self. Regarding this context of social saturation and self-colonization, Gergen's proposal opens a possibility of facing the development of a new modality of being multiple in the face of fragmentation.

The next stage in the process is the personality so-called pastiche, alluding to a way of dealing with saturation without achieving a complete coherence. The pastiche personality becomes a way to surf diversity.

[5] According to Austin (1962) in speech act theory, locutionary is what is said; ilocutionary is what is done by saying and perlocutionary the effect of what is done by saying.

However, the moment of initial break with modernity is approached by the position of social constructionism towards the elaboration of a perspective of the relational self in the direction of a new conception of cultural being, the relational being that differs from the delimited or individual being non-relational. This is how the conception of the relational self finally emerges, which addresses the dimensions of narrative truth, emotion in a narrative framework, as well as narrative morality. In this context of transition, the relational self-approach addresses – narratively – the precise dimensions that are in a break in modernity, namely, the notions of the propositional, the normative and the expressive, as types of independent discourses that have developed since the beginning of the modern stage. Let us remember that culture was understood medievally as the search for truth, good, and beauty. It is precisely these dimensions that would have entered a break or failure in modernity, according to the postmodern gaze. We can see Gergen transiting the discussion between postmodern modernity, reformulating the notion of an internally established, romantic self, which gives way to a modern reformulation – which in turn breaks ties with the romantic tradition. Finally, with the advent of communication tinged with social saturation, Gergen chooses to face it generating a new conception and alternative of postmodern identity, according to the postmodern gaze. In short, his proposal is to move foward a relational self, faced with the possibility of a vocabulary of relationship in the field of postmodern life. As an alternative, Gergen raises the vision of the relational self in language as use in the coordination of action and the relational confluence, facing the identity crisis in saturation due to the multiplicity of fractional relationships. The most important thing in the postmodern relational perspective is that you can contribute to the romantic and modern tradition by continuing with the sense of openness to multiplicity, thus allowing a dialogue that does not eliminate previous vocabularies.

Next, we propose to assume the discussion of the discourses of the self within the scope of the epistemological assumptions of the psychological theories that support them.

1.4 Paradigms in Psychology and Epistemological Core of Intelligibility

To access the framework of epistemological discussion, I will make a brief contextualization of foundationalism that leads to the position of logical empiricism and discussion from holism (Arístegui 2015). Later, I will expose the framework for discussion of paradigms in psychology and the nucleus of epistemological intelligibility, as a disciplinary matrix that sustains the discourses of the self.

The modern epistemological position of foundationalism, supposes an access to the privileged representation, conceived as objective knowledge. By proposing to adequately reflect reality, the notion of the mirror mind constitutes the basis of privi-

leged representation, where true knowledge is accessed as a faithful copy of a pre-given reality.

To delve into the transition from the epistemological tradition to the pictorial conception of language, we will focus on the stages of the linguistic turn (Rorty 1967, 1979, 2010).

The linguistic turn is an orientation that maintains that problems in science and philosophy can be examined in a way that would not be possible if the dimension of language is not addressed. The analytical philosophy of language is committed to the idea that it is possible to establish meaning and reference in a background language. Additionally, it assumes that the dimension of truth is analyzed in primitive forms of reference, which is crucial for the orientation of the theory of truth as correspondence.

Two variants were developed, such as analytical philosophy of the ideal language and philosophy of ordinary language. Recently, it has been explicitly revealed that hermeneutic (phenomenology) is an active part of the linguistic turn (D'Agostini 2000).

The analytical philosophy of the ideal language is projected in the analytical conception of science. Scientific knowledge in this frame inherits the idea of privileged representation, such as the accuracy of representation, no longer as an image but as a formal representation. This ideal is achieved in modern analytical science with recourse to observation and verification. In logical empiricism the foundation is conceived as the correspondence of the proposition with the facts of the world, where the word-thing relationship is established as a foundation.

Applied by Carnap (1970) for language understanding, it was proposed as a set of linguistic rules and in addition the truth. In this precise context, a semantic system is made up of a set of rules:

1. Rules of translation from ordinary language to ideal language
2. Rules of assignment of meanings for parts of the ideal language
3. Rules of truth for words using the theory of truth

The set of rules constitutes a semantic system, or linguistic background, into which ordinary language is translated to allow the establishment of the unambiguous reference.

1.4.1 Pragmatism

Within the analytical philosophy of language, an alternative perspective originates, the pragmatic vision, against the tradition of correspondence-reference. From the philosophy of ordinary language, Wittgenstein initially questions the image theory and the position of verificationism. He proposes the version of meaning as use, in the context of language games connected with life forms. His new philosophical vision of language radically transforms the previous scenario, raising an objection

to the centrality of the reference, the language game of science. He maintains that there is a variety of games in which the meaning is established.

To restrict that range of language games, Austin (1961, 1962), in that same framework, introduces the performative-constative distinction. He points out that the use of verbatim language centered on the facts of the world is a traditional form of use, centered on truth, the reference established by truth conditions, but not the only way to give meaning. Performative uses are characterized by being a type of expression in the language that "they do when they say." They constitute the world; they do not describe it. They are characterized by not having conditions of truth, but conditions of happiness, or fulfillment in accordance with the social convention. The distinctions locutionary (what is said), illocutionary (what is done when saying), and perlocutionary (the effect of what is done when saying) are linguistic keys to the new conception of language that are developed in the theory of speech acts. In this theory, five types of speech acts are recognized: declarations, commitments, directives, assertions, and expressions.

1.4.2 Holism

From a logical point of view (recalling the name Quine uses for the set of essays critical of logical empiricism), Quine's epistemological holism (1953) proposes that theories are underdetermined by evidence, in his attack on the *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*. A further step is taken in proposing the indeterminacy of the radical translation (Quine 1960). In a radical translation context, consistent with the same evidence, it is possible to hold more than one translation manual, although logically incompatible with each other. Referential terms are behaviorally indeterminate in a context of radical translation indeterminacy (Quine 1969). In turn, the indeterminacy of the reference applies in the mother tongue. The context of validity in science, the pictorial theory of language and the inherited conception of theories, is thus radically criticized from Quine's position.

Assuming critical positions to the reference of Wittgenstein (1953), of the underdetermination of the theory by the evidence and of the indetermination of the Quine reference (1960, 1969), Gergen (1991, 1994, 2009) elaborates the consequences of holism in line with indeterminacy, questioning whether psychological theory is derived from observation and reflects reality. The construction of meaning is carried out, with the participation in language games in holistic contexts and in performative use. From indeterminacy it is possible to have more than one valid description. It proposes the pragmatic conception of language as coordination of action, based on joint action.

1.4.3 Nucleus of Epistemological Intelligibility

Returning to our interest in clarifying the foundation of self-discourses in the epistemological context of paradigms in psychology, how can we understand the process involved in transit and changes from the romantic, to the modern, to the relational self?; does the suppression of romantic vocabulary from modern discourse involve the same treatment of romantic and modern discourses from the establishment of postmodern vocabulary? The questions refer to the disciplinary matrix, the epistemology of psychology as science. It brings into play the concepts of clinical psychology. These questions can be articulated meta-theoretically as a paradigmatic commitment to pictorial theory or, alternatively, the pragmatic conception of language.

What is the framework of intelligibility of the self-discourses examined? In our context of discussion, this involves reflecting on the epistemological assumptions of the discourses and conceptions of the self involved in the transition from modernity to postmodernity. To pose the question to make its meaning and action potentials (foundations) intelligible as social practice (meta-theoretical assumptions).

Analyzing this context, the context of the paradigm shift in psychology, three central moments are recognized in which psychological theories reach a paradigmatic status (in the Kuhn sense). Thus, behavioral theory, cognitive theory, and social constructionism are recognized. Considering a framework for changing intelligibility, Gergen (1996) proposed the existence of two auxiliary discourses – which accompany the theory, in the process of transition from one intelligibility to the next. This is how he questions whether theoretical proliferation alone is enough – to make way for a new paradigm. It is necessary that meta-theory and methodology accompany the theory as necessary levels of change to say that change is paradigmatic. Remember that Kuhn (1975) proposed that between one paradigm and another, there was a revolutionary period, in which there is no new regulation, which appears in a subsequent phase. Elaborating the paradigm shift dimension, Gergen distinguishes the normal science phase, the critical science phase, and the transformational science phase.

The step from one intelligibility to another is shown in Table 1.1.

The passage from one paradigm to another requires alignment with the epistemological core of intelligibility, between the meta-theoretical, methodological, and theoretical levels, at each stage of science. Traditionally, Kuhn circumscribed the paradigmatic moment to normal science. Gergen proposes the moment of critical science, like the one in which an internal discussion of the paradigm is presented, although it does not stop participating in its conventions. Instead, when the conventions of negation exceed the explanatory power of the paradigm, beyond normal

Table 1.1 Change of intelligibility

Modernity		Postmodernity
Intelligibility I		Intelligibility II
Normal science	Critical science	Transformational science

Table 1.2 Nucleus of epistemological intelligibility (NEI)

Meta-theory	Logical empiricism	Logical empiricism	Holism, language games
Methodology	Scientific method	Scientific method	Performativity
Theory	Behavioral	Cognitive	Social Constructions
	Normal science	Critical science	Transformational science

science and critical science, a new vision emerges. To constitute itself as such informs the meta-theoretical and methodological discourses, with which, in addition to having a theoretical novelty, it produced a paradigmatic change beyond the revolutionary period.

In Table 1.2, we outline schematically the transition from one intelligibility to another, by levels of the epistemological core of intelligibility.

In the modern period that includes both stages, normal science and critical science, the commitment to the theory of truth prevails as correspondence; therefore the finding at the methodological level being characterized by the constative dimension (according to the Austinian expression that Gergen critically introduces to question the modern psycological paradigm) Gergen (1996); Arístegui (2015). The development of behavioral theory and the step towards cognitive theory, at the paradigmatic level, is included under the same meta-theoretical assumptions of logical empiricism. Both theories are constituted as moments (the two dogmas) of the development of the epistemological vision of logical empiricism, namely, the reduction to observation and analyticity.

The paradigmatic breakdown of modernity in psychology occurs when dissatisfaction with the supposed cognitive revolution leads to the emergence of constructivism; that radically questions the theory of truth as correspondence and reintroduces in the psychological theoretical discussion the dimension of the subject, meaning, and, mainly, consciousness. When questioning the theory of truth as correspondence, a breakdown occurs at the level of epistemological assumptions (meta-theory and methodology) and not only at the level of theoretical discussion.

Gergen's position of social constructionism questions that the change from behaviorism, as a normal science, to cognitivism, as a critical science, constitutes a paradigm shift. Theoretical change is not accompanied by a change at the meta-theoretical and methodological level. In this sense, he does not agree with the idea that cognitivism is a revolutionary change in psychology, but rather represents a strengthening of the paradigm. The modern paradigm of psychology remains anchored in the assumptions of the pictorial theory of language, that is, of truth, as correspondence that is at the center of the program of logical empiricism.

In contrast, Gergen proposes a conception of psychological theory outside the limits of logical empiricism. He maintains the thesis that theories are not derived from observation; that they do not represent reality; and that psychological phenomena are not independent of discourses. At the same time, it advances in the line of pragmatism in language, which does constitute an alternative paradigm in that it provides meta-theoretical assumptions that question logical empiricism and the scientific method from holism and at the same time proposes a new vision from holism.

Invoking the underdetermination of the theory by the evidence, it supports the questioning of the reference in the context of justification (validity) of science, pointing to action language and not to language as representation.

Social constructionism is meta-theoretically based on the alternative of holism, language games, and at the methodological level, novelly in the performativity in front of the constative dimension, proposing that the meaning is found in the use of language in contexts of coordination of relational actions and not within the mind.

The understanding of our individualities occurs in the framework of the relationship between historically and culturally situated people. The terms with which we account for ourselves are not dictated by objects. They are the product of cultural exchange. Self-accounting over time does not depend on objective validity. The significance of language derives from the way we operate in patterns of relationship, where discourse informs patterns in cultural life.

In this context of opposition to the epistemological core of intelligibility of the modern paradigm of psychology, we can conceptualize at a meta-theoretical level (including the normal science phase, as well as the critical science phase) the approach of social constructionism as a paradigmatic alternative. The emergence of holism (pragmatism) in the transformational phase raises the indeterminacy of both meaning and reference. What affects the factions in conflict from the tradition of logical empiricism – which are projected in the phases of science under a modern normal and critical conception in psychology at a meta-theoretical and methodological level in each one of them – however, this does not mean a radical paradigmatic difference between one stage and another.

There is the possibility to look at the development from one stage to another, from holism – depending on the vocabulary of the two dogmas of empiricism, the reduction to observation and the synthetic analytical distinction. The behavioral phase specifically focused on reduction to observation with the elimination of theory and the cognitive phase with the introduction of analytical hypotheses, with recourse to analyticity.

1.5 Meta-theoretical Reflection

In order to develop a meta-theoretical reflection on the assumptions of mindfulness committed to the individualistic tradition, based on correspondence-reference and the pictorial theory of language, I propose to delimit the assumptions of individual mindfulness regarding the position of being relational, anchored in the discourse of the relational self and the relational being.

The definition of mindfulness, understood in the discourse of the modern individual self, in a pictorial framework leads to the interior of the subject, to the identity understood as referentially determined. By proposing that it is about paying

attention, intentionally, without judgment, you define an individual being. As an effect of its inclusion in the field of mental health, it is linked to the deficit discourse, insofar as it operates as an effective treatment within the biomedical framework of diagnosis-treatment. The definition, under discussion, coincides in giving a framework for prior understanding of the terms at stake. The scientific definition establishes the reference of the terms under investigation, previously in a background theoretical, meta-theoretical, and methodological framework, following the principles of logical empiricism.

The latter leads to distinguishing, against the epistemology of convergent mindfulness with the modern cognitive-behavioral phase – centered on logical empiricism and the conception or theory of truth as correspondence – the thesis of the underdetermination of the theory by evidence and the double under-determination, the indeterminacy of radical translation (IT), from which it is possible to delimit and question the assumptions of logical empiricism on which cognitive and behavioral psychology is based, where the developments of mindfulness committed to correspondence nest.

The approach of social constructionism, centered on the discourse of the relational self, refers to holism, indeterminacy, language games, and performativity. Leaving the pictorial paradigm, it opens to the dimension of pragmatic language as coordination of action. He recognizes indeterminacy and questions the primacy of the reference game. The conversation is constituted in the supplement and the coordination of joint action.[6]

From the relational perspective, Gergen proposes a confluence between social constructionism in dialogue with Buddhism. In both positions it is not possible to "tell the truth". It consists of not taking the statement for granted but deconstructing it. He maintains that indeterminacy (which he contributes from constructionism), comes together with the notion of not accessing a truth from himself. The very position of the self is understood in social constructionism as a construction. Which converges with the non-self-position of Buddhism. In examining the path of the four noble truths, Gergen points out a difference with the vision of Buddhism in the final stage of its development, regarding understanding cessation as liberation from suffering limited to the personal, individual domain (Gergen, además lo que 2009). Instead, the context of relational being leads to social agency; it is a way of assuming an inclusion, a decentralization of the self, not in a reflective self. It is a radical change of reference and use of language. The meaning is undetermined; we open ourselves to being with others.

[6] Although performativity involves determining the illocution point in an agreement or network of conversations, in the Austin-Searle derivation (Arístegui,2015), Gergen does not follow that line committed to the ideal language philosophy.

1.5.1 Meta-theoretical Assumptions of the Pictorial Theory of Language as a Context for Understanding Mental Terms

The foundation of the modern paradigm is given by the commitment to the theory of language as a reflection or pictorial theory of language. When conceiving language as a reflection, its main function is conceived of describing the facts.

In the pictorial context of language comprehension, words establish the term-thing connection, constituting the level at which the reference is established. The specific context of the application of this strategy to mental terms raises the problem regarding the domain of application of the reference. The question is opened about the conditions under which a mental term can satisfy the necessary conditions to establish the reference. It is by way of the denomination in the diagnosis, or in the characterization oriented to the individual mental experience as internal, that the discourse of the self is constructed as an individual being delimited as soon as the mental or self-referential terms are interpreted through the pictorial theory of language.

In this context, the under-determination of the theory by the evidence applied to the understanding of mental terms, being mediated by the use of language, proposes the parameters of a double under-determination (indeterminacy of the meaning of mental terms by the indeterminacy of the radical translation). In the context of the indeterminacy of radical translation, there is no question of fact (between manuals). It implies that in the domain of habitual conversation (in the mother tongue itself), the indeterminacy of the reference operates, which, in the context of pictorial interpretation, constitutes a difficulty, which is overcome with radical translation. This means that ordinary language is translated into a linguistic background as a previously established linguistic background.

Indeterminacy applies to faulty diagnoses on the *DSM-5*[7] line. Although the healing potential of mindfulness as a treatment technique in psychotherapy shows great success in terms of effectiveness, the strategy involves a commitment to the ontologization of descriptions and labeling, via pictorial theory, which says "on what there is," which circumscribes the domain of the problem in the context of the discourse of the modern self, within the person.

Here indeterminacy opens as a possibility of conversation, also of the identity of the self. Absolute determination of meaning (by indeterminacy), assumed in radical translation, is not possible. "Subjection" occurs in the assumed hierarchy, introduced by the linguistic frame of reference uncritically taken for granted.

With the argument reformulated in terms of the psychological domain of modern self-discourse, if establishing meaning consists in operationalizing mental terms at the level of observation conditions, this cannot be fulfilled as soon as the notion of correspondence-reference with a supposed internal mental reality is applied. If, on

[7] American Psychiatric Association, DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria Reference Guide. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

the other hand, an attempt is made to introduce it by way of analyticity, analytical hypotheses, or truth by virtue of meaning, are affected. Appealing to the context of validity in science, the justification criterion is not satisfied.

In summary, in opposition to the pictorial context of understanding the mental terms referred to the scope of the modern self-discourse, Gergen (1996) invokes the thesis of the theory's underdetermination by evidence (Quine) to address the claim to satisfy the criteria of adequacy for interpretation by means of the theory of truth as correspondence (pictorial theory) of mental terms. According to the conception of epistemological holism, if the theory is undetermined by the evidence, the treatment of the mental terms is questioned according to which the terms in the conversation could operate as referents in the language – towards "the internal" as we have said. The named reality – which refers to the internal – poses an additional problem, which consists in that the input is linguistic and, therefore, it is affected to the indeterminacy of the radical translation and not only to the underdetermination of the theory by the evidence.

Thus, moving in the same direction, our formulation regarding access to the identity of the relational self, as an understanding of oneself and of the other as mediated by the use of language, also places us in the context of the indeterminacy of the referents in the mother tongue, in everyday communication. Access to the understanding of identity with oneself and with others needs to be adjusted within the framework of the relationship in language as coordination of action; it is not a matter of fact. If the linguistic correspondence is transferred to the scope of the relationship between a signifier and a signified beyond, it is being proposed that the game of reference applies to the domain of the internal mental. What confronts us is a conception of pictorial language, understood as "the language." It is a tradition that is inadvertently used not only in philosophy, but in addition to its application in science, it has effects in everyday life, what permeates the translation of mindfulness in the modern individual frame.

Assuming the perspective of holism – from criticism to the dogmas of empiricism – it is necessary to challenge the analytical-synthetic criterion of differentiation, because, if an analytical position is adopted about language, separating language from the experiential dimension, we would be influencing in the difficulty of making a demarcation criterion explicit, due to the acceptance of a mindfulness practice subject to the "scheme" of the dogmas of empiricism. The perspective of the pragmatic conception allows access to the articulation of experience in the context of being relational.

On the other hand, if one adopts a pictorial position, language and experience are disaggregated, as occurs in the discourse of the modern self. As an alternative, we propose from holism the under-determination of theory by evidence. In this context, we develop the precision that in the understanding of the experience articulated in language, the double under-determination, the indeterminacy (of the radical translation), occurs, which results in the relational referents being brought into play to adjust directly, in the context of the relationship the understanding of the meaning (Arístegui 2006, 2015). It is this indeterminacy, brought to hand from holism in the position of social constructionism, that brings about a convergence with the

approaches derived from the Buddhist foundations (Gergen 2006) of mindfulness, according to which there is no access to a truth, neither in the world nor in itself, where the meaning emerges generatively in the relationship.

As already mentioned, access to meaning does not come from disaggregation or segmentation carried out at the level of "the experiential" in preparation for, subsequently, delivering a previous meaning, for example, between what it feels like to breathe, listen, look, and walk with full attention in a mindfulness retreat practice, which culminates in a summit session where a pre-established doctrine is given as a sense that determines the references, previously coined. Translating-interpreting the experience, framed in terms of the previous doctrine as "that is impermanence," or "not-me", "non-duality" functions as a protocol equivalent to an ideal background language, to which the pre-given doctrine of wisdom is translated and uncritical references are established.

This procedure rests on the conception of correspondence-reference and linguistic correspondence. It is the equivalent of a radical translation of experience into a theory developed based on assumptions, principles, and stipulative definitions. It influences the third dogma,[8] where they come to for the previous ones, of outline and content. It is a normative vocabulary imposed for the description of experience (Thompson 2020).

On the other hand, it is not a matter of proposing a dualism of content and experience, where the experience is approached by reducing it to a condition of "authentic," hypothetical observation without cultural theoretical context. Rather, it consists of sustaining a conception of holism that gives rise to a generative theory that questions the approach that there is a prior sense that determines the internal relational references to a practice (Arístegui 2006, 2015), in which a dialogue is allowed between cultures. This does not mean that the existence in practice of certain representations cannot even be accepted; rather, the experience is approached without having to assume a privileged or correct representation. In short, if it is accepted that an indeterminacy is at stake, it allows to open a dimension of community of practice and learning as a relational context to locate mindfulness, with a poetic principle (this means that, until now, the final words have not yet been spoken).

As the meaning is not approached according to pre-established images of a previous sense in a background linguistic framework – which uncritically establishes the referents – but rather situated in relation to direct relational referents as others situated in a relationship of knowledge and care "with," not "about." The referred context allows us to consider an approach to the intimate experience of meditating and being a relational self in the context of mindfulness moments with others. The last line was not said yet.

[8] The third dogma of scheme and content. The questioning of the epistemological dualism proposed by Davidson (1974). In this context, it proposes the indeterminacy as a way of confluence with Buddhism.

1.5.2 Gergen's Synthesis: Holism and Coordination of Action

When examining the meta-theoretical assumptions implicit in the discourses of the self – which refer to the confrontation of the core of epistemological intelligibility of the different paradigms in psychology – we find the traditions of language theory as correspondence and the pragmatic conception of language as use with constructing meaning in coordinating action, to the basis of the differentiation (non-confrontation) between modernity and postmodernity. Gergen's approach to social constructionism rests on the path of conversation and the conception of human being opened by holism, indeterminacy, and the search for language games articulated with ways of life, performatively, through which it leads to the characterization of the worldviews of the self at stake in psychology.

Assuming a perspective of the discussion of paradigms, from Kuhn, modified by Gergen by the auxiliary discourses of theory, methodology, and meta-theory, it is necessary to consider the three disciplinary moments in psychology in a context of formation, transit, and transformation, not only within a paradigm but between paradigms. The strategy is how to make the movement intelligible, both in the presentation of a position and in the confrontation, due to the prevalence of the conventions of negation that are put into play. Since Kuhn, the sequence of change occurs when the anomalies exceed the explanatory power of a frame. At the center of Kuhn's discussion and proposal – against the slope of theoretical change by accumulation of evidence against – emerges a discontinuous configuration change with the scientific Gestalt culturally based, not reducible to evidence. It consists of introducing a Hegelian synthesis approach, with revolutionary moments between paradigm shifts. Kuhn has adopted the notion of language games of the second Wittgenstein, as well as Quine's radical translation indeterminacy thesis, at the center of his proposal. This involves a paradigmatic tension of incommensurability when considering theories as different language games, incompatible with each other, as well as not being theoretically inter-translatable. At the same time, the theoretical compatibility strategy, if carried out from logical empiricism, in psychology leads to a kind of theoretical (and technical, in psychotherapy) eclecticism. The foregoing does not allow us to assimilate the differences between the different approaches, which threatens the identity of the theories, reducing them to the empirical basis and introducing an assumption of analyticity as the center, in other words reducing one paradigm to another and making the fixed, irreversible analytical nucleus prevail.

Trying to overcome this traditional epistemological scheme, according to which an approach constitutes "the privileged representation," we suggest assuming the position of holism followed by both Rorty and Gergen. This leads to advocating a conversational alternative, through the pragmatic conception of language as opposed to the foundationalist assumptions of the pictorial theory of language. In this way, consider in the meta-theoretical dialogue that theories in psychology and psychotherapy suppose a commitment to the core of epistemological intelligibility of (the) psychological theories, as traditions of meaning – in the theoretical, meta-theoretical,

and methodological articulation within a paradigm; although they do not necessarily constitute in themselves paradigms accepted by psychology,

In a transformational science, what is at stake is the step towards a dimension of meta-vocabularies with the introduction of the notion of conversation, which involves going beyond a foundationalist epistemological foundation, focused on the pictorial theory of truth. What appears from the transformational perspective in a pragmatic position is a conception of alternative vocabulary and not of foundational truth, which can lead to conversation rather than confrontation. This, pragmatically, has consequences for action since it opens the consideration of the different terms and vocabularies in the conversation. In the same sense, proposing a route of conversation between the epistemological positions outlined in the previous section is aimed at new coordination of action. It would consist of creating a vocabulary to communicate, not to refute. When in a conversation in case a representational tone is not adopted, and the words and terms are considered without the correspondence, the weight of the conversation of characterization and objectification is released; instead it is proposed as coordination of action. It also opens the possibility of coordination of joint action, to a communicational and collaborative language game connected with forms of life where there is a space for power (inter) being in every perspective, from the cultivation of the relational mindfulness dimension between us, with others.

In the pragmatic context, it is possible to listen to the uses of language, without eliminating the vocabulary for reasons of repression of a position confronted with others. There might exist the possibility of conversing, in different vocabularies and languages without paradigmatic confrontation, on the path of the immeasurable, and at the same time distinguishing the local, in the face of conceptual colonization. There is no polarity between theoretical intertraductibility and the indeterminacy of radical translation. Counting on the principle of charity in conversation, we consider that the other "is correct," although that does not mean that the other establishes the truth as correspondence referentially (Quine-Davidson). Understanding the meaning of expressions and terms holistically leads us to start listening by affirming that the other speaks well, in terms of his tradition. If the difficulty in understanding lies in the translation rather than in the assertion of the misunderstanding, the position of pragmatism can converse in different language games with others. The movement of meaning does not constitute an inside that is now an outside, but in the scope of the vocabulary of the discourses of the self in a non-pictorial, constative, representational (theoretical and abstract) context, but in the supplement in the coordination of action in contexts of illocutionary understanding. The language and the intentional turns (that involve intentionality) from the use of the mental terms in the relationship are allowed because it is understood that they lead to the understanding of commitment in the agency. His understanding is post-metaphysical. They do not account for a beyond the limit of language.

Along the way and developing the relational perspective, Gergen (2006, 2009) proposes a confluence between social constructionism in dialogue with Buddhism.[9]

[9] Kwee (2010)

In both positions it is not possible to "tell the truth." It consists of not taking the statement for granted but deconstruct it. He maintains that indeterminacy (which he contributes from constructionism) comes together with the notion of not accessing a truth from himself. The own position of the self is understood in social constructionism as a construction, which coincides or converges with the position of the not-self of Buddhism. In examining the path of the four noble truths, Gergen draws a distinction to the interpretation of Buddhism at one stage of its development, with respect to understanding liberation from suffering not confined to the personal, individual domain (Gergen 2009). The context of relational being leads to social agency; it is a way of assuming an inclusion, a decentering of the self; it is not a reflective self. It is a radical change of reference and use of language. The meaning is undetermined; we do not open the being with others in communication.

1.6 Conclusion

Mindfulness has been translated into a frame of the discourse of the modern self, circumscribed by being delimited, inside, separate, individual, atomized in the language used in a pictorial context, which refers to the interior.

When the Buddhist metaphor of the four noble truths is approached, which leads to liberation through a path that recognizes suffering, the origin of attachment or desire raises. This proposes a liberation by accessing the not-self and culminates in a new state of release. This step of liberation from suffering is understood as an individual state.

However, assuming a perspective of the relational being without the presuppositions of the delimited individual self, of the passage of liberation understood in the context of the relational being, consequences for joint action follow. A potential for access to a social background is released. In this space of confluence in the here and now with a future horizon, the proposal of relational mindfulness transits towards including multiple parts.

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Chapter 2
The Skillful Art of "Heartfulness" and "Kindfulness" in Relational Buddhism

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> …I expound and point out only the reality of suffering and the cessation of suffering. – Anuradha Sutta[1]
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> Just as the ocean has only one taste, namely, the taste of salt, so is the Dhamma possessed of one taste, namely, the taste of freedom. – Hemavata Sutta

2.1 Introduction

Buddhism 4.0 is a fourth-generation interpretation of the Buddha's discourses (after the Buddha's Dharma, Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka, and Vasubandhu's Yogacara-Cittamatra) as a self-psychotherapy and a metapsychology of social constructionism, founded on Gergen's Relational Being, that I have coined Relational Buddhism (Gergen 2009a, b). The "4.0" is in line with the classical designation of the previous three turnings of the wheel (Samdhinirmocana Sutra): Buddhism as a soteriology (the Buddha), a philosophy (Nagarjuna), and a god-less religion (Asanga-Vasubandhu). Buddhism as a psychology of awakening meditation and therapeutic conversation transcends these accounts. As a psychology this widely studied teaching belongs to the academic discourse of psychologists, even though it is not (yet) recognized by the mainstream discipline.

This offering starts with the proposition that Buddhism is a "religion-less religiosity" commenced by a mortal man who got his genius and insights by using his intellect of heart and brain while sitting under a tree in the Iron Age. What he discovered or rather uncovered was obviously not rocket science but knowledge and

[1]Suttas and Sutras: The referred threads can be found by googling and choosing the preferred version.

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wisdom on relating with self and others. The Buddha exemplified this way of life 100 generations ago by his enlightening conversations and awakening meditations. His discourses exclude references to the beyond. They highlight instead the primacy of here-now experience in a search for happiness amid existential suffering (Kwee 2013b). When asked by the Brahmin Dona, awed by the Buddha's footprint, what kind of being he is, the Buddha answered that he is awakened; and when asked whether he is a deity, celestial being, half-god, or human being, the Buddha discarded these labels and declared that "I am like a lotus flower blooming out of the mud." This makes his teaching fundamentally different from known systems which propagate that something other-worldly is ruling humanity. The Buddha's teaching can be delineated as the skillful art of relating peacefully within (as well as without) which is based on self-confronting with own body, speech, and mind, i.e., actions, thoughts, and feelings. These are the only experiencing available when sitting alone together with self under a tree. Basically this is a meditative search for self and might be called a psychological quest. Ironically, in his exhaustive search to "know thyself," the Buddha did not find any self but found "not-self" instead. Worship is anathema in his teachings which exclude projections of gods (Kaccanagotta Sutta; Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta; Gaddula Baddha Sutta). Contrary to the Brahmanical comforting belief in godheads and self, the Buddha's alternative expounds "emptiness" and "not-self" which implies that, looking within, there is no everlasting fixed self (I-me-mine/ego) due to life's impermanence. As manifested in thinking and feeling, this impermanence causes continuous imperfection and psychological suffering. The latter is due to habitual craving, grasping, and clinging, leaving the seeker frustrated and unsatisfied (Kwee et al. 2006; Kwee 2010, 2015a, b).

The term mindfulness, first used by T.W. Rhys Davids (1843–1922), is a translation of sati whose general meaning and linguistic connotation is remembering or being heedful and not forgetful to guarding wholesomeness. Mindfulness as a translation of sati feels like a mishap because the term associates with a full rather than with an empty mind. Pristine mindfulness pertains to more than non-judgmentalness. It is a memo to being constantly watchful in full awareness-and-attention to whatever appears in the stream of consciousness and to being a guardian of the doors of perception securing karmic wellness of body/speech-mind. The peaceful method that the Buddha secures to ending suffering under a tree I call "heartfulness." The Chinese calligraphy for this meditation is 念 which means presence (upper character) of heart (lower character) denoting that it is about being wakeful while practicing what I call "kindfulness" (loving-kindness, compassion, and joyfulness) when confronted with whatever feeling, thought, or action that appears in body/speech-mind. These dimensions can be refined and detailed into Behavior-Affect-Sensation-Imagery-Cognition-Interaction, one's BASIC-I (Kwee and Lazarus 1986; Kwee and Ellis 1997, 1998). BASIC-I is an acronym of these modalities and is a wordplay for self or ego. It is equivalent to the khandhas (Pali) or skandhas (Sanskrit) (aggregates or heaps) of clinging that function in dependent origination. BASIC-I arise and subside in concert, not independent from each other.

Heartfulness is a qualification of the practice's quintessence to watching and witnessing our hearts and to relating to ourselves and others. In the Buddhist languages of Asia, mind accounts for Affect that inhabits the heart, where experience is felt on the level of emotionality which goes deeper than discursive versus non-discursive or non-judgmental awareness. The mind as heart is not an alien idea considering the way love is depicted as an event of the heart in the East and the West. *Heartfulness* is a term designating emotional experiencing which associates with a resonating heart. The notion that the elusive mind is "neither within nor without, nor is it to be apprehended between the two" (Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra) implies that mind is empty and nowhere to be found. By lack of words, mind is in the heart, thus "Inter-heart." The practice of *heartfulness* refers to cultivating here-now affective awareness. It is also a memo to noting each moment that passes by in the spaces of body/speech-mind. The task is to attending, introspecting, and inquiring intelligently our afflictions, to guarding and protecting against unwholesomeness, and to forming wholesome affect and Karma in relational balance (Kuan 2008, 2012, 2013a, b, c).

Affect is the psychologists' term for inner feelings, from vague moods to fierce emotions, and forms the center of BASIC-I (Kwee 2014). Emotions are not facts. Emotions are just transient experiences which disappear when embodied non-defensively. Extinction expedites when the emotion is not judged, but tolerated and accepted as such. Emotions might escalate when rejected and repressed. Because poisonous emotions are a matter of the heart, they can be detoxified by a warm, open-hearted, and generous attitude of equanimity implying kindness, compassion, and shared joy amid life's adversity. The crux of the Buddhist suffering is emotional, and Buddhism's *raison d'être* is to ending this by experiencing that the self is ultimately empty (Kwee 2015a, b).

The discovery that there is not-self comes in naturally if insight and understanding dawn that self is an abstraction of a non-abiding inner state which exists as an "I am" illusion of permanence (but is nonetheless a useful index in provisional reality). On an ultimate level of reality, the Buddhist experience is that "I am not." BASIC-I is something to be aware of, attended to, and embraced in unconditional positive regard which is in effect letting experiences come and go with tolerance, acceptance, openness, curiosity, gentleness, humor, caring, and trust. By doing so, particularly when the Three Poisons – greed, hatred, and ignorance (3P) on how the mind works – are met, the practitioner becomes peacefully grounded and is relatively unmoved by the daily recurrent storms of negatively felt emotions of fear, grief, anger, or depression. Practice while in action is the daily quintessence of *heartfulness* which boils down to a method of relating to experiences encountered from now to now in the here. Self-acceptance is hands-on by being non-judgmental when dealing with thoughts about self, but judgmental to-the-max when intentions of karmic actions are at stake.

2.2 Appropriating

The current Western "mindfulness-based" practices are connected to Kabat-Zinn's (2003, 2005, 2009a, b) understanding of the exercise that he operationalized as "a moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and openheartedly as possible. When… cultivated intentionally, it is… deliberate mindfulness. When it spontaneously arises… it is… effortless mindfulness" (p. 108). He subsequently takes this mindfulness-based practice out of its Buddhist context and massages it into Western culture by medicalizing it and by spanning a universal umbrella, other than Buddhism, over it. This de-contextualization of mindfulness-based exercises is verbalized as follows (Kabat-Zinn 2011; http://articles.latimes.com/2010/oct/02/local/la-me-1002-beliefs-meditation-20101002): "Mindfulness, the heart of Buddhist meditation, is at the core of being able to live life as if it really matters. It has nothing to do with Buddhism. It has to do with freedom. Mindfulness is so powerful that the fact that it comes out of Buddhism is irrelevant."

If it is true that meditation in the mindfulness-based practice is the heart of Buddhism, how can it be that it has got nothing to do with Buddhism? How can its Buddhist origin be irrelevant if it stems from Buddhism? Why is its Buddhist umbrella replaced by "universal wisdom" which conveys a depreciation of Buddhism and disrespects its innovator, the Buddha Gautama? The mindfulness-based method founder appeals instead to the Hippocratic Oath and neglects to mentioning the Buddhist basic principle of ahimsa, non-harming. According to Kabat-Zinn (2011, p. 283), "…how the Buddha himself was not a Buddhist, how the word 'Buddha' means one who has awakened, and how mindfulness, often spoken of as 'the heart of Buddhist meditation,' has little or nothing to do with Buddhism per se, and everything to do with wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom. These are universal qualities of being human, precisely what the word dharma, is pointing at. The word has many meanings, but can be understood primarily as signifying both the teachings of the Buddha and the lawfulness of things in relationship to suffering and the nature of the mind." Indeed, the Buddha was but a finger pointing to the moon, not the moon itself, and Kabat-Zinn is seemingly blurring Buddhism by an appropriated pointing. By taking the practice out of its Buddhist context, the Buddha's heritage is thrown out of the window. It is curious that the pioneer of the "mindfulness-based stress reduction" current, although knowledgeable about Buddhism, knowingly disidentifies from it (e.g., Husgafvel 2016), pays tribute to Hatha yoga, and seems to not being interested in the Dharma's stake. Is this appropriation, pilfering, a chutzpah (Kabat-Zinn 2015 in www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ7adrOj9s)?

Noteworthy is that mindfulness in the mindfulness-based method is defined as paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. However, this "moment-to-moment non-judgmental awareness does not include Buddhist psychology…" It is but an isomorphic translation "…for greater awareness, self-knowledge, equanimity, and self-compassion… practiced

across all activities of daily living…" aimed at "the cultivation of insight and understanding of self and self-in-relationship" (Davidson and Kabat-Zinn 2004, pp. 150–152). How can greater awareness, self-knowledge, equanimity, self-compassion, and the cultivation of insight and understanding of self and self-in-relationship – unmistakably psychological processes – exclude psychology? Is it because Davidson as a neuroscientist and Kabat-Zinn as a molecular biologist lack allegiance to clinical psychology and psychotherapy?

From a Buddhist perspective, Kabat-Zinn's (2003, p. 145) operational meaning comprising "on purpose," "present moment," and "non-judgmentally" is constrained. It is not clear what "on purpose" exactly entails as it seems to be referring to the purpose of the exercise but not to the essential purpose of awakening to Buddhist insights. On a different note, Kabat-Zinn (2011, pp. 291–292) clarifies non-judgmental: "Nonjudgmental does not mean to imply… that there is some ideal state in which judgments no longer arise. Rather, it points out that there will be many many judgments and opinions arising from moment to moment, but that we do not have to judge or evaluate or react to any of what arises, other than perhaps recognizing it in the moment of arising as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral…" The question what is meant by non-judgmental was also noticed by Gethin (2011) who grappled: "Yet… an unqualified emphasis on mindfulness as nonjudgmental might be seen as implying that being nonjudgmental is an end in itself and that all states of mind are somehow of equal value, that greed is as good as non-attachment, or anger as friendliness" (p. 273).

Having begun as a detox to inoculate stress, it was discovered that, if combined with cognitive therapy, the mindfulness-based approach also works as a relapse prevention and cure for depression (Aalderen 2015). One can also see that the trading of the practice has been capitalized by, e.g., Goldman Sachs, Monsanto, Capitol Hill, and the US Army. Would this imply that mindfulness-based programs send employees to sitting and keeping their mouths shut in McMindfulness rather than anti-doting the 3P? Economically, it has by now become part of a multibillion dollar industry (Purser and Loy 2013 in www.huffingtonpost.com/Ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html; www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tud1yJ-1zNI). Can this mindfulness be appropriated from its Buddhist context like yoga from its religious roots? Can it be borrowed and disconnected from its pristine function as mind's guardian of wholesome Karma and isolated from the Eightfold Balancing Practice? The answer is evidently yes because that is exactly what has happened. A de-contextualized mindfulness can be used for benign and malign purposes like sneaking, stealing, swindling, sniping, or black ninja killing, silently on the sly. It can certainly be used to augmenting pleasures of a lifestyle which encourages greed and covetousness which Buddhism aims at dispelling.

Notwithstanding the above, mindfulness-based practices have become a hype. Its wide acceptance is propelled by being practically oriented, by its focus on the popular world, by affirming worldly concerns, and by satisfying worldly desires. Inconspicuously this mindfulness has inundated the middle class that benefits from a non-Buddhist mindfulness. Having obscured its historical ties, it is ever-more disconnected from its Buddhist past. Moreover, this mindfulness has not only been

taken out from Buddhism, but it also seems to being commoditized. The victims of this appropriation are Buddhism and the Buddhists who do not oppose a skillful means (upaya) which egregiously adjusts the teaching to a training without the Buddha. This chapter rebuts this false voice.

2.3 Denuding

Now that the phase of mindfulness as a Trojan horse in the medical fortress is history and the mindfulness-based approaches are quite accepted in many professional quarters, it is time to reclaiming Buddhism's role. Since Buddhism began to spread after the Buddha's death, some 2600 years ago, Buddhist practices including *heartfulness* have been adjusted, accommodated, and adapted in far corners and cultures which are disparate from the mores of Northern India. The teachings are realized in many neighboring countries resulting in different forms of Buddhism. There is nothing new under the sun when the Westernization of Buddhism takes on a Caucasian face. One is already accustomed seeing white Buddhist adepts just like seeing yellow-faced Buddhists. About one-third of American Buddhists are of Asian descent, while more than 50% of Buddhists is Caucasian. Among the most notable Western Buddhist teachers are adepts of Jewish descent (so-called JUBUs, Jewish Buddhists), a rather enigmatic phenomenon (www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/193989/the-roots-of-mindfulness). Is the role of Asian Buddhist teachers, who are in the USA and in Europe all along, being downplayed? Being a Caucasian Buddhist or JUBU gives distinction; to be Asian and Buddhist seem to equaling being a backward practitioner of some superstition or folklore (www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/american-buddhists).

Hsu (2016 in www.lionsroar.com/weve-been-here-all-along) contends: "The white ownership of Buddhism is claimed through delegitimizing the validity and long history of our traditions, then appropriating the practices on the pretext of performing them more correctly." In the East Asian traditions, matters of wisdom are respected. They are valued higher than modernism or matters of commerce. For example, Buddhism and meditation in Asia are not treated instrumentally as a wok-to-go devoid from context. She further points at the racism toward Asian Buddhism in the USA which marginalizes Asians' disseminating role in the West. White teachers convey "essential and real" Buddhism, whereas Asian teachers convey something "culturally barraged," that is, the white media message. It seems that since World War II, being Buddhist fueled "racial othering" prompting Asians to bury their Buddhist heritage rather than to come forward with it to not belonging to an inferior race. Exclusion erased the role of Asians as authorities in modern Buddhism and side-lined them in the public discourse in the West.

Inner liberation is attained by cultivating the heart toward wholesome Karma – intention and action – and by imbibing a warm-heartedness throughout body/

speech-mind. The quintessence of the Buddha's message is to practicing *heartfulness* to ceasing suffering. His way to stopping suffering is by being wakeful and awakened, i.e., not asleep, and attentively aware of the ins and outs at all six sense doors. The Buddha admonished to doing this in order to fulfill what he contended: to only teaching emotional suffering (dukkha) and the cessation of this suffering (Alagaddupama Sutta). The Buddha saw the suffering experience as a psychological creation out of mental data material tapped by the sense organs (Rohitassa Sutta): "In this very one-fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world …" In another instance, the Buddha declared that there is no other ALL except per the eyes and images, the ears and sounds, the nose and scents, the tongue and savors, the skin and tangible touches, and per the mind or rather brain that sees mental objects, hence the "mind's eye" (Sabba Sutta).

And what did the Buddha mean by suffering: is it physical or psychological? As an awakened human being, he pointed at suffering as birth, aging, sickness, and death (Dhamma Cakkappa Vattana Sutta). It is well-known that mothers suffer from labor pain when giving birth to a child. The Buddha's birth has led to the death of his mother 1 week after delivery which led to the boy's suffering of not knowing his mother: she was but an illusion (Maya) to him. In fact, any birth or beginning of a life process leads to death through aging. Once young, strong, and pretty, one will inescapably decrepit toward old age and become weak and ugly. Deterioration is expedited by illness and sickness which inevitably shorten life. However, Buddhism is not gynecology, nor is it gerontology, medicine, or thanatology. His analysis of suffering can also be comprehended as a Buddhist developmental psychology of emotional suffering. The suffering referred to is significantly related to the stress of life, its psychological adversity, anguish, agony, and daily felt hardship. Thus, it is not about birth, aging, illness, and death itself but about their ramifications, one's reaction and response, via the psychological functions of perception, cognition, emotion, and action leading to mental suffering which the Buddha had sought to ending.

The Buddha elaborated on these stresses in a terminology which rests ample doubt that psychology is what Buddhism is about. Besides he talked about the self, which is a prime topic of psychology, and innovated the only psychology of self and not-self to date. Thus, I submit the thesis that Buddhism is a psychology and the Buddha was the first psychologist ever, even before the profession and term existed.

2.4 Reclaiming

Pilfered or borrowed and de-contextualized from Buddhism, the 8-week mindfulness-based training has nonetheless gained wide acceptance in health care. This chapter aims at clarifying the Buddhist practice of a pristine mindfulness or *heartfulness* in the context of awakening and at re-contextualizing the mindfulness-based method as *heartfulness*, a disciplined application of Buddhist psychology.

This secures a 3P detoxification by cultivating warm-heartedness and practicing karmic wholesome activities.

Reintegrating this best known mindfulness of the West in a proper Buddhist context can be realized by re-contextualizing it through one of the ten links to *heartfulness*. Buddhist-lite mindfulness becomes *heartfulness* if the practice is (1) an anti-dote against emotional poisoning, the 3P; (2) a means to preserve wholesome Karma; (3) an intertwined component of the Four Ennobling Realities; (4) a step in an Eightfold Balancing Practice; (5) an indivisible part of (Abhidhamma) Buddhist psychology; (6) a training to perceiving dhammas, the smallest unit of experience; (7) an intrapersonal and interpersonal practice of kindness-compassion-joy-equanimity; (8) a start to complete seven awakening factors; (9) a state or trait embedded in wakeful self-love; and (10) a member of a family of twelve meditations, based on the four foundations of sati. These are:

(1) The body (i.e., bodily action and feeling: sensations and emotions)
(2) The body's behaviors (i.e., the motions of internal/external body)
(3) The mind (i.e., thinking: visualizing imagery and conceiving cognition)
(4) The mind's behaviors (i.e., conceptual motions; images and cognition)

Heartfulness is an elaboration of sati that it includes and adds the highlights of 2600 years of meditators' experiences as explained below. The content of what belongs to body and what to mind is evident. A guideline to sati is Buddhaghosa's sixth-century *Visuddhimagga* that refers to a family of 12 meditations on karmic subjects regarding body/speech-mind, to being dealt with by the meditator. These meditations are focused on processes regarding the body and feelings in and of the body (6 exercises) and on processes regarding the mind, the mind's brainy thoughts, and self-speech (6 exercises). See the below table of 12 meditations on body/speech-mind where 6 themes refer to body and another 6 to mind:

1. Breathing (body as living organism as air passing nostrils)
2. Behaviors (body in sitting, standing, walking, or lying dignity)
3. Repulsiveness (body: a skin-bag of organs, liquids, and digested food)
4. Elements (body as water, fire, earth, and wind)
5. Decomposing (body eventually rots and turns into bones and dust)
6. Feelings (body might feel +, −, or neutral, skin-deep, or heartfelt)
7. Hindrances (mind: pleasure, ill-will, sloth, torpor, agitation, and worry)
8. Modalities (mind as khandas or BASIC-I modalities of clinging to self)
9. Senses (the organs: mind as eye, eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin)
10. Awakening (mind of 7 factors to awakening; Satipatthana Sutta)
11. The Four Ennobling Realities (mind on suffering and its vicissitudes)
12. The Eightfold Balancing Practice aiming nirvana (arousal extinction)

The twelve meditations and the four foundations of sati as well as *heartfulness* are all a metonym, meaning that the exercise itself is the means and goal of accruing liberation from emotional suffering. It also helps to developing the seven factors (Bojjhanga Sutta) of enlightened understanding. These are observing and investigating dhammas (smallest units of experience) with energy, joy, and tranquility, in

concentration and equanimity (neither craving nor rejecting). Awakening can be a short-term or enduring experience propelled by insight and understanding by experiencing the ever-changing nature of impermanence of things and persons and self-implying a pervasive emptiness/not-self at the ultimate level of reality.

Rediscovering our inner world aims at a more successful personal striving, at the care of the mentally needy, which might include oneself, and at combatting and preventing debilitating stress, burnout, and other psychological disturbances like depression, anxiety, anger, and trauma. As projected in the mindfulness-based interventions, it is attainable in an 8-week course by a watered-down training of a psychological skill. In its pristine form, it is meant as an in Buddhist context embedded awakening practice for an initiated few committed to a disciplined training. This committed person can be an initiated bhikkhu or a lay practitioner. Both strive to becoming a Bodhisattva: someone who has fully come to senses and is on the way toward Buddhahood. One is awakened to an enlightened self-understanding with a trained ability to skillfully self-anti-doting the source of psychological suffering. Suffering is mainly due to the 3P, comprising greed (fear of losing and grief of having lost), hatred (self-hatred or depression and angry-aggression toward others), and ignorance on the functioning of mind or psyche which results in illusions of the self and delusions on the beyond. Being a Bodhisattva is a lifelong engagement in leading a virtuous life from the depth of heart by kindfulness in unbiased equanimity and in relational balance as to preserving wholesome Karma. While these are prime qualities of the generous and warm-hearted person in an unconditional love affair with self, the term *heartfulness* is appropriate. In the pristine Buddhist context, it serves the function of cleansing and preventing psyche from defiled – afflicted or inflicted – intentional karmic action to enabling a life of awakening in virtuous conduct.

Illuminating insights prompt the novice to exercising wakefulness, i.e., being alert, watchful, and vigilant, not asleep. These are experiencing events of sensing in receptive openness to the spaces of body/speech-mind. Knowing these happenings requires a monitoring of thoughts passing by like raindrops falling on the head, registering how thinking and feeling connect to Karma and kindfully understanding every emotional splash that occurs. This method works with the vigilance of an alert sentinel who is watchful to what enters mind or psyche through the sense doors and who is capable to discern whether the witnessed action, cognition, or emotion is wholesome or unwholesome. In an observing neutral mode, the skills undergird the practitioner’s awareness of body/speech-mind (doing/thinking-feeling) in dependent origination: how, when, and where do each of these modalities originate, arise, and cease?

2.5 Karma

As life is impermanent and imperfect, happiness and pleasure will sooner or later cyclically turn into unhappiness and despair. Our thinking, feeling, and performing are subject to the inherent flaws and fallibilities of a non-abiding world (Dukkhata

Sutta). Suffering arises and ceases in dependent origination of emotion/suffering, cognition/intention, and action/Karma and rests on a circular process of cause and effect, whereby effect is also cause in a subsequent cycle.

The Buddha called himself a kammavadin and kiriyavadin, someone who explains the causes and conditions of Kamma (Pali) or Karma (Sanskrit) and the consequences of action (kiriya) to live a "self-actualized" fulfilling life (www.purifymind.com/KammaLifeforce.htm). This illustrates the importance of Karma and effective action. His take of Karma was radically different from the Brahmanical meaning as a book keeping of good and bad deeds in the context of reincarnation. As the atman, the self and soul, were nullified by the Buddha, reincarnation, the transmigration of a spiritual substance from one body into another body, is anathema. Rebirth can also be interpreted in a present life context as a this-worldly event, i.e., the recurrence of an emotional episode due to one's Karma defined as intentional action/behavior. *Heartfulness* changes undesirable conduct and might extinguish karmic negatively felt emotions by unconditionally and peacefully accepting whatever enters the self-observational spaces of body/speech-mind. Hence the admonition that one needs to be mindful to be heartful, i.e., aware of and attend to the intention of each deed in order to transform karmic unwholesome emotions into karmic wholesome ones and balanced harmonious karmic action.

The 3P hold a central place in a kammavadin's practice of meditation. These poisons follow a traditional Buddhist classification of affect and make more sense if they are formulated in present-day psychological terms by using an equivalent taxonomy of emotions. The framework to classifying Affect is the onion model of basic emotions (Kwee 2015a, b) comprising specific layers, from outer to inner: depression, anger, fear, grief, joy, love, and silence. Silence is an unmoved state of being which could change into being moved (the term emotion stems from the Latin emovere, to move), toward karmic positively felt emotions (love and joy) away from karmic negatively felt emotions (grief, fear, anger, and depression) to which emotional gravity tends to pull. Experiencing negatively felt emotions is although painful and distressing not per se something negative in the end. Its meaningfulness can be insightfully understood and subsequently transformed if totally tolerated in *heartfulness* with unconditional positive regard and self-acceptance. The Buddha's greed inheres in fear (anxiety, fright, scare, panic, terror, apprehension, and the like) and the act of fleeing when anticipating the loss of a loved object and inheres in grief (sadness, bereavement, anguish, pain, despondency, and the like) and the act of crying when having lost a loved one. Hatred inheres in anger (fury, enragement, hostility, resentment, contempt, and the like) and the proclivity to acting aggressively when blaming someone or something and inheres in depression (dysphoria, dejection, melancholia, gloom and doom, and the like) and the inner act of self-downing when angry at self (Goleman, 2003).

The most important and controversial concept in the very heart of Buddhism is Karma. However, the Buddha was clear about Karma's entanglement with the 3P because he viewed them as intertwined with his teaching on ceasing Karma (Kamma Sutta). Detoxifying the poisons is a matter of education. Ignorance is lifted when the Buddha's middle way is completely understood. The quintessence of suffering, its

assessment, diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy, revolves around Karma. Educating includes a rational interpretation of Karma, not as a law of retribution but as a concept of logical fate: willful feeling and thinking reap willful action.

In summary, Karma's features are as in the following (Kamma Sutta):

1. The sober (non-metaphysical/this-worldly) and shortest definition of Karma (Sanskrit) or Kamma (Pali) is intentional action.
2. Karma is an action (behavior/conduct/deed) which includes an intention and is planned (premeditated).
3. A karmic or intentional action takes place during or after an affective or emotional episode by willful thinking prior to action.
4. Karmic intentional action comprises feeling, thought, and emitted action which exists and originates in interdependence.
5. Although karmic intentional action arises in dependent origination, what eventually counts is the accountable deed.
6. Dependent origination is a sequential process of arising-peaking-subsiding-and-ceasing of karmic emoting-thinking-doing.
7. Transforming Karma requires awareness and attention (*heartfulness*) of intention and action of body/speech-mind.
8. The transformation of Karma starts with investing heart-mind energy in witnessing BASIC-I or self to gain experiential insight in not-self.
9. This implies an understanding of the transient nature of self or ego as Behavior-Affect-Sensation-Imagery-Cognition-Interaction.
10. *Heartfulness* is a love affair with karmic self, resulting in not-self (vanished feeling-thought-action of self as lover and of self as beloved).

To be sure, *heartfulness* is to secure awakening, inner liberation, a life of wholesome karmic intention, and action guided by a roadmap combining the best of Theravada, Mahayana/Chan, and social constructionism as elaborated below (Kwee 2012a, b, 2013a, b, c, 2015a, b).

2.6 Re-contextualizing

The Buddha has his own language game plenty of metaphors and texts whose meanings are to be inferred figuratively. Although the Buddha and his soteriological teachings can be qualified as godly, he is neither a god nor a prophet, just a mortal thus fallible human being. He might be called a poetic teacher on extinguishing emotional suffering by eradicating ignorance through practical education. This author has made strides to designing a comprehensive applied psychology out of many of the Buddha's suttas to help people helping themselves. Non-ignorance is primarily based on a psychological understanding and interpretation of the elementary first sutta that sets the wheel of the Dhamma in motion (Dhamma Cakkappa Vattana Sutta) (cf. Gethin 1998; Harvey 2013).

Known as the "Four Noble Truths," this sutta refers to "Four Ennobling Realities" which when lived by purify the heart toward nobility. Ennobling reflects a practice that aims at the Karma of becoming noble of heart and is not a process that makes someone a member of the royalty. It is about experiencing the healing benefits of practicing a middle way between extremes to subsequently attain bodhi, the awakening of mind or psyche. A way of the middle does not condone Transcendental Truths because referring to eternity those truths are extreme and shy from the middle. Obviously there is a truth versus a lie, but something absolute is likely not what the spirit of the discourses breathes. The Dhamma, pioneered and proven by the Buddha to being effective, is a psychological way of life, rather than a godhead religion where such truths are expounded. Dhamma is like in the saying which points at "the truth" that lies in the middle. According to the literature, the Pali and Sanskrit word for truth might also mean reality or fact. Thus, I prefer "Four Ennobling Realities" and drop the Eurocentric label "noble truths" of the early translators. The Buddhist highest attainment is to becoming an Arhat: *a noble or worthy one who has abolished inner enemies and has realized nirvana, the extinguishment of emotional fires*. Here is a psychological reading of this sutta on the Four Ennobling Realities (note the difference with Harvey's "True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled"; 2009).

1st Ennobling Reality Dukkha (suffering) and its counterpart sukha (happiness) are inferred as essentially emotional by nature. Rendered as feeling or bodily sensation, certain patterns of sensations form an emotion. The nature of emotion is layered and encompasses the basic emotional tones of depression, anxiety, anger, sadness, love, and silence or non-emotion (not-self or emptiness). Metaphorically speaking any suffering event, physical and psychological, starts and ends and includes its metaphorical birth, aging, illness, and death. Prior to becoming a wandering seeker, the Buddha, then Prince Siddhartha Gautama sequestered by his father from worldly misery, saw for the first time four sights. The sights of people suffering from aging, illness, and death and the sight of a mendicant which inspired him to going forth. These sights, ex birth, usually set readers on a literal bodily interpretation of suffering much to the detriment of a metaphorical reading what suffering could also be, an emotional or psychological experience. Notwithstanding, the Buddha's basic teaching is rooted on a dual view of human beings as namarupa, mindbody, whereby the primacy of mind is emphasized in the reading of namarupa (not rupanama). No doubt, we need a body to experience at all, and we need mind (psyche and consciousness) to be aware of what we experience. These two psychological factors and one biological factor point at understanding Dhamma as a psychology.

Quintessential in understanding the psychology of emotional suffering is this double meaning when speaking about the sufferings of birth, aging, illness, and death. Why is birth a joyful human event in all known cultures and does birth in the Buddha's take came to mean suffering? Not dismissing the idea that birth of body is the start of human physical suffering and of any experience, the sutta points that the sufferings referred to are definitely of a psychological nature: "sorrow, lamentation,

pain, grief, despair, being with the unloved, not being with the loved, frustration" (Upanisa Sutta). These are all negative emotional or affective states. No one can deny that these variations of stress and apprehension are psychological conditions. In other words birth, aging, illness, and death might well be metaphors referring to mental events. Quite enigmatically, but again pointing at psychology, the discourse ends these 12 sufferings with "In short, the five khandhas of clinging." These khandhas refer to psychological functions: mindbody/namarupa, consciousness/vinnana, sensing/vedana, perceiving/sanna, and mental (cognitive-emotive) fabrications/sankhara. They correspond with the BASIC-I modalities which occur in dependent origination and to which one usually grasps and clings giving metaphorically birth to suffering due to I-me-mine/ego-self. Self or personality is a temporary conglomerate, a constellation amid a flux of modalities, and is therefore essentially a non-abiding empty phantom. From a Buddhist point of view: by not dealing with the illusory nature of self, erroneous approaches eventually perpetuate suffering.

As all these themes of suffering, save body or rupa, refer to emotional experiences, we talk psychology here. Solely taking into account a biological view of birth, aging, illness, and death is accepting a serious shortcoming. When putting a nama perspective alongside the usual rupa perspective, birth could as well be the birth (or rebirth) of clinging to khandhas which creates I-me-mine/ego-self. Giving birth to a self that craves and clings is the prime Buddhist psychological source of emotional suffering. Luxuriating on the metaphor, aging might also refer to the aging of me or self, and illness likely means the inflation of ego toward egotism which is, also in mainstream psychology, a "dis-ease" of mind. Consequently, death including the prospect of dying means losing everything what is I and dearly mine and which belongs to me and my self, my status, my possessions, and my loved ones. All of these define my identity as a person that is lost when dead or is on the way to being lost when dying. This implies an anticipation of a once in a lifetime event that usually encompasses emotional suffering. To note, the death of psychological self has a positive flip side, i.e., the birth (or rebirth) of a next provisional self that might again be transformed into "ultimate not-self," thus repeating an infinite cycle until existential lessons are learned and an enduring and stable liberation from suffering due to obnoxious self and emotionality is attained.

Taking the rebirths as the rebirths of the body of selves would require many physical lives which is anathema in a Dhamma that defies metaphysics (Aggi-Vacchagotta, Sabbasava, and Malunkyaputta Suttas). Bypassing the nama perspective is regressing to a rupa perspective which leads Buddhism to metaphysics, cosmology, and superstition, much further away from a psychological perspective. Does this mean the end of the provisional householder index self? Obviously no! We'll still pay taxes and have a name, address, phone number, and passport. Not-self implies a psychological death or re-death after rebirth experienced in a this-worldly everlasting cycle of happiness and suffering, samsara, and nirvana. Letting provisional self die, i.e., transformed to not-self on the ultimate level of existence, is a reset or reboot of the body/speech-mind system from where a return to life with a refreshed non-clinging attitude is made possible. In summary, the sutta is about a

twofold suffering. The birth, aging, illness, and death of self and self-identity and the birth, aging, illness, and death of body as flesh, bone, and blood.

2nd Ennobling Reality A relevant psychological insight is that the prime underlying cause of emotional suffering is craving which is linked to the 3P which the practitioner needs to abandon. These 3P, discerned and detailed in the disruptive basic emotions of fear, anger, grief, and eventually depression, are obstacles. However, they might be the path to healing if worked through. In Buddhist psychology terms, greed includes fear of losing and grief to having lost; hatred includes anger toward another or oneself; the latter accrues depression. Psychologically, craving is an experience one needs to be aware of, particularly of its dependent origination, i.e., its conditioned arising-peaking and subsiding-ceasing in concert. How does craving arise and cease in dependent conditionality? One may say through the modalities of feeling, thinking, and doing or more refined through the BASIC-I modalities which concur with the khandhas and which occur in dependent origination of each other. BASIC-I winks to the empty khandhas constituting I-me-mine/self-ego which are illusions lacking substance in life's non-abiding process. This self illusion was dis-illusioned by the Buddha in meditation during his quest to ending dukkha, which was his greatest lesson he has learned and conveyed to humanity.

Looking inside, the Buddha emphasized the appearance of consciousness (vinnana) due to the contact of a sense organ with a sensed object. He discerned the usual five sense awarenesses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) and on top a sixth sensing faculty capable to perceiving and observing body/speech-mind and to "viewing" into psyche and body and their contents. This sixth sensing experience is usually described as "mind perceiving mind" but is here called "brain-based mind's eye" to be consistent with the fact that the senses are biological organs. Thus, the brain as the sixth sense alongside the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Having sensed (vedana) and being aware how the object feels (positive, negative, or neither), one introspectively perceives (sanna) mental formations (sankhara). For instance, craving is an assemblage formed by Affect, Imagery, and Cognition, modalities which mound in the intention-motivation (or volition) and corresponding karmic Behavior. Thus, one does, acts, and conducts Karma that is manifested by body and in speech and mind. Unwholesome Karma is conditioned and exists due to craving's idiosyncratic origination-arising-peaking-subsiding-ceasing in concert of the BASIC-I. One gets usually hooked and ends up grasping and clinging to illusory I-me-mine/ego-self. These subconsciously fabricated mental formations might aggravate emotional suffering by proliferation of (racing) thoughts, called papanca, mostly resulting in psychological disturbance or disorder. Since the terms Affect and emotion have no equivalents in the Asian Buddhist languages, felt experience is subsumed under sankhara, a lump of Affect and thought in conjunction with Behavior, which mixes feelings together with Imagery and Cognition, forming karmic intention, emotion, motivation, and karmic action.

The khandhas (aggregates, heap) do not indicate or reflect a noticed order of appearance. The items of the more detailed BASIC-I enable a listing of any focused

on “firing order” of modalities. Depending on focus and attention, one can be aware of the experienced firing order one by one during meditation. The Buddha rendered the firing order sensation/vedana-perception/sanna-formation/sankhara-action/Karma. In modalities’ terms, the Buddha’s firing order is SI/CAB and SAC/IB, whereby I/CA and AC/I are the specifications of a lump denoted as mental fabrication or formation which combines Affect and thought resulting in manifest Behavior. Firing orders have been experimentally studied in mainstream psychology. For example, seeing a snake, we sense the heart racing, think “danger,” feel fear, and run, thus SI/CAB (James-Lange), or seeing a snake, we feel fear, sense heart racing, think “danger,” and run, thus ASI/CB (Cannon-Bard), or seeing a snake, we sense heart racing, run, feel fear, and think about it, thus SBAI/C (Schachter-Singer). Concluding, any firing order is possible depending on disposition, conditioning, and momentary factors which determine a corresponding brain reaction out of a zillion idiosyncratic neuro-electro-chemical possibilities.

3rd Ennobling Reality The end of suffering is when the vicious cycles of birth-rebirth and death-re-death, thus of (mental) pain or samsara, are disrupted and left behind. Emotional suffering is usually embedded in samsara in a cycling process of samsara and nirvana. It may however cease abruptly, like when thirst is quenched by drinking or like when one laughs amid adversity. Nirvana is attained when illusory self is abolished and can be experienced long-lasting when craving is ceased enduringly. Craving and consequent emotional disturbance can be ceased by choosing for the wholesome Karma of thought, speech, and action while unfolding and balancing an eightfold practice. This is the Buddha’s middle way, which is a psychological modus vivendi that one can realize from day to day (the fourth ennobling reality).

Craving’s origination-arising-peaking-subsiding-ceasing and grasping and clinging are interdependent processes involving the BASIC-I modalities/khandhas. The way out of suffering’s vicious cycles of effect and cause is by extinguishing painful emotional arousal on the road toward nirvana. Extinguishing the emotional flames of greed, hatred, and ignorance and working toward non-greed, non-hatred, and non-ignorance require knowledge and wisdom. These are attainable by studying and practicing the Buddhist teachings and by meditation that starts with a one-pointed focused attention to breathing and a widespread awareness of body/speech-mind. The meaning of nirvana as the quelling of sensory flames and emotional fires is similar if not identical to the psychophysiological concept of the extinction of emotional arousal (Squire 2009).

An emotion shows spontaneously occurring expressions reflecting patterns of ingrained physiological sense responses forming fear, anger, grief, or depression, each of which arises and subsides in dependent origination of the BASIC-I. This forming is close to the Buddhist concept of sankhara: naturally occurring mental fabrications of Cognition, Imagery, and Affect resulting in Karma. As in meditative self-observation, it takes an emotion a few minutes of arousal to going through the nervous system. Lengthening is logically due to Cognition and Imagery by one’s own self-talk and inner chatter. Silence evokes nirvana. The term nirvana defies translation and can be, as the Buddha indicated (Bahiya Sutta), a temporary or an

enduring experience wherein life's dilemmas and the dualisms of thinking are transcended into non-dual views of life culminating in empty self. Someone who knows this first-hand and has himself or herself transformed is called Arhat.

An Arhat is someone who, having eradicated inner enemies, maintains a love affair with self and who, by walking the talk of the Four Ennobling Realities, has accomplished a noble heart. Depending on the number of fetters one has overcome, usually totally ten, four levels of progress in depth and understanding of the teachings can be differentiated. One can be at the level of (1) a *stream-enterer* in the Dhamma, (2) a *once-returner* to the Dhamma, (3) a *non-returner* from the Dhamma, and (4) an *Arhat*. Nirvana, a peaceful mind condition of total emptiness, might appear as a transitional state to a long-lasting trait of liberation from greed, hatred, and ignorance. This accomplished person is free from fear, anger, grief, and depression; has gone beyond joy, love, and happiness; and has arrived at an unshakable inner silence that was there all along. A realized or self-actualized man or woman lives a balanced karmic life.

One gets at the Arhat's nirvana by balancing virtue (sila), meditation (samadhi), and wisdom (panna) by balanced views (samma ditthi). The first wisdom when becoming a stream-enterer is the experiential insight in and understanding of a transformed view regarding self and not-self brought about by instructive healing conversation and by the practice of various meditations toward awakening and inner liberation. This wisdom of not-self is also the first step in the alpha and omega of the Buddhist life that cultivates wholesome (kusala) Karma by an eightfold ennobling balancing of a middle way. The given that the Buddha called himself a kammavadin, an expert in transforming Karma, reflects the *raison d'être* of the practice and of Buddhism as a whole. If there is not a self, craving and emotional suffering transforms, breaking the cycle of emotional rebirths. The process is about performing wholesome Karma through body/speech-mind until the end of physical life. A psychological view is not concerned about bodily rebirths which is a subject matter that belongs to metaphysics.

Nirvana is to be attained by walking the talk of an "Eightfold Balancing Practice" (EBP) which is a proposition to detoxifying the 3P. After being wakeful, being mindful to be heartful is the recipe for Buddhist inner liberation and karmic wellness. Interpreting the EBP as the modification of thought, speech, and conduct, I have coined "Karma transformation," a therapeutic strategy of stress inoculation based on training by *heartfulness* and other meditations and by structured therapeutic conversations, which provide a road map at the start and a strategy to unstick when stuck in the process of loving oneself. An extended version of the "how to" of this Buddhist talking cure is offered elsewhere (Kwee 2013a, 2015a; http://relationalbuddhism.org).

4th Ennobling Reality Once a balanced view on self as a practical provisional illusion and on not-self as an in-depth ultimate reality is realized, embodied, and lived through, one lives on a foundation of emptiness in a perilous world with generally a lack of compassion for each other. Logically therefore, take care of self first as in the oxygen mask principle of the air stewardess who instructs to putting the mask on our

own faces first before applying it to our children. Loving and caring of self to eventually abolishing I-me-mine/ego-self are cultivated by practicing the "immeasurables" or brahmaviharas, the divine abodes of human attitudes, which include equanimity when being boundlessly (but not foolishly) kind, compassionate, and joyful to oneself (and by so doing naturally-logically also to others). Thus, deal with self in kindful self-speech. It is a task that points at a balancing act between life in the outer world and in the inner world. Against this backdrop one traverses the EBP. *The EBP starts with a deeply understood experiential view of not-self (1), which constitutes the basis for transforming unwholesome to wholesome intentional karmic thoughts (2), karmic speech (3), karmic acts (4), in daily life (5) requiring resolve, effort and commitment (6), which are practiced here-now by being constantly fully aware of the inner and outer flux of events (7) while being concentrative and attentive (8).* The latter two are contained in the concept of *heartfulness*: a relational act of self-therapy and self-healing in unconditional self-love as a solid basis for compassion. These eight eventually lead to insight and liberation of afficted Karma.

Heartfulness takes place via an organ mentioned before, the mind's eye, a sixth perceptual function discerned by the Buddha and inferred here as the brain that perceives and integrates internal stimuli of body/speech-mind, and which is more than propriocepsis (awareness of body movements) and interocepsis (awareness of internal organs). It enables the awareness of awareness and the alert monitoring and luminous comprehension of dhammas, a technical-scholastic term which refers to the smallest discernible unit of body/speech-mind inner experiencing (not to be confused with Dhamma with upper case D meaning the Buddha's teachings). Watching the arising and subsiding of emotion, cognition, and action aims at gaining insight in dependent origination of the discernible but non-independent modalities/khandas; this is a crux in understanding Dhamma (paticcasamuppada, Vibhanga Sutta). In order to comprehend *heartfulness* and body/speech-mind states, it is imperative to understand the working of the mind's eye and its sights with the brain as the "inner eye organ" that "sees" "perceivables" and "conceivables" the ALL refered to before (Kwee 2014):

- Perceivables of external form – visual awareness
- Perceivables of external sound – auditory awareness
- Perceivables of external smell – olfactory awareness
- Perceivables of external taste – gustatory awareness
- Perceivables of external touch – tactile awareness
- Conceivables of internal forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts (cognitions/images) – mental awareness of concepts

The mind's eye notices what is experienced which encompasses what I call perceivables varying from neutral sensations to charged emotions, which are patterns of sensations. They comprise the visualization of perceived external input and the immediate experience of bodily feelings linked to the object (nimitta) in combination with conceivables (knowables or thinkables). These are internal/cognitive events (conceptions of sensed stimuli) which are covertly appearing in psyche and

experienced as thinking, speech, or self-speech (sanna) (Kuan 2008). Likely, gray matter can integrate perceptions of external as well as internal stimuli comprising everything that is conceivable. Thinkables and imaginables include memories, dreams, illusions (of self), and delusions (of godheads). At the end of the day, *heartfulness* aims at differentiating, evaluating, and judging the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of dhammas in the pursuit of karmic wellness.

The Buddha's sixth sense is imho the brain that renders the capability to be aware and attentive to anything perceived or conceived. The perceptual organs' receptivity is "awarenessed" by attention and concentration. The mind's eye can apperceive anything in a split second. Apperception is a pre-conceptual perception precluding pre-conceived – conceptual, discursive, and judgmental – thoughts and ideas. It is thus pre-conceptual but post-perceptual. This sixth sense is imho usually (mis)translated as mind. It is not something metaphysical as it functions within the sensory modality (although usually undetected by non-meditators). Mind as sense organ does not parallel the other fleshy organs, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, so that "mind sensing mind" does not quite make sense. Mind, is that brain, heart, or brain-heart? Nowhere in the literature can an account for this sixth sense be found (Austin 2010). Could the Buddha's sixth sense be the brain that scans dhammas which come about in dependent origination through the modalities of feeling (Sensation-Affect/emotion), thinking (Cognition-Imagery/thinking), and doing (Behavior/conduct-action) in relational Interaction? Or is scanning a matter of the heart giving direction to our brain in a balancing act?

2.7 Heartfulness

Heartfulness is a method which enables seeing and experiencing emptiness as life's ultimate reality by fine-tuning attention-concentration (to disciplining a wandering mind) and awareness-introspection (to understanding ultimate not-self and provisional Karma as intentional action in dependent origination). It also enables a luminous introspective awareness developing toward full wakefulness by an inward and outward attention and focus to objects which appear in swiftly changeable variable foreground presence against an often stable backdrop. *Heartfulness* operates in sensorium through six senses including the mind's eye and refers to the processing of watching or witnessing (sensing, perceiving, observing). It might also refer to the outcome: acquainting, knowing, and wisdom. The Buddha's proposition is that the world of individual mind or psyche is constructed through speech, self-speech, and Inter-mind (which is conceived as existing prior to singular mind). Mind's activity involves speech through language in talk with others and with self when emitting self-speech or self-talk: saying things to yourself. It is inferred that mind's voices are in a continuing dialogue with others even if they are not physically present. Viewed this way to-be-is-to-be-compassionately-related: one is never alone and constantly together with self in internal conversation with self and via self with

imaginary others. Hence, the term Inter-heart which emphasizes human hearts' interconnectedness.

Heartfulness as a method is rooted in the Buddha's training to awaken to emptiness and not-self, which ascribed sati (to remember to be present and guard the wholesomeness of Karma) a central place as designated in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta and the Satipatthana Sutta which are about remembering the four frames of reference: the body and its events (dhammas) and the mind and its events (dhammas). It emphasizes a memo to not forget to observe the body and what one feels bodily and to observe the mind and what one thinks and talks in the head.

As a G-factor of many meditations, *heartfulness* comprises a cultivation discernible in two phases, a gradual Phase (A), which usually requires lengthy rigorous training, which is the classical Theravada way of meditating toward awakening and a sudden Phase (B) that usually comes about as AHA and HAHA flashes of inner light experiences of awakening which are inspired by Mahayana/Chan and social constructionism. The classical Theravada Phase A includes Stages I and II; the deepening Phase B includes Stages III and IV. Note that the mindfulness-based approaches are limited to this first stage, shaded gray in the table below.

An introductory or preliminary start is the taming of the restless mind by tranquilizing and relaxing the body in delightful sitting. This can be done in any position that holds the back upright. This sitting, called jhana, uses breathing as an anchor of attention and aims at playful sharpening of concentration, focus, and centeredness. One then slips into Stage I (Fig. 2.1).

Each of this two-phase cultivation comprises four stages of each two steps, i.e., eight states of awareness and attention which are fluid and overlapping by nature (Kwee 2014). The steps are cyclical and based on a psychological understanding of awakening and relational insights. Even though a cycle suggests strict categories, the states overlap as they are ongoing processes of the discernible but inseparable steps. These eight steps include the best practices of Theravada, Mahayana/Chan, and social psychology. The practice of Chan requires a separate extensive study and a rigorous practice (Kwee and Taams 2005). The steps are psychological states which are transitional and transforming over time into relative stable "personality traits" by training. All is focused on perceiving through the senses up to the reset/reboot point of mind-emptiness and not-self and is the new software programming a generous and open warm-heartedness full of loving-kindness, compassion, and joy toward self and others based on a balanced attitude of equanimity. The agenda is the formation of wholesome Karma.

In Short The four stages of eight steps or states require vigilance (appamada) at *Stage I* of gradual progress. This connects to heedfulness of a one-point concentration undergirded by the zeal, diligence, and alertness of a sentinel on the way to nirvana (emotional extinction). Steps 1 and 2 parallel the jhanas of concentration-contentment-equanimity and a deep relaxed stress-free state of stillness which likely result in immersion, absorption, or flow that dissolves views and extinguishes emotional arousal (nirvana). *Stage II* of gradual progress requires wise reflection (yoniso manasikara) when practicing Steps 3 and 4 which aim at transforming Karma

Context: the 8-Fold Balancing Practice	Attention (nr 8) Verbal/speech (description)	Awareness (nr 7) Non-verbal/no-speech (acquaintance)
Stage I (gradual) ´Bare attention´: 1point concentration with zeal & diligence (*appamada* /awake-watchful guard)	1 *Samatha* targets calm & tranquillizing (serenity)	2 *Samadhi* targets flame extinction: *Nirvana* (flow)
Stage II (gradual) Wise reflection: aims at wholesome karmic action (*yoniso manasi-kara*/wise focussing)	3 *Vipassana*: insight in dependent origination (The Buddha)	4 *Sunyata* as wisdom of non-self/ emptiness-MTN (Nagarjuna)
Stage III (sudden) Wisdom through due to a clear comprehension of the world (*sampa-janna*/understanding)	5 *Mahamudra*/Non-duality of subject-object/MTN-form (Vasubandhu)	6 *Kill-the-Buddha*: the last *nivarana*/hin-drance as paradox (Chan/Zen)
Stage IV (sudden) Accomplishing the benevolence of inter-being (*antaratman*/ ´inter-minding´)	7 *Brahmaviharas*: social meditations/ B-nature in action (Mahayana)	8 *dharmas*: empty social constructions (Relational Buddhism)

Fig. 2.1 Heartfulness monitored in eight states, four stages, and two phases A and B

and its not independent origination of thought-feeling-behavior while wisely focusing on the highest wisdom: the emptiness of self and the BASIC-I of craving and clinging. It is about gaining insight on how the mind functions in dependent origination and about experiencing a total emptiness of self due to impermanence. *Stage III* provides sudden experiencing of insight based on an understanding or clear comprehension (sampajanna) of the non-duality of dhammas' dualities (YinYang). It is about realizing the non-dual nature of things and thoughts by lifting conceptual paradoxes like in the mantra "form is emptiness" (Step 5) and about getting rid of conceptual obstructions like the concept of the Buddha as a teacher, thus Chan's "kill-the-Buddha" to not clinging to a big impediment and gain freedom (Step 6). *Stage IV* provides a sudden experiencing of insight in Inter-being or Inter-self (antaratman) by Inter-heart or Inter-mind through the brahmaviharas, the practice of kindfulness by being kind, compassionate, and joyful in equanimity. It is about understanding hearts to accomplishing benevolence by being through living Relational Being (Step 7) and about eventually arriving at an ubiquitous and pervasive emptiness (Step 8): the dhammas as social constructions is empty. Everything in the world that is, will ever be, and has ever been cognized is basically an empty social construction, made in meaningful interrelationships of groups, communities, societies, countries, and cultures, hence *Relational Buddhism* (Kwee 2013a, b, c).

In Long Steps 1–4 are a gradual journey of awakening traversing a heartful process that de-constructs self while gaining insight in self's not-self-ness, selflessness (without self), or emptiness (anatman).

Step 1: Samatha. A bundled light beam on focused external and internal objects balancing and fine-tuning "bare attention"; by watching-witnessing one develops self-control by calm tranquilizing toward stress-free serenity despite suffering while working toward nirvana (a momentary state of extinguished emotional arousal transformable into an enduring trait).

Step 2: Samadhi. By a stable/firm concentrative but gentle focus, a receptive absorption of the meditative object, a non-suppressing, non-reactive, and non-conceiving quiescence, is possible. This state is aka "surfing on the flow of time" or being in the Zone, a being one with ever-changing impermanence with glimpses of emptiness. Having tamed emotional storms, one cleanses the doors of perception enabling to see-things-as-they-are: how intention and Karma become and un-become.

Step 3: Vipassana. Introspective insight comes about by remembering to mind Karma. By self-speech/self-dialogue/self-talk insight and understanding arise on Karma's dependent origination as body-doing/speech-thinking-and-mind-feeling. Vipassana's light of insight distributes around, illuminating the interdependence or non-independence of body/speech-mind which is vital for understanding a happy life.

Step 4: Sunyata. Insightful understanding results in the highest wisdom of not-selfness/emptiness, a state of "luminous suchness" or "vast zero- ness" which is a reset or reboot of the enlightened heart into a state of nirvana. The watcher-witness, i.e., the self, disappears in empty oblivion.

Steps 5–8 are an experiential journey of *heartfulness*. One is ready for sudden insights on the non-selfness of self when traversing a process of (re)constructing Inter-being or Inter-self via Inter-heart or Inter-mind.

Step 5: Mahamudra. Emptiness is deepened by practicing the silencing state of non-duality of Tao which transcends and eradicates YinYang dualities created by conceptual speech; however, cause = effect, left = right, emptiness = form, beginning = end, up = down, heaven = hell, beautiful = ugly, good = bad, yes = no, etc., which might culminate in sparkling mind-liberating paradoxes: If worthless = worthy, is the Buddha = worthless? These non-dual exercises and insights are meant to help dis-attaching from conceptualizations of empty reality.

Step 6: Nivarana: the teacher as hindrance. In a non-dual spirit "Kill-the-Buddha" is a Chan anarchistic instruction of Lin-chi (ninth century) enabling eradication of progress-impeding dependency and awakening-hindering concepts of the Buddha as a representation of authority existing next to other known hindrances (sensuality, ill-will, torpor, restlessness, doubt).

Step 7: Brahmaviharas: where the gods dwell. This metaphor for sublime places of benevolent dwelling in the heart refers to the social contemplations to embodying loving-kindness, empathic compassion, and sympathetic joy in intra-/interpersonal equanimity. Many more meditation-in-action exercises boosting positive

Affect can be practiced, e.g., mirth-laughing, contentment-smiling, delight-singing, savoring-eating, and so on; all daily Karma can be exercised in generous and warm-heartedness creating a modus vivendi of contentment aka happiness-amid-adversity.

Step 8: dhammas as empty social constructions. With a small case d, dhamma refers to the smallest unit of experience. Telescoping dhammas in the inner galaxy, insight flashes that things and thoughts are empty on the ultimate level of reality and socially constructed on the provisional level of reality. In a process of social deconstruction, the point zero of emptiness is not the end goal. A blank mind is but a reset/reboot moment providing a scaffold for starting a warm-hearted collaborative practice of social re-construction by kind and joyful compassion while functioning in the marketplace as Relational Being (Gergen 2009a, b).

2.8 Relational Buddhism

Per the Buddha, the human predicament of suffering is relational and rooted in the 3P (Sedaka Sutta and Madhupindika Sutta). Greed is always in comparison to others. Hatred is also always in relation to another or others. Ignorance is due to a lack of learning from others. Wisdom detoxifies via healing speech (intrapersonal self-dialogue and interpersonal interaction) and by being genuinely kind to self and others while balancing on an ennobling road toward not-self. This requires a relational perspective and an in-deep understanding of Inter-self, Inter-mind, and Inter-heart which are beyond self, in-between minds, and hearts, thus begetting the Inter-being or Relational Being of compassion. The relational perspective is about humanity's interrelatedness that is usually depicted in Mahayana as Indra's net (Gandavyuha Sutra): a jewel net with a gem at each crossing which reflects every other gem which mirror infinite interpenetrations symbolizing humanity's interconnectedness. Experiencing dhammas as empty can be done along one new and three beaten tracks: as neither-empty-nor-not-empty (the Buddha), as empty-of-emptiness (Nagarjuna), as empty-non-duality (Vasubandhu), and as "ontologically-mute-social-constructions-empty-of-Transcendental-Truths" (Gergen 2009a, b).

The history of scholarly views of dhammas is interesting as it reflects Buddhist scholarly thinking up until today (Kwee 2010, 2012a, b, 2015a, b). The advancement of Buddhist thought down the ages started with the Buddha, 2600 years ago, who expounded throughout his discourses that dhammas are neither empty nor not empty. In his non-theistic (neither theistic nor atheistic) middle way, subject and object are both neither real nor unreal. The Buddha's ultimate not-self is basic and complementary to the householder's provisional self. The second Buddha, Nagarjuna (second century), approached the emptiness of dhamma as something that is empty of emptiness: ever-changing impermanence equals emptiness. Subject and object are both unreal because they are empty. Thus, he spoke about the "non-self" of everything rather than about a personal not-self. He commented on the Perfection-of-Wisdom-Sutras (Prajnaparamita Sutra) which expound a via negativa that negate the self of

things toward their selfless-ness, ad infinitum. Nonetheless, one might criticize his philosophical thesis of "the emptiness of emptiness of emptiness, etc." as a "still something-ness." This insight was taken up by Asanga and Vasubandhu (fourth century) who countered with a via positiva, an anti-thesis which views dhammas as empty of duality, thus as non-dual experience (with far-reaching resonance in Taoist China). Subjective inner experiences are real but empty, while objective things out there are considered unreal although empty as well. It is therefore sanctioned to stuff them with (empty) mind projections to lure new adherents, like with transcendental Buddhas, a Buddhist cosmology, metaphysics, and accompanying superstition which the historical Buddha would have opposed. Asanga's commentaries on the Buddha-Womb-Sutras (Samdhinirmocana Sutra) make the proliferation of Mahayana metaphysical flirtations understandable as skillful means (upaya) to catering the meek and quenching a thirst for eternal happiness via a godhead of many.

As I see it, there is another roadmap to emptiness: a "fourth turning of the Dharma-wheel" now seventeen centuries post the last scholarly approach to emptiness: social constructionism, a psychology championed by K.J. Gergen who posits that all ideas on things are empty of Transcendental Truths (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_J._Gergen; Kwee 2012a, b). Experiences are fed by meanings which are only valid in relational context, social groups like cultures, countries, and communities. Descriptions of subjective and objective experiences of reality are the ideational projections of a social group and are nothing but empty social constructions. Having discovered social constructionism's correspondence and alignment with Buddhism, my quest resulted in postulating a confluence of a traditional teaching and a metapsychology which I have coined Relational Buddhism (Kwee 2010). In effect the merging of ideas meandered in a meta-vision which views reality from a relational perspective and which proposes dhammas as ontologically-mute-social-constructions-empty-of-Transcendental-Truths. Thinking is relational activity executed as covert-private verbalized/visualized speech. This relational stance has led to the co-creation of a "relational-being-in-between-selves" and of a "non-foundational morality of collaborative action." Social constructionism renders a team spirit for humanity with congenial bonds of appreciative inquiry as lifeline. Paraphrasing Gergen (2009a, b), truth and morality can only be found within community; beyond community there is thundering silence. The practice of *heartfulness* is thus enriched by a fourth exercise of deepening and understanding dhamma experiences as empty social constructions comprising "perceivables and knowables, i.e. conceivables, thinkables, imaginables, memorables and dreamables, illusions and delusions." Willy-nilly, Gergen might be given the moniker "the 4th Buddha" because he realized a psychology of an empty but not void Relational Being (Gergen 2009a, b), a conception equaling the Buddhist Inter-being and Inter-self, founded on Inter-heart and Inter-mind experiences in deep meditation and *heartfulness-in-action.*

Buddhism as a clinical psychology and psychotherapy, conceptualized from a social constructionist relational meta-perspective, I have named Relational Buddhism. Based on the above, this warrants the predicate Buddhism 4.0, an integrating nexus for Theravada, Mahayana/Chan, and academic psychology in the quest of empty dhamma.

2.9 Closing Remarks

This chapter is a plea to restore the Buddhist context of Western mindfulness-based approaches in the framework of *heartfulness*. The new context provided comprises guidelines derived from Theravada, Mahayana/Chan, and academic psychology. A call to re-contextualizing was heard and reported earlier (Kwee et al. 2006), and the discussion goes on (Kwee and Berg 2016). However, the question remains: can Western mindfulness be invoked without subscribing to Buddhism and is it necessary to reinstall the Buddhist origin of this mindfulness? Considering the increase in interest in Buddhism in the urbanized world, the future seems bright regarding a re-framing and re-rooting of Western mindfulness.

As expounded above, *heartfulness* which includes wise reflection, insight in dependent origination and not-self/emptiness, offers a practice that inheres in an evaluative or judgmental aspect (vikappa) when differentiating and cultivating beneficial Karma. Judgment is an inherent part of the exercise that discerns wholesome versus unwholesome doing/thinking-feeling when cultivating beneficial Karma. The revered Milindapanha (www.sacred-texts.com/bud/milinda.htm; 150 BCE) renders sati as noting neutrally and keeping wholesomeness: "…[the practitioner] repeatedly notes the wholesome and unwholesome, blameless and blameworthy, insignificant and important, dark and light qualities… he searches out the categories of good qualities and their opposites thinking, 'Such and such qualities are beneficial and such are harmful'. Thus does he make what is unwholesome in himself disappear and maintain what is good…" This practice holds awareness-and-attention in place. It corrects distractions while merely watching-witnessing and guarding the senses against the intrusion of unwholesome thoughts which drop like rain. The latter implies a discriminatory capacity and a retaining of what is beneficial in the pursuit of salubrious Karma. The aim is to removing unhelpful actions/thoughts-feelings while keeping and expanding helpful actions/thoughts-feelings.

As a pristine meditative exercise*, heartfulness* is a judgmental training, definitely in the second phase B of the training which requires judging when realizing wholesome karmic intentional action in dependent origination. Body/speech-mind are judged vis-à-vis its virtuousness regarding past, present, and future Karma. Western mindfulness leaves aside the insight in dependent origination and the experience of emptiness. By not dealing with not-self, it preserves the illusion of self which Buddhism aims to dispell. It ignores the quest for insight as in *heartfulness* which implements wisdom-rendering transparency of non-duality and paradox. While *heartfulness* implies a bearing in mind or a remembering, bare attention alone leaves the recollection of any Buddhism aside. This is only possible in Stage I. For those who aim the end of emotional suffering by an insightful understanding of Buddhism, Western mindfulness will not suffice. One might get lost if Buddhist meditation is disconnected, isolated, and alienated from the systematic teaching of the Buddha. Nonetheless, Buddhism itself already had offered "Buddhist-lite" meditation before. These were meant as an exercise for laypersons who are interested in a fast fix and want the gain of mindless self-absorption and nirvana without Buddhism.

A moment-to-moment non-reactive awareness-and-attention, which is non-discursive and non-judgmental though generous and warm-hearted, was illustrated by the Buddha himself in an exceptional case that he treated with a Buddhist-lite exercise. Bahiya was in an urgent situation. He was stressed and hurried as he expects to die soon, which indeed happened shortly after he received guidance by the Buddha, which boiled down to an instruction of samadhi, thus the first two steps of *heartfulness* as explained earlier. The Buddha's instruction was as follows (Udana, 1.10): "In the seen, there is only the seen, in the heard… only the heard, in the sensed… only the sensed, in the cognized… only the cognized. Thus you should see that indeed there is no thing here; this… is how you should train yourself … and you see that there is no thing here, you will therefore see that indeed there is no thing there. As you see that there is no thing there, you will see that you are therefore located neither in the world of this, nor in the world of that, nor in any place betwixt the two. This alone is the end of suffering." Bahiya was a man in distress but already wise and only lacked the light of "bare awareness" in his quest. The remembering and recollection parts which point at bearing in mind the Dhamma was not handed down to him, but still this exercise was sufficient to ending his exceptional instance of suffering (Bahiya Sutta).

Although samatha and samadhi start with bare attention-and-awareness (Nyanaponika Thera, 1901–1994), and perchance with "choiceless awareness" (J. Krishnamurti; 1895–1986), *heartfulness* is clearly not non-judgmental in the subsequent stages which complete the exercise. The trainee trains indeed non-judgmentalness initially when learning to making responses rather than to reacting in an automatic mode. In the beginning it is learning to see a thought as a thought and a feeling as a feeling. Not believing in self-sabotaging thoughts likely lead to distancing and dis-attaching from these thoughts (Segal et al. 2002). These practices have their own merit, but its scope is limited from a Buddhist perspective. A known proponent of a Buddhist-lite exercise in the Theravada tradition is Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982). He has been influential in propagating an easy and swift way to learn "simple mindfulness" with quick results without the complexity of Buddhism. The well-respected teacher allegedly prompted lay people from East and West to applying an exercise which bypasses the Buddhist teaching while allowing to enjoying the delight of nirvana by samadhi. By targeting the augmentation of good feelings rather than anti-doting 3P suffering and designating wholesome Karma, this and kindred action may have helped boosting Western mindfulness. Thus, we see the commodification of a possibly "greed-magnifying mindfulness" that may vary from dating, drinking, dining to sex and conduct with malign motives.

Disconnecting the pristine exercise from Buddha-ism (the Buddha's discourse), even though by Buddhists, is at odds with the spirit of the Dhamma. Consequently, it brought Mahasi in a contentious position (Sharf 2015), eventually "castigated for dumbing down the tradition, for devaluing ethical training, for misconstruing or devaluing the role of wisdom, and for their crassly 'instrumental' approach to practice" (p. 476). What's more, the practice of "bare here/now-centered situational awareness-and-attention" is not without dire side effects. The author points at "meditation sickness," a phenomenon already reported in Chan long ago, which is a kind

of solipsistic social isolation due to giving in to a self-absorption of a non-analytical and non-critical moment-to-moment presence. Practitioners might end in getting stuck in a nirvana of mindful mindlessness. This caveat refers particularly to those who use meditation as a "spiritual bypass" which avoids dealing with personal disturbances of mind and emotion. The plea is to restore the pristine Buddhist context of all disconnected Western mindfulness and mindfulness-based approaches in order to doing justice to a great tradition.

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Chapter 3
Radical Presence: A Relational Alternative to Mindfulness

Sheila McNamee

There has been an enormous insurgence of mindfulness philosophy and practice over the past several decades circulating in almost all areas of our lives – therapy, business, community, spirituality, medicine, and education, to name a few. While traditional mindfulness is rooted in Buddhism, contemporary models of mindfulness provide forms of practice that do not require the original Buddhist spiritual and cultural commitment.

I would like to take a step back and open conversation and reflection on the discourse of mindfulness. I would like to propose that we recognize mindfulness as a way of talking – a way of relating – that, when employed, privileges certain ways of orienting ourselves to the world. I would like to question the place of mindfulness within contemporary culture. My hope is that this discussion will provide fruitful resources that will help professionals, and laypeople alike, avoid some of what I see as the unfortunate by-product of "the mindfulness fad." At the same time, I must be clear that my attempt here is not to dismiss the use of mindfulness practices. Rather, my interest is in raising questions about *how* we are engaging with the discourse of mindfulness and for what purpose.

3.1 Why Mindfulness, Why Now?

I do not think anyone would disagree that we are living in challenging times. Globally, politics are in a state of instability that we have not seen since the Cold War. Where we once enjoyed a sense of hemispheric (if not national) dominance, a

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decline in ideological struggle, and a high degree of global cooperation, we are now living in a moment of contestation where competition has replaced cooperation and opposing ideologies dominate. Additionally, we have front row viewing and around-the-clock commentary on coups d'etat, school shootings, airport bombings, and other violent crimes around the world. Our access to personal suffering is proliferating, thereby inviting a narrative of danger, distrust, and fear. If we look at the state of affairs globally, it might be less surprising that people are flocking to what they see (and is often referred to) as the meditative practices of mindfulness. The belief is that centering one's self and giving space to reflect on one's present moment will provide us with the resources to make our way through a chaotic, divisive, and challenging world.

But, for the most part, the discourse of mindfulness, and the practices and advocating that go hand in hand with the most dominant form of this discourse, emerges within the tradition of modernist science where social problems or challenges become the problem of the individual. In other words, the presumption is that, if the complexity and diversity of the world (or of your community, family, or intimate relationship) becomes too much to bear, *you*, the individual, must find a way to "cope," to "deal with," and to "manage" *your* discomfort, irritation, feelings of being overwhelmed, etc. The focus is on the individual.

What this approach ignores is that, as humans, we live in community. We engage in relations with each other and with our environments. The challenge that confronts us as we examine the pervasive problem of living in contemporary culture is the challenge to move beyond an individualist ideology where it remains the purview of the individual to resolve his or her problems. Instead, we should be questioning the larger social orders – the very institutions and taken-for-granted ways of relating – that invite divisiveness, conflict, and human suffering. In doing so, we shift from enticing people into a self-focused practice (mindfulness, in most elaborations of mindfulness) to a future-forming ritual. We need to provide a coherent narrative that allows us to examine the broader cultural and social factors that perpetuate our personal suffering. Thus, transformation or problem resolution occurs in recognition of the intimate and interdependent relationship between our daily processes of engaging with others and the creation and maintenance of broader social orders (e.g., institutions, belief systems, values) – not within the individual. This stance challenges the dominant discourse of popularized mindfulness and invites us to explore how this discourse has been socially constructed. It also invites us to explore how our engagement in popularized mindfulness practices maintains a focus on the individual at the expense of pathologizing the individual and ignoring broader social practices that make living often unbearable.

3.1.1 The Discourse of Mindfulness

Probably the simplest way to summarize what could be an extremely lengthy discussion of the evolution of the discourse of mindfulness (see Purser 2019) is to acknowledge that the ideology of liberal humanism, very much an individualist stance, privileges the pathologizing and subsequent treatment of persons over deconstructing and transforming social and cultural institutions, thereby challenging our dominant discourses. It is easier to prescribe mindfulness practices for overworked employees or university students who are overwhelmed with deadlines and exams than to examine and question the condition of the workplace or the ways in which we educate. It is easier to medicalize/psychologize a person's experience than to politically examine our ways of living.

In these remarks, my hope is not to summarily dismiss mindfulness. That is not at all what is being argued here. Rather, by identifying the discourse of mindfulness within the individualist paradigm, my hope is that we might acknowledge that, by imposing the discourse of mindfulness on interactions that challenge one's sense of presence in the world and ability to cope, we ignore the larger political and social issues that contribute to the chaos of contemporary culture.

3.2 The Rise of Disciplinary Knowledge

Foucault (1977) argues that our sense of self, very much situated within the twentieth-century ideology of individuality, autonomy, free choice, and liberty, has been constructed by the rise in stature of the social and "psy" disciplines (Rose 1990). These disciplines (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and even sociology and anthropology) have emerged as dominant discourses that regulate our lives. Specifically, what a culture or society comes to believe is "normal" is regulated by the psy-disciplines including normal sexuality, family and work life, and all that we take to be rational, reasonable, and right.

Thus, we can say that we have been living in a culture marked by the multiple ways in which we can pathologize ourselves and others. No matter what professional domain we encounter, we offer ourselves to the surveillance of experts – expert doctors, expert scholars, expert therapists, expert politicians, and expert managers. Foucault's argument makes clear that the construction of dominant discourses (generated within what he refers to as "disciplinary regimes" – or, professional domains, we might say) guides our actions and, recursively, as we act in concert with the dominant discourse, we unwittingly insure that this dominant (unquestioned) way of acting is maintained. As we utilize the services of educators, medical professionals, and legal experts, we are not only acting in ways that are simply taken-for-granted as the proper way to be in a particular community, institution, or culture, but, in so doing, we are keeping these unquestioned beliefs and practices alive. To Foucault, if we question these taken-for-granted discourses and

engage in what he calls an "archeology of knowledge" (1972),[1] we come to question the truth value of these practices and free ourselves to construct alternatives.

3.2.1 Pathologizing Discourses

Foucault (1972) makes clear that the disciplinary discourses are, just that, discourses. They are ways of talking, ways of being in the world. And, to put it that way, suggests that there are or could be other ways of talking and being in the world available to us. This is not to suggest that the discourse of mindfulness is wrong or not useful. Rather, it is to suggest that, when engaged in any sort of therapeutic encounter,[2] we should ask ourselves how useful the concomitant vocabulary and practices of mindfulness are. This is most commonly located as an individualist discourse – one that places the nexus of a person's being within the private recesses of the mind/psyche (McNamee 2002). Thus, mindfulness becomes an individual's sensible response to social challenges.

The concentrated focus on the individual in contemporary society is the by-product of these emergent and eventually dominating discourses. And, when understood in historical, cultural, and social context, it becomes possible to recognize that all of us are active participants in the power and dominance of what I refer to as "pathologizing discourses." Pathologizing discourses are ways of talking that cast a person, family, or group as abnormal, lacking in some way, unable to meet social expectations, or basically not meeting social standards. When the discourse of mindfulness was introduced in the field of clinical psychology in the form of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (or MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn 2005), all the original Buddhist components of mindfulness practice were in place (attention to the here and now, no judgment, focus on feelings, thoughts, bodily sensations, etc.). Yet, this focus was condensed into the singular practice of one person attempting to focus on himself/herself so he/she can deal with the complexities of the social world.

The result of this internal, individualist focus is that, if one is not perpetually satisfied, fulfilled, and emotionally and behaviorally "adjusted" in the workplace, school, community, or family, there must be something wrong. Dissatisfaction is either a personal problem/deficit or a problem imposed by the contextual demands of the environment within which one operates. Basically, all problems we confront in contemporary society are traced to some personal failing or flaw. Even admitted contextual problems–in the way in which work, school, and everyday life is

[1] Engaging in an archeology of knowledge (Foucault 1972) is to trace a certain social practice or way of talking back to its origins. For example, when did health professionals first start diagnosing workers with trauma and (most important) what else was going on at that time, in that context and historical/cultural moment? The assumption is that social practices emerge as "sensible" within the communities that construct them. Yet, over time, a particular practice might lose its utility.

[2] Here, I use the term therapeutic in the broadest sense, encompassing any form of diagnosis and treatment.

structured or in the physical constraints of these environments–are viewed in terms of how these problems effect the individual. In other words, the dominance of psychological discourse actually shapes the contours of our day-to-day lives; since the individual is always the unit of analysis, focus remains on individual performance at the cost of creating collaborative and communal environments. Thus, competition and comparison to others becomes the norm, and constant surveillance (by self and others) leaves one feeling incompetent, inadequate, and – most important – the cause of one's own hardships. And, most unfortunate is the fact that mindfulness – a practice and philosophy designed to help people connect with each other and their environments – actually further separates and divides, making success in life a personal pursuit.[3]

Here, we see the deterioration of relational bonds. Where is the community to support one who is suffering? Who – if anyone – might be able to offer alternative descriptions of what one is experiencing, descriptions that are not based on deficiencies? Are a person's problems really due to his/her inability to "cope," or might "inability to cope" be a rational response to institutional systems of discipline such as education, healthcare, and organizational life? Should an employee engage in the practice of mindfulness because he/she finds the competition in the workplace unbearable or because he/she walks past abject poverty each day on the way to work and is riddled with guilt for his/her own comfort? A movement beyond this pathologizing culture requires a shift in focus from expert voices and unquestioned forms of practice toward an active attentiveness to processes of relating and to what Gergen (2009) calls "relational being."

This relational focus offers an alternative to the modernist ways of describing social life, elevating our attention instead to processes of relating as opposed to objects or entities (such as an individual person, an individual's thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations). I believe, this relational sensibility offers us a very different path for living in today's complex world and points us beyond the (often) pathologizing discourse of contemporary and popular mindfulness. It is to suggest a very particular way of positioning ourselves in the world as opposed to creating formulas for "correct" (or corrective) action, and, to that extent, the relational understanding of our daily environments, coupled with questioning the discourse of mindfulness, might offer new forms of life. In order to explore this relational alternative, it is important to provide a brief overview of a constructionist stance.

3.3 Reconstructing Mindfulness Relationally

Constructionists takes a critical stance toward taken-for-granted understandings of the world. Constructionists also acknowledge that what is taken as real is not only the by-product of social interaction but our interactions, in turn, serve to sustain

[3] I am limiting my discussion here to the popularization of mindfulness practices.

what we assume to be real. The implications of this stance are significant. If we create what we take to be real in our interactions, then we can change reality by changing the ways in which we engage *with others*. Note the emphasis. Where popular mindfulness practices urge us to change ourselves, the relational stance of constructionism invites us to change *how we engage with* others. We shift our focus from diagnosing and treating an individual and focus, instead, on examining processes of interaction where certain beliefs, values, and social orders emerge. Social construction urges us to attend to the traditions, the communities, and the situated practices of the participants at hand – that is, to attend to local understandings – in identifying what becomes real, true, and good. To attend to traditions, communities, and situated practices requires a constant flexibility on the part of those involved, a flexibility marked by discursive potential (McNamee 2015). Discursive potential refers to the ability to move in and out of divergent discourses – to recognize more than one discourse (social order) and become curious about what different discourses might open as possibilities.

3.3.1 Social Construction

There is no one voice in constructionist theory and practice. However, there are shared assumptions that guide constructionist work. First, constructionists are concerned with how meaning and understanding are created in interaction among people and in the environments in which they operate. To this end, constructionists focus on language or what I refer to as language practices. Language in this sense encompasses much more than words or written text. Language includes all embodied activity. The alternative that social construction offers is what many refer to as a relational stance – one that views meaningful action as always emerging within relationship: relationship among people as well as relationship between people and the environment. The focus of analysis, therefore, is not the individual but is what people do together and what their "doing" makes. Once we embrace the assumption that meaning is created in the joint actions of people, we must ask, how does the inner focus of popular mindfulness provide resources for navigating a world of relational engagements?

Given this focus on local language practices, constructionists adopt a critical stance toward taken-for-granted understandings of the world. Since interaction is always situated (locally, culturally, historically), the possibility for differing and often incompatible realities is always present. Thus, questioning what we take to be true, real, or good is a necessary part of social construction.

Constructing a World Elsewhere (McNamee 2014), I have offered a visualization of the constructionist focus on interactive processes and how the responsiveness of persons to one another and to their environment comes to create what we "know," what we "understand," and what we believe to be "real." Let us consider how specific ways of understanding the world emerge. Meaning emerges as communities of

people coordinate their activities with one another. These meanings, in turn, create a sense of moral order – how things are or should be (what is referred to earlier as dominant discourses). The continual coordination required in any relationship or community eventually generates a sense of taken-for-granted, common practices (moral orders) otherwise known as dominant (and largely unquestioned) discourses.

As people coordinate their activities with others, patterns or rituals quickly emerge. These rituals generate a sense of standards and expectations that we use to assess our own and others' actions. Once these standardizing modes are in place, the generation of values and beliefs (a moral order/dominant discourse) is initiated. Thus, from the very simple process of coordinating our activities with each other, we develop entire belief systems, moralities, and values. Of course, the starting point for analysis of any given moral order (reality) is not restricted to our relational coordinations. We can equally explore patterns of interaction or the sense of obligation (standards and expectations) that participants report in any given moment. We can also start with the emergent moral orders, themselves (dominant discourses as many would call them), and engage in a Foucauldian archeology of knowledge (1972) where we examine how certain beliefs, values, and practices originally emerged (which returns us to the simple coordinations of people and environments in specific historical, cultural, and local moments). The relational process of creating a worldview is illustrated in Fig. 3.1.

This is a simplified way of illustrating the relation among coordinated actions, emergent patterns, a sense of expectations, and the creation of dominant discourses. Adopting a relational focus places our attention on the specificities of any given interaction while also allowing us to note patterns across interactions, across time, place, and culture. It is important to note that the focus, unlike traditional, modernist approaches, is not placed on individuals, on individual actions, on individual mental capacities, or on individual, isolated features of the context. Rather, through this description we can see that the macro-social orders that guide our micro-level interactions (coordinations) are also maintained by those very micro coordinations,

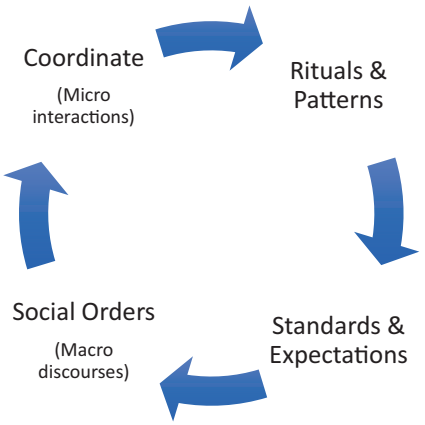

Fig. 3.1 The process of constructing a social order

themselves. For example, one common social order embraces that belief that, when we are ill, we should seek treatment from a medical doctor.[4] And, as we continually in fact do seek a doctor's treatment, we unwittingly maintain the belief (social order) that medical treatment is the "right" response to illness. It is also important to note that, since we coordinate with many, many different people and in many, many different environments each day, we participate in constructing multiple social orders/dominant discourses. And, similarly, we cannot anticipate that others share the same social orders as we do. In other words, a constructionist stance embraces both the multiplicity and the complexity of the social world making the goal of agreement a futile effort and replacing it with an attempt to reach new forms of understanding across differences. This stance of understanding multiplicity is what I referred to earlier as discursive potential.

As mentioned, most research and popularized understandings of mindfulness are rooted in the individualized ideology of the psy-disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, social psychology, etc.). The constructionist approach to understanding mindfulness examines interactive patterns and the worlds they create. In other words, our focus is on how microlevel interactions create and maintain larger, macro institutions and belief systems – the very ordering systems we presume to be true. When *process,* not isolated behavior, is centered, mindfulness can no longer be viewed as a self-focused practice. Mindfulness imposes the challenge of living amidst the complexity and diversity on each separate individual, whereas the relational alternative proposes that we examine how our engagements with each other and our environments contribute to the chaos and complexity of the world. In short, we turn our attention to patterns of social interaction as opposed to the singular attention of our thoughts, feelings, and bodily responses. This is not to suggest that thoughts, feelings, and bodily responses are ignored but, rather, they are considered within the broader landscape of social orders that have emerged through the micro interactions of persons in relation with each other.

3.3.2 From Private Minds to Social Minds

Since mindfulness relies on training one's mental capacity to sense, feel, and notice what is going on within one's self, it is useful to look at how we understand what mind is (i.e., the mind in mindfulness). One's inner mental life is the domain of the psy-disciplines. And that inner mental life, referred to as "mind," is contained within the bounded body of the person. Sampson (1993) critiques this "self contained individualism" and proposes a "celebration of the other" in the form of dialogism. He says:

[4] I should note that this is only one social order. There are many alternatives that would generate very different actions. For example, a different social order might have one seek spiritual counseling if one was experiencing bodily discomfort (what we might refer to as illness).

> The heart of any dialogic argument is its emphasis on the idea that people's lives are characterized by the ongoing conversations and dialogues they carry out in the course of their everyday activities, and therefore that *the most important thing about people is not what is contained with them, but what transpires between them* (emphasis in the original). P. 20

Earlier, Gregory Bateson (1972) talked about this focus on what transpires between people as the pattern that connects, and, to that end, he describes mind or mental states as social – not bounded by the skull but rather, as "immanent also in pathways and messages outside the body … [and] still immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology" (p. 461). This more expansive view of mind – mind as released from the confines of the body into our relational patterns of engagement – provides fertile ground for a relational reconstruction of mindfulness. I refer to this relational vision as *radical presence*.

Radical presence, unlike popular elaborations of mindfulness, draws upon Bateson's notion of the pattern that connects and Sampson's vision of dialogism. The term – radical presence – is a deliberate attempt to avoid drawing upon the discourse of mind. My hope is that by avoiding mental language, attention is more readily drawn toward relational processes and away from self-contained individuals. Where mindfulness guides one to a presence to one's self in the sense of bodily feelings, sensations, and thoughts, radical presence places our attention on relational processes. There is an active attentiveness to the process of relating, itself. This is distinguished from consideration of "what I am doing" or "what is going on inside me," not to imply that attention to these aspects of our relational being should be ignored. Rather, radical presence orients our concern toward what *we* are making together as our interaction unfolds within specific local circumstances, histories, and cultural patterns. Rather than solely scrutinize the integrity of our own actions, we recognize how our actions and the actions of others invite certain responses. And in inviting certain responses, we pause to consider what other responses might invite alternative supplements. The significance of this attention to unfolding, interactive patterns is that we recognize that our well-being and the well-being of the other are intricately connected. They cannot be separated and evaluated independently. It is worth pointing out that this attention to the moment-by-moment unfolding of interaction is a form of presence to what "we are creating together" that is radical in its focus.

3.3.3 Radical Presence and the Challenges of Living in a Complex World

The relational focus of radical presence offers us a way out of the self-contained focus offered by our individualist tradition. And, mindfulness, while not intended to ignore broader social issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression, inadvertently tells those who are practicing mindful meditation that the outcome of their efforts will help them cope in a chaotic, challenging world. But is this the message (or the

practice) that we want to perpetuate? It is akin to giving sedative drugs to someone who is suffering from poverty and oppression. If they are sedated, they will be less likely to attend to the ever-emerging features of their poverty or oppression; they will be less likely to engage in social activism to change the injustices in the system. We could also say that popular versions of mindfulness practice are like imprisoning the young, black youth for possession of marijuana; the imprisonment ensures that this youth will not publicize the comparatively low number of white youth incarcerated for the same offense. In both of these cases, the response to "the problem" is imposed by an authority. The difference with mindfulness practice is that we are told to impose it upon ourselves. Instead of asking what, in our own small ways, we can do to create possibilities for equality, justice, and inclusion, mindfulness tells us that we can focus on ourselves and endure.

O'Brien (2019) points out how mindfulness has "privatized a social problem." She tells the story of social housing residents who, when evicted from their high-rise homes by the local council, were coached in mindfulness. "The council encouraged residents to look inwards, towards their brain chemistry, and in doing so cast itself as a solution, rather than a cause of the problem" (p. 3). O'Brien quotes Purser who claims that:

> … mindfulness has become the perfect coping mechanism for neoliberal capitalism: it privatizes stress and encourages people to locate the root of mental ailments in their own work ethic… it promotes a particular form of revolution, one that takes place within the heads of individuals fixated on self-transformation, rather than as a struggle to overcome collective suffering. (p. 6)

3.3.4 The Peril of Relational Isolation

Purser's words are important and are supportive of the argument I am attempting to make here. Our attention to mindfulness practices of the sort Purser and I are addressing ensures that we ignore the larger discursively constituted realities and structures that are the main contributors to our present angst. Radical presence, on the other hand, directs our attention to the relational processes, to the ways in which we are all connected to – and part of constructing – all that we love and enjoy as well as all that disturbs and worries us. Radical presence can take many forms. It is embodied in the curiosity and attentiveness of a therapist engaging with a client. It is the manager who adopts an unknowing, ready to learn from others stance. It is the invitation to collaborate that a teacher offers her students. It means adopting the assumption that we are, if even in some small way, part of the larger problems we confront.

Let me offer two challenging situations that we confront in contemporary culture: environmental concerns and addiction. In both these situations, a shift from an individual focus to a broader, relational focus transforms our way of thinking about and approaching both problems. And, in so doing, this relational focus illustrates a radical presence.

Environment As we worry about climate change and our environment, we are told that recycling is important. We are told that each of us is individually responsible for purchasing less plastic and recycling the plastic we do use. And, while this is of course a practice that is environmentally sound, it ignores the larger issue of the production of plastics.[5] Shouldn't we be looking at the corporations that are producing the plastics in the first place? Furthermore, the individual, who occasionally places a plastic bottle in the trash instead of in the recycling bin, has been trained to feel immediately guilty. Here we see, as in many popular mindfulness practices, how isolated individuals bear the burden for larger social problems. Can we, through adopting the relational stance of radical presence, recognize the interdependent relationship between our micro interactions and macrolevel institutions (e.g., corporations producing and using plastic packaging), cultural beliefs, and values (see Fig. 3.1)?

Addiction Another illustration can be drawn from our common understanding of addiction. Where addiction is commonly viewed as an individual's problem (e.g., chemical hooks in the brain, criminal activity, and/or immoral character), Bruce Alexander (2008) argues that addiction is the by-product of late capitalist society where, thanks to our individualist ideology, people are isolated and dislocated. He questioned the common wisdom about addiction based on his observations of and work with drug addicts. He proposed that drug addiction has less to do with the actual chemicals and the reaction of those chemicals on the brain. He proposed that addiction has more to do with one's environment and one's relations.

Alexander set out to explore the influence of environment on addiction. He designed a study using rats. In his study, there were two rat cages. One that contained an isolated rat with two bottles: one with water and one with morphine. In the second cage, the cage Alexander called "Rat Park," he provided wheels, balls, and food, and, instead of putting one rat in the cage alone, he put several rats in together. The second cage, like the first, had two bottles: one water and one morphine. What Alexander observed was that the rats in Rat Park drank less than 5 milligrams of the morphine while the rats in the isolated cages used up to 25 milligrams of morphine a day. Even more interesting was that:

> He took a set of rats and made them drink the morphine solution for fifty-seven days, in their cage, alone. If drugs can hijack your brain, that will definitely do it. Then he put these junkies into Rat Park. Would they carry on using compulsively, even when their environment improved? … In Rat Park, the junkie rats seemed to have some twitches of withdrawal – but quite quickly, they stopped drinking the morphine. A happy social environment, it seemed, freed them of their addiction. (Hari 2015 p. 172)

There's much more to be said about this, and the interested reader is encouraged to read both Alexander's (2008) and Hari's (2015) accounts of drug addiction. But, what does this have to do with mindfulness and its emergence within the dominant

[5] Of course, plastics are not the only environmental concern. I am using plastics as an example here.

discourses of psychology, education, medicine, work-life, and beyond? Everything. In the description of Alexander's research, we see strong support for a social, relational approach to human problems. It is an approach that diverges from the standard practice of individual diagnosis and treatment. Paying attention to a person's relational environment – not just with other humans but with the physical environment as well – offers a wealth of resources for transforming problems. When we expand beyond the individualized, medicalized/psychologized approach, we recognize that those who feel challenged have options. Perhaps the options are choices made between participating in certain relationships over others. Or perhaps alternative forms of explanation can be generated once we expand our attention beyond the singular person. This, too, is what a focus on relational processes offers. Being radically present requires a curiosity, a responsivity, and a desire to understand beyond what appears to be "obvious." Alexander (2008) illustrated the power of looking at relational patterns instead of individualized behaviors, and, in doing so, he has demonstrated the power of relational engagement over isolation.

3.4 Radical Presence as a Different Path for Going on Together

To me it is clear that radical presence positions us to appreciate a relational understanding of the social world. Amidst all the diversity and complexity of our daily lives, how could a practice that advocates attention to and centering of one's self be responsive to the need to collaboratively deconstruct and reconstruct our ways of going on together? The world is complex, not simple. It is time that we embrace this complexity and develop ways of *coordinating* our diversity rather than eliminating it by finding our own, self-contained "core." When we orient ourselves to the other, to the complexity, and difference, with curiosity and a desire to "know differently," we are radically present. Our respectful attempts to understand might foster new forms of coordinated activity, and this coordination might be focused on embracing the diversity among which we live.

We need to widen the lens; we need to see and assess what is happening within our communities, our institutions, and our culture. It is important to ask how mindfulness assists in challenging oppressive and unjust social orders or encourages engagement with others to create social transformation. As long as we shelter ourselves within an individualist ideology, we avoid confronting some of the most vexing challenges of today. When problems are individual problems, and mindfulness is touted as the most useful way to deal with one's problems, we remain locked in patterns of first-order change Watzlawick et al. (1974) where we simply substitute a different form of action for the typical action. However, the overall pattern remains the same because the new action serves the same function as the original. This simple substitution does not change the entire scenario. If, instead, we ask ourselves how our broader social structures and our ways of maintaining those social struc-

tures contribute to alienation, disengagement, humiliation, degradation, and negative evaluation, we recognize our own participation in the perpetuation of individualized pathology. By adopting a radical presence, we can move beyond the focus on individuals and harness the vast resources available when multiple communities coordinate together to create ways of "going on together" (Wittgenstein 1953).

If the central questions of modernist discourse and the popular mindfulness practices that are centered within this discourse are, "how can I learn to control myself – and cope – in the face of complexity, diversity, and chaos?" the parallel questions of the relational constructionist are:

(a) What are we making together?
(b) How are we making this?
(c) Who are we becoming as we make this?
(d) How might we make a more livable future? (Pearce 2007, p. 53)

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Chapter 4
Recovering the Phenomenological and Intersubjective Nature of Mindfulness Through the Enactive Approach

David Martínez-Pernía, Ignacio Cea, and Andrés Kaltwasser

4.1 Introduction

The origins of mindfulness can be traced to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, an ancient text that shows how to calm negative thoughts and reach nirvana (Shulman 2010). The very concept of mindfulness is itself *Sati*; while loosely interpretable through terms like "awareness" or "consciousness" (Shulman 2010), it can be understood more deeply as a way to achieve an exact perception of a phenomenon – leaving aside observant self-interest and judgment – in order to observe the phenomenon as if for the first time (Thera 1962). *Sati* is to be fully aware, to have a complete understanding of a situation, a comprehension of a phenomenon as a wholeness; in other words, there is an acceptance that all aspects are a part of the same unicity (Williams 2015). Mindfulness practice is the means by which we can reach spiritual enlightenment, and encourages a phenomenological way of living in which people are fully aware of immediate experience (Sangharakshita 2003).

Notably, all these perspectives emphasize the element of subjective practice in mindfulness (or at least highlight the importance of the subjective personal view in understanding and improving the qualities that it provides). As Grossman asserts, mindfulness "is the result of a 2,500-year development of a phenomenological approach oriented toward a gradual understanding of direct experience" (Grossman 2011, p. 1035). Despite the manifestly phenomenological approach of Buddhist mindfulness, its perspective has been adapted by Western psychology toward scientific endeavors that analyze and assess its effects (Van Dam et al. 2018). As a result,

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scholars have reshaped Buddhist concepts into a series of constructs and variables, operationalizable and analyzable via psychology. For instance, mindfulness has at times been defined as a psychological concept; at others, more like a mental state; and, at yet more, as some sort of meditation-based practices that can facilitate a mindful state (Chambers et al. 2009; Chiesa and Malinowski 2011; Rapgay and Bystrisky 2009). According to Shapiro et al. (2006), mindfulness is composed of three elements: intention, attention, and attitude. Hölzel et al. (2011) proposed that mindfulness is composed of attention regulation, body awareness, emotion regulation, and change in perspective on the self. Still more authors emphasize that mindfulness surpasses mere internal awareness of bodily sensations and rather emphasizes elements like external stimuli and cognitive thoughts (Baer et al. 2006). For others, a key element of mindfulness practice is body awareness (Mirams et al. 2013).

There is no doubt that the knowledge developed in mindfulness from the scientific perspective has provided important advances in both basic and clinical sciences. Nevertheless, the traditional scientific perspective omits its fundamental nature: mindfulness as an experiential practice. The main goal of this chapter, then, is to present the enactive approach and its advantages in expanding the contemporary scientific proposal through the reintroduction of the original phenomenological nature of mindfulness. To reach this point, this chapter is organized as follows.

First (Sect. 4.2), we develop a tentative explanation of why investigations of mindfulness have not given appropriate attention to its phenomenological (i.e., experiential) nature[1]: we argue that mindfulness has been understood mainly as an attentional or attention awareness cognitive information processing and that such theoretical premises are reinforced by objective and quantitative methodologies. Second (Sect. 4.3), we argue that characterizing mindfulness only by its functional and behavioral information processing properties is unsatisfactory. To show this, we delve into the nature of mindfulness, its Buddhist roots, and its introduction to mainstream academia and clinical practice by John Kabat-Zinn and show that, irrespective of its several interpretations, mindfulness is essentially a phenomenological experience, a primordially conscious practice constituted not only by a personal subjective dimension but also by an intersubjective relational domain. Finally (Sect. 4.4), we present the enactive approach in cognitive science and an applied scientific program based on it, that is, the neurophenomenological program. We contend that this approach is a naturally well-suited explanatory framework to study mindfulness in its full experiential richness, both in its physical and phenomenological dimensions.

[1] Hereafter, we will use the terms "phenomenological," "experiential," "conscious," "aware," and related words interchangeably. Notwithstanding, below we will identify two significantly divergent senses of "consciousness"/"awareness," a phenomenological conception and a non-phenomenological functional conception.

4.2 Mindfulness as a Cognitive Practice

The introduction of mindfulness in the West precipitated making its practice more attractive and accessible to non-Buddhist practitioners (Baer 2019) "so that it would be maximally useful to people who could not hear it or enter into it through the more traditional dharma gates" (Kabat-Zinn 2011, p. 288). Thus, for example, the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) framework was presented with the scientific support required in the West (Kabat-Zinn 2011) to allow its practice to be carried out in a secular context (Baer 2019). In this process, scholars have tried to adapt Buddhist concepts into a series of constructs and variables, operationalizable and analyzable via psychology. These authors address only certain elements of mindfulness – whose presence they consider equivalent to mindfulness itself (Grossman 2011) – such as awareness, observing experience, nonjudgment, self-acceptance, insightful understanding, attention, or body awareness, among others (Bergomi et al. 2013; Hölzel et al. 2011; Shapiro et al. 2006).

In the cognitive domain, attention is the most relevant concept used in defining mindfulness and its derived scientific proposals. We here argue that there is a trend of focusing on attention in investigations of mindfulness that prevents adequate analysis of its phenomenological (i.e., experiential) nature. Indeed, an extensively cited definition of mindfulness that explicitly characterizes it as an attentional process was given by John Kabat-Zinn: "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 1994, p. 4). This conception is also present in the influential work of the Theravada monk Nyanaponika Thera, who asserts that "attention or mindfulness is kept to a bare registering of the facts observed, without reacting to them" (Thera 1962, p. 30). Although the concept of attention that Kabat-Zinn and Thera had in mind should certainly be interpreted as an experiential feature – i.e., a first-person conscious quality of attention – we suggest that the constant characterization of mindfulness as an attentional process may have led cognitive science researchers to approach it as a non-experiential cognitive function or skill. Within mainstream cognitive science, "attention," as well as any other cognitive process, is widely understood in non-phenomenological information processing terms (Bermúdez 2014).

Though there is probably no single all-encompassing and satisfactory definition of attention (Wolfe and Horowitz 2004), it is typically understood in functionalistic cognitive terms, that is, as a process identified by a particular causal role in the workings of the cognitive system or the brain. The most widespread view of attention is that of a process of information selection[2] (Duncan 1999; Pereira 2020). Other particular views see attention as the process needed to unite elements that make up perceptual stimuli (Braisby and Gellatly 2012; Treisman and Gelade 1980)

[2] The definition of attention as a process of information selection comes from Broadbent's seminal work, in which attention is understood as a bottleneck or filter in the brain's information processing (Broadbent 1958).

or as the cognitive process that encodes sensory information in working memory (Prinz 2011).

Regardless of the details of any particular definition, all of them treat attention as functional information processing that occurs in the brain. However – and significantly – if attention is understood in functional terms, and if mindfulness is primordially a kind of attention, then the result is the study of mindfulness as a non-experiential cognitive (and neurobiological) process because functional characterizations cannot capture the phenomenological dimension of the mind (Block 1978; Chalmers 1996; Kim 2005). In other words, mindfulness ends up being studied only in terms of what it does – i.e., its function – and not as how it is experienced, i.e., its phenomenological dimension.

It could be counterargued that both mindfulness (as a particular kind of attention) and attention itself (as a general cognitive process) are meant to be inseparably related to consciousness and that understanding mindfulness as a particular kind of attention would not therefore undermine its conscious nature. For instance, both Kabat-Zinn and Thera stress that mindful attention and awareness are inseparable: Thera writes that "Bare attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception" (Thera 1962, 30)[3]; and Kabat-Zinn clarifies his 1994 definition of mindfulness by emphasizing that he meant the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn 2005). Furthermore, philosophical and scientific approaches to attention also establish its intimate ties to consciousness. Some researchers claim that there is no unconscious attention, that attention is sufficient for conscious awareness (Gennaro 2016; Mole 2008; Prinz 2012), or that attention "is the process that not only unites the elements that go to make up a stimulus, but also brings the result to conscious awareness" (Braisby and Gellatly 2012, p. 61). Those accounts essentially link attention to awareness in such a way that any study of attention, including the particular attentional process of mindfulness, would necessarily deal with consciousness also, at least implicitly.

However, this objection is quickly refuted. Although it is certainly true that researchers have often emphasized that the appropriate sense of "attention" in mindfulness practice is closely associated with "awareness," and although there are both philosophical and empirical reasons within the cognitive sciences to consider that attentional mechanisms are relevant to conscious states, the terms "awareness" and "consciousness" are widely given a non-phenomenological functional reading among cognitive scientists. In short, they continue to be relegated to a specific kind of information processing, devoid of any first-personal qualitative dimension (Block 2007; Chalmers 1995, 1996).

This means that even if the close relationship between attention and awareness in the scientific study of mindfulness has been recognized, cognitive scientists typically understand both mental capacities in non-phenomenological functional terms.

[3] "Another English term for sati (mindfulness) is 'bare attention'"(Gunaratana 2002, p. 140).

As a result, any derived models, explanations, or applications end up picturing mindfulness as just a special kind of (functionally understood) cognitive practice.

There are many illustrations of this non-experiential functional notion of "consciousness" and "awareness." Let us quote two examples of definitions from the literature on consciousness science. Neuroscientist Hal Blumenfeld defined awareness as "the attentive and other processes necessary for events to be selected, handed off and encoded into memory for subsequent report" (Blumenfeld 2016, p. 21). Similarly, Bernard Baars, in his influential book *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness,* states that people are conscious of an event if "(1) they can say immediately afterwards that they were conscious of it *and* (2) we can independently verify the accuracy of their report" (Baars 1988, p. 15). Both cases make use of a non-phenomenological functional conception of consciousness characterized by its objectively describable role in the cognitive system and not by its first-person experiential qualities.

To address this disparity in understandings of consciousness, philosopher Ned Block (2007) introduced the terms "phenomenal consciousness" and "access consciousness." The former is the experiential notion applied to the mental states of an organism for which "there is something it is like" (to be in those states) (Nagel 1974, p. 436). The latter – the non-experiential functional notion applied to an organism's mental state – occurs "if it is poised for direct control of thought and action" (Block 2007, p. 168). According to this now widespread conceptual distinction, a person is phenomenally conscious if she is experiencing something, and access conscious if, e.g., she is able to verbally report what objects are in front of her. Of course, most of the time, we are capable of both experiencing things and manifesting meaningful behavior concerning what we experience. However, Block's point is that both senses of consciousness may be conceptually and empirically dissociated, e.g., when we suddenly "notice" (become access conscious) that we were long ago hearing (phenomenally conscious) the sound of the refrigerator. Additionally, he stresses that cognitive scientists should be especially cautious about this distinction to avoid misunderstandings in their research on consciousness.

Hence, we could now say that the scarce attention that the phenomenological dimension of mindfulness has received in its scientific study could be understood as being, at least partially, caused by the widespread functional (non-experiential) conception of general cognitive processes and – specifically – of attention and awareness. In short, these are assessed inasmuch as they are access consciousness, but not as phenomenal consciousness. One of the main goals of this chapter is to show the need for research strategies that approach mindfulness in its full phenomenological richness.[4] Particularly well suited to achieve this goal, the enactive approach (Varela et al. 1991), as a general explanatory framework within cognitive science, and its

[4] Hereafter, the terms "consciousness" and "awareness" will be used in their phenomenological sense.

main methodological tool, the neurophenomenological program (Varela 1996), are presented in the final section.

4.2.1 The Scientific Study of Mindfulness Through Self-Reports

This section analyzes self-report questionnaires – one of the main methods in assessing mindfulness practice (Baer 2019) – and addresses the core characteristics of their scientific methodology, what they consist of, and their contributions. Taken with the previous subsection, this will serve as an illustration of the Western scientific mainstream on mindfulness: first, its benefits and then its counterarguments.

Considering the myriad operational definitions of mindfulness, adequate research approaches are necessary for the cognitive sciences to deliver a proper explanation of mindfulness (Gomis 2018). Western scientific methods, which have fundamentally tinged understandings of the impact and functioning of mindfulness practice (Quaglia et al. 2016), include self-report questionnaires, neuroimaging studies, physiological measurements, reaction times, behavioral measurements, and motor control, among others. Of these, self-report questionnaires have been the main research instrument used to comprehend mindfulness and have thus significantly contributed to the research of this phenomenon (Baer 2019; Park et al. 2013).

Indeed, self-report questionnaires are widely used in the social sciences. They are administered to a massive number of participants, easily collect large amounts of data, and aid in generalizing results and corroborating hypotheses (Demetriou et al. 2015). This instrument is generally considered one of the most direct ways to assess data related to participant thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and attitudes. As a versatile instrument, it is no wonder it has been used to approach different aspects of mindfulness practice (Simms 2008). When collecting information on mindfulness, the instrument asks the participant to observe one's specific mental contents – a mental ability of self-observation or reflection is called introspection – and report them as a Likert scale or a psychological construct reported in the questionnaire.

As a consequence of the aforementioned myriad cognitive definitions of mindfulness, instruments designed to assess this phenomenon approach it from different points of view. Particularly, self-report tests meant to assess mindfulness end up measuring one or several dimensions that only approach certain aspects of mindfulness and which further depend on if the scale assesses trait or state mindfulness (Goodman et al. 2017): as a trait, mindfulness describes a series of specific, separate, and trainable skills; and as a state, it is a way of being, cultivated through meditational practices, where being mindful – aware, in the moment – is a characteristic aspect thereof (Baer 2019).

Regardless, self-report questionnaires on mindfulness have important advantages: (i) they adequately measure psychometric properties; (ii) they collect relevant information that can help to comprehend mindfulness and its effect on health and

wellbeing (Baer 2019); (iii) they show high correlation with different constructs related to mindfulness, such as psychopathology, rumination, and emotional intelligence (Johnson 2007); and (iv) they provide a robust body of research with the potential to reveal relevant data on the usefulness of mindfulness-based therapeutic mechanisms and interventions (Park et al. 2013).

4.2.2 Limitations of Self-Report Questionnaires in Collecting Information on Subjective Experience

Of all the types of scientific procedures applied in Western psychology (neuroimaging studies, physiological measurements, reaction times, behavioral measurements), self-report questionnaires are the most clearly interested in measuring the personal perspective of the mindfulness practitioner.[5] Through this methodology, the meditator observes their own mental contents (introspection) and reports different aspects of their consciousness. Despite self-report questionnaires having made advances in their approach to mindfulness, phenomenological analyses still reveal deficiencies stemming from their epistemological and methodological premises. This subsection will briefly explain what kind of knowledge is omitted when mindfulness is considered empirically, as a cognitive process, and as a type of introspection.

The main phenomenological critique is that self-report questionnaires quantify participant consciousness. Each item objectivizes conscious experience, collecting information from the participant on their mental content and quality (e.g., *to be aware of with equanimity*). Nevertheless, no answers provided by the participant refer to their singular and personal view. For instance, the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown and Ryan 2003) asks about conscious perception of different behaviors, from "almost never" to "almost always"; the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) (Walach et al. 2006) uses four ranges of behaviors, from "rarely" to "almost always"; and the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer et al. 2004) categorizes answers on five-point Likert scales, from "never or very rarely true" to "almost always or always true." Clearly none of these answers concern a description of perceptions or of the pre-reflexive processes that underlie experience; rather, while the categories imposed (e.g., never, very rarely, always, and so on) inform the researcher about an objective reality, they leave no room for understanding the subjective and descriptive nature of participant experience.

Doubtless the data provided on objective perception of experience is useful for subsequent statistical analyses; nevertheless, this method omits personal description of how the meditator lives the experience, through their own words, under their own meanings. In short, collected data may not explain the real experience of the

[5] A cognitive ontological discussion would see the introspective self-report as a "subpersonal cognitive process." For an in-depth analysis, see Martínez-Pernía (2020).

meditator, but rather a kind of consciousness that, while superficially similar to their qualitative nature, in fact differs profoundly (Grossman 2011). As Grossman (2011) states, citing the Buddhist scholar Buddhaghosa (Nanamoli 1975), it may be that introspective self-reports are "near enemies" in the study of mindfulness: while apparently similar, they are in essence opposites. Operational definitions may be far removed from their phenomenological – and Buddhist – roots. This phenomenological critique has led to distrust of self-report scales: as Chiesa states, "modern attempts to operationalize mindfulness have consistently failed to provide an unequivocal definition of mindfulness which takes into account the complexity of the original definitions" (Chiesa 2013, p. 265).

In sum, self-report questionnaires are an assessment method to collect quantitative and objective data of the conscious experience. They do not, in contrast, record any data relating to the qualitative nature of consciousness. Directly applicable to our discussion of mindfulness, Thomas Metzinger said it most clearly: "if we wish to take seriously our own consciousness as a phenomenon bound to individual perspectives of experience, we cannot – as a matter of *principle* – approach it through objective methods, since the essence and the strength of *these* methods consists precisely in moving as far away as possible from any purely individual perspectives" (Metzinger 1995, p. 7).

4.3 The Experiential Nature of Mindfulness

Having elucidated in the previous section why and how the scientific study of mindfulness has neglected its experiential or phenomenological nature, this section establishes that mindfulness is a primordially conscious practice and mental capacity and that it is constituted not only by a particular subjective experience but also by an intersubjective relational domain. We will proceed as follows. First, we will delve into the nature of mindfulness – especially as introduced to mainstream academia and clinical practice by John Kabat-Zinn – and its Buddhist roots. Subsequently, we develop a set of arguments to conclude that mindfulness, given its phenomenological nature, entails an intersubjective relational domain that cannot be neglected.

Kabat-Zinn is quite explicit about the essential phenomenological dimension of mindfulness: "Mindfulness can only be understood from the inside out. It is not one more cognitive-behavioural technique to be deployed in a behaviour change paradigm […] It is primarily what Francisco Varela termed a first-person experience" (Kabat-Zinn 2011, p. 284). This experiential notion is also arguably present in the influential book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, in which Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh states that "the term 'mindfulness' [refers] to keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality" (Hạnh 1987, p. 11).

Not only contemporary authors offer experiential interpretations of mindfulness; such premises were also given by its Buddhist origins. Indeed, if we dig into the Buddhist roots of mindfulness, we find it inexorably linked to consciousness or

awareness understood experientially: whether taken as the translation of the Buddhist term *sati* (in Pali) to refer to a particular focused and attentive quality of awareness or as the translation of *sampajañña* (in Pali) to denote a capacity of meta-awareness key to the development of the former attentive state (Dunne et al. 2019; Garfield 2015; Lutz et al. 2007); mindfulness is a key conscious capacity whose exercise has profound consequences to the way we experience our daily lives. Within Buddhism, mindfulness is a central component of the eightfold path leading to the cessation of suffering (Bodhi 2011). Given that the relevant sense of suffering here concerns the *experience* of suffering, and that the practice of mindfulness is something one could do on purpose to change the way we experience what happens to us, the place of mindfulness within Buddhism strongly suggests that this mental capacity must be experiential and not just information processing of some specific sort. The importance of lived experience in Buddhism is eloquently expressed by Garfield, who writes that "phenomenology is central to Buddhist thought, because in the end, Buddhism is about the transformation of the way we experience the World" (Garfield 2015, p. 179).

The same idea is reinforced in secular applications of mindfulness. The MBSR program, for example, sees mindfulness practice as a means of changing our conscious experience in such a way that stress – the particularly widespread form of suffering in our highly demanding lives of immediacy – may be significantly diminished or, ideally, completely removed (Kabat-Zinn 2011). Hence, under a broad reading, "mindfulness" and "consciousness/awareness" – both in the context of Kabat-Zinn's contributions and within Buddhism – are most naturally understood in a phenomenological sense rather than as a functional-cognitive process.

Let us now discuss more specific and technical reasons to approach mindfulness as an essentially conscious mental capacity and practice. Within *Abhidharma* psychology,[6] mindfulness (*sati*) is considered a key "mental factor" (*caitesika* in Sanskrit) that, when cultivated, determines the quality of consciousness (*citta* or *vijñana* in Sanskrit) (Dreyfus and Thompson 2007, p. 99), specifically its stability and focus (Lutz et al. 2007). Indeed, in this context, mindfulness can be defined as the "mind's ability to keep the object in focus without forgetting, being distracted, wobbling, or floating away from the object" (Dreyfus and Thompson 2007, p. 99). According to the *Abhidharma*, every mental state is composed of the primary factor of awareness (*citta*/*vijñana*), plus a plethora of mental factors, which constitute its specific character. In the words of Geshe Rabten, the primary factor of consciousness "is like a hand whereas the mental factors are like individual fingers, the palm, and so forth. The character of a primary mind [i.e., consciousness] is thus determined by its constituent mental factors" (Rabten 1981, p. 52). Hence, as a mental factor in the *Abhidharma*, mindfulness is always a mental component of the flow of experience, a determinant for its quality and stability.

[6] The *Abhidharma* is one of the earliest traditions within Buddhism. It aims to analyze the ultimate components of conscious experience and of the world presented in such experience (Dreyfus and Thompson 2007).

One may also contemplate the position of mindfulness along the eightfold path. Not restricted to the *Abhidharma* tradition, mindfulness (again as the translation of *sati*) is a universal and basic aspect of Buddhism and the seventh member of the path.[7] According to Bodhi (2011), who thoroughly discusses the meaning of "mindfulness" (*sati*) as depicted in the practice of the "establishment of mindfulness" (*satipatthana*)[8], mindfulness should be characterized "from the side of the subject [by the] lucidity and vivacity of the act of awareness, and from the side of the object, its vivid presentation" (Bodhi 2011, p. 26). In other words, in the context of this fundamental aspect of Buddhist thought and practice, a proper understanding of mindfulness is as a particular quality of conscious experience, characterized "in the simplest terms, as *lucid awareness*" (Bodhi 2011, p. 25).

Nonetheless, in contemporary studies and applications of mindfulness, it is not uncommon to find that "mindfulness" refers to a technical Buddhist term other than "*sati*." As mentioned some paragraphs above, mindfulness is also used as the translation of "*sampajañña*" (in Pali). That term originally meant "clear comprehension" (Bodhi 2011, p. 21) that springs from the cultivation of mindfulness; after Santideva (625 CE), however, it was reframed as the key conscious meta-cognitive capacity (i.e., meta-awareness) needed to monitor the stability of mindfulness (*sati*), preventing it from distraction and/or realizing when distraction has already occurred, and which is needed to attain the focused state of mind that characterizes mindfulness as an object-directed awareness (Dunne et al. 2019). Additionally, this mindful meta-awareness is a crucial element needed to experience the objectless awareness that characterizes advanced stages of *samata* meditation within the Theravada tradition, which is similar to the "choiceless awareness" practice included in MBSR (Dunne et al. 2019) and the nondual (no subject-object structure) meditative states attained through the Open Presence Meditation within Tibetan Buddhism (Lutz et al. 2007). The point is that, even if mindfulness is understood as this meta-cognitive capacity (*sampajañña*), and not as the previously discussed object-directed focused awareness (*sati*), still it should be taken to be a component of conscious experience, in particular, a kind of sustained and non-propositional meta-awareness that enables the practitioner to attain the focused stability of their mind, and eventually even a state without subject-object differentiation.

In summation, by digging into the nature of mindfulness both within Buddhism and contemporary secular contexts, we have shown it to be an experiential first-person phenomenon that must be approached as such. In the following section, we are going to see how the crucial phenomenological dimension of mindfulness also opens it to relational domains.

[7] That is, as "right mindfulness" (samma sati). The eightfold path in turn is the fourth and final among the "noble truths" in the teachings of the Buddha. It is the way that leads to the cessation of suffering.

[8] The teaching of the "establishment of mindfulness" is included in the Pali Canon, which is the oldest written collection of Buddha's teachings (Bodhi 2011).

4.3.1 The Relational Nature of Consciousness and Mindfulness

This section develops the argument that understanding mindfulness as an experiential phenomenon entails considering it also an inherently relational one. It is intersubjective, not individualistic or solipsistic. We will offer phenomenological reasons to take conscious experience, and mindfulness in particular, to be inextricably tied to the existence of other subjective experiences and the world around us. We will discuss also some of the ethical and ontological consequences.

We start with a brief sketch of some phenomenological arguments from Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty.[9] According to Heidegger, one essential feature of human existence (*Dasein*) is its being-in-the-world, in the sense that in our everyday experience we are constitutively related to the world, without which our mode of existence would be fundamentally different. Moreover, the *Dasein* world is primarily social and enculturated, in which we encounter artifacts and equipment that we implicitly understand mostly refer to others, are produced by others, and in which our work with them is destined to others, or could potentially be used by others. In this way, *Dasein* being-in-the-world is also being-with (*mitsein*) others. In other words, our conscious existence is inherently tied to an intersubjective world (Heidegger 1962). Hence, because mindfulness entails a heightened awareness in our daily activities – which Heidegger describes as constantly including dealing with equipment that concern others – then the practice of mindfulness in our everyday contexts will be permeated by, and may even make more salient, that constant reference to others, even in the absence of concrete others.

Moreover, this mode of encounter in which everyday objects are found to be ready-to-hand, that is, available to be used skillfully for different sorts of tasks, is characterized by a practical and nontheoretical direct relationship with them. Crucially, this pragmatic relationship with equipment is devoid of any structure in which a subject represents an object (Wheeler 2018). As stressed by Araya-Véliz and Arístegui (2016) and Arístegui and Araya-Véliz (2019), this conception of prereflective pragmatic experience, in which there is no subject-object split, holds the potential of being a better conception of the relationship between self and world in the context of mindfulness practice. In this approach, mindfulness in our everyday dealings with things reinforces the constitutive place of the world in our conscious experience and the pervading absence of a fixed and permanent self against a pregiven world. Of course, it also connects to the aforementioned nondual forms of mindfulness characteristic of advanced states of *samata* and *open presence* meditations (Dunne et al. 2019; Lutz et al. 2007).

Let us turn now to Husserl, who focuses on a key feature of the very structure of perceptual experience. Everywhere we perceive objects, like a cup of tea or a ball, even though those objects are never presented to us in their entirety; rather, we are

[9] Our exposition of the arguments of Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty closely follows Thompson (2001, 2007) and Zahavi (1997, 2001).

always directly presented with some part or side of the objects around us, but somehow, we implicitly know that we are perceiving the whole cup or the whole ball, not just parts of them. How is this possible? Husserl's answer is that the hidden sides are best understood as being the profiles presented to the simultaneous potential perceptions of other subjects (Zahavi 1997, 2001). In other words, we perceive whole objects and not just the parts that are directly presented to us, because we implicitly understand that their hidden parts could be experienced by others. In this way, the very capacity of perceiving objects, a basic and fundamental feature of perceptual experience, depends constitutively on the possibility that multiple subjects could perceive the same things, but from different vantage points.

This idea has far-reaching consequences. First, it would entail that the very intelligibility of the concept of "object" depends on this kind of perceptual intersubjectivity; that is, if we want to make sense of our idea of "object," then we must refer to the experiences of others (Thompson 2007). In other words, our capacity of meaningfully speaking about such and such objects in our everyday experiences presupposes the possibility that other subjects could experience them but from different perspectives. Second, the notion of "objectivity" or "objective validity" so essential to science, but also to our everyday affairs in the world, would also depend on the encounter among different subjects of experience. In Zahavi's words, "Husserl's thesis is that my experience of objective validity is mediated and made possible by my encounter with a transcendent other, and that this transcendence… endows the world with objective validity" (Zahavi 2001, p. 159). In sum, according to Husserl, the very possibility of objects being part of our conscious experience, and our notion of objective validity, depends on our implicit understanding that other subjects could also experience a common world.

The consequences of these Husserlian ideas on mindfulness are important. If we understand mindful experience as a lucid awareness of a world in which objects are presented vividly (Bodhi 2011), then mindfulness should involve, at least implicitly, the presence of potential others experiencing the same world as us, even if they are not concretely present. Then, in the light of Husserl, we can say that a mindful perception of a common and objective world, a world which we take to be shared, a world capable of being scientifically investigated and which is not the illusion of a solipsistic mind, highlights and makes more explicit the irremediable reference to other experiential subjectivities being capable of perceiving the same things as we do.

Because the Husserlian analysis presuppose that we can make sense of the idea that other people could be conscious of the world around us as we are, it could be sensible to ask, how do we know that there are other subjects of experience? That other people are also conscious if, as it seems, I could only have direct access to my own consciousness? In contrast to mainstream approaches to social cognition like the "theory of mind" (Antonietti et al. 2006; Premack and Woodruff 1978) and the "simulation" theory (Goldman 2006; Gordon 1996) in which we find an experiential and epistemic abyss between our minds and the minds of others which requires either inference or projection (Fuchs and De Jaegher 2009), the phenomenological tradition claims that we can directly perceive the experience of others inasmuch as

the mind and body are the same (embodied) and their expressions and actions are their mind displayed – a capacity known in phenomenological philosophy as *empathy* (Overgaard 2018; Zahavi 2001).

Let us explore this idea. Even though our empathic capacity depends on our perception of another's bodily expressions and involves some degree of inference, phenomenological empathy should not be understood either as a mere combination of perception and inference – like the "theory of mind" approach – or as a projection of our own inner experiences into the other, like the "simulation" approach. Rather, the phenomenological concept of empathy does not adhere to the problematic mind-body dichotomous conception implicit in both theories, in which the mind is restricted to inner private states inside the skull and the body is a public and objective physical machine controlled by those inner mental states. Instead, the body is seen as a sentient lived body (*Leib* in German), and the mind is taken to be present in the meaningful patterns of gestures and bodily movements which are expressive of experiences. Thus phenomenologists claim that if we pay attention to our own every day social interactions, we could see that we are "directly acquainted with another person's joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection" (Scheler 2017, p. 260).

This special form of intentionality directed toward another's experience was already present in the analyses of Husserl. He claimed that "in empathy, the empathizing I experiences the inner life or, to be more precise, the consciousness of the other I" (Husserl 2006, p. 82). However, he carefully acknowledged that "no one would say he lives it and perceives it […] just like his own consciousness" (Husserl 2006, pp. 82–83); otherwise the empathizing I would not experience another's consciousness as foreign and as transcending his own. The treatment of empathy was further elaborated by Husserl's student Edith Stein in her 1916 doctoral dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy* (Stein 1964). We are going to focus on one special feature of Stein's analysis. Just as one can be experientially directed toward the experience of another, when we are also empathetically grasped by that other and we empathetically experience that empathy toward us, we experience ourselves not only from within but, in a sense, from without also. She calls this *reiterated empathy*. To restate, this occurs when we experience another's empathic experience of ourselves. The consequences of this face-to-face type of intentionality are varied, but the key moral for present purposes is that our own intimately felt subjectivity is tightly linked to a mutual intersubjective empathy. Thompson puts it this way: "My sense of personal selfhood… is tied to recognition by another and to the ability to grasp that recognition empathetically" (Thompson 2007, p. 392).

Now, if as we suggest, science is going to approach mindfulness as a conscious mental capacity and practice, science should also pay attention to the way in which mindful experience in social encounters could heighten the phenomenological capacity of empathy through which one's awareness of another's experience is revealed. Also, as the concept of reiterated empathy suggests, mindfulness could also modify the way we perceive ourselves through the eyes of others. This approach would give intersubjective interactions a prominent role in mindfulness research

and align them more faithfully with the Buddhist ethical framework in which mindfulness was originally situated – a framework that commits practitioners to the well-being of others as much as their own, seeking to ameliorate suffering from all sentient beings (Garfield 2015).

Additionally, an intersubjective approach to mindfulness would prevent the "looping effect" that mainstream cognitive science generates when it conceives of and studies mindfulness as an individualistic, private, and representational cognitive mechanism – a conception which, in turn, reinforces a narcissistic view of the practitioner and a consumerist view of mindfulness as a commodity (Thompson 2017). The intersubjective approach, in contrast, could help to redirect research in such a way that the cultivation of mindfulness goes along with heightened awareness of societal and environmental concerns (Thompson 2017).

Furthermore, phenomenological reasons to give a special place to intersubjectivity do not end here. According to Husserl (1973) and Merleau-Ponty (1968), the very possibility of empathically grasping another's experience is based on a kind of proto-intersubjectivity within our own embodied subjectivity. When we touch one hand with the other, we experience the phenomenological double-sidedness of our own bodies, the capacity of being both the object of sensation, i.e., what is touched, and the subject of sensation, i.e., what touches; moreover, these roles are reversible – i.e., the hand that touches could become the touched hand and vice versa. This reversibility evidences that both are manifestations of one and the same body (Husserl 1973). It is this exteriority (our body as an object) in our embodied self-awareness that opens us to others, to understand that other living bodies are embodied subjects of experience (Merleau-Ponty 1968). In the context of mindfulness, this would entail that cultivating a mindful experience of our own sentient bodies would at the same time enhance our awareness of others as subjects of experience, sentient bodies with a phenomenological perspective on the world as much as we have.

To sum up, according to the phenomenological analyses we have briefly presented, our consciousness is constitutively open to the world and others in such a way that both our experience of an objective world and of ourselves is permeated by and depends on the possibility of there being other experiential subjects and, further, on our capacity to empathetically grasp another's experience of a commonly shared world and of ourselves too. As Zahavi puts it: "Far from being competing alternatives, subjectivity and intersubjectivity are in fact complementing and mutually interdependent notions…the three regions 'self', 'others', and 'world' belong together; they reciprocally illuminate one another, and can only be understood in their interconnection…the subjectivity that is related to the world only gains its full relation to itself, and to the world, in relation to the other" (Zahavi 2001, p. 166).

If subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and world are so phenomenologically intertwined, then research on the experience of mindfulness should incorporate the interdependence of individual mindful experience, the actual and potential presence of other experiential subjects, and a shared world. This will give us a richer understanding of the practice and effects of mindfulness and would also contribute to an ethically more suitable understanding of its cultivation in secular contexts.

Moreover, this emphasis on the experiential, intersubjective, and world-involving nature of mindfulness fits better with the radically relationalist view of reality at the core of the Buddhist worldview that originally framed the practice of mindfulness, according to which all phenomena, including our*selves*, are dependent on complex networks of causes and conditions for their existence and identity and hence are empty of independent substantial existence (Garfield 2015): what the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh calls the "inter-being" of all phenomena (Hạnh 1987).

Finally, and with the aim of going deeper into our phenomenological arguments, the following section presents the enactive approach as a theoretical and empirical framework that naturally fits this understanding of mindfulness as a physical and phenomenological experience.

4.4 Enaction: The Natural Framework to Investigate Mindfulness as Experience

Given our characterization of mindfulness as an experiential practice and capacity – and hence, an inherently relational phenomenon – the natural framework to investigate it is the enactive approach (Froese and Di Paolo 2011; Thompson 2007; Thompson and Varela 2001; Varela 1984, 1991, 1997; Varela and Thompson 2003; Varela et al. 1991), which has had repercussions both in basic sciences and in clinical sciences (e.g., Fuchs and Schlimme 2009; Martínez-Pernía 2020; Martínez-Pernía et al. 2016; McGann et al. 2013).

Since its very inception, the enactive approach has repeatedly stressed that cognitive science needs to incorporate conscious experience into both its *explananda* and methodological tools (Varela 1996; Varela et al. 1991). In *The Embodied Mind,* Varela and colleagues stated that "the new sciences of mind need to enlarge their horizon to encompass both lived human experience and the possibilities of transformation inherent in human experience" (Varela et al. 1991, p. xv). At the same time, they also emphasize that human experience should benefit from the knowledge gained in the mind sciences, in a mutually enlightening circulation between science (third-person) and experience (first-person).

Varela et al. (1991) presented their approach as a continuation of the work of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, especially concerning his perspective on the theme of *embodiment.* As mentioned above, Merleau-Ponty delves into the idea, originally presented by Husserl, that our embodied self-awareness presents our bodies as being both object and subject. To advance in their purpose of making cognitive science significant to human experience, and vice versa, Varela et al. (1991) assert that the dual subject-object nature of our lived bodies must be put at the center of research. Hence, in the enactive approach, the bodies of conscious organisms, in particular living human bodies, are comprehended "both as physical structures and as lived, experiential structures - in short, as both 'outer' and 'inner', biological and phenomenological" (Varela et al. 1991, p. xv).

Concerning mindfulness, Varela et al. (1991) presented it to the cognitive science community as a crucial pragmatic tool to enhance our first-person study of cognition as a conscious embodied process. They stated that "if cognitive science is to include human experience, it must have some method for exploring and knowing what human experience is. It is for this reason that we are focusing on the Buddhist tradition of mindfulness meditation" (Varela et al. 1991, pp. 23–24). The experiential dimension of mindfulness and its relevance to cognitive science is further accentuated by Evan Thompson in his introduction to the 2016 *Revised Edition of The Embodied Mind*: "The cognitive processes that constitute mindfulness as a meaningful form of human experience […] cannot be fully understood unless described phenomenologically. This is one way in which thinking through the enactive approach returns us to the phenomenology of lived experience as a necessary complement to scientific investigation" (Varela et al. 2016, p. xxvi).

Then, enaction perfectly fits our account of mindfulness as a full-blown experiential practice and a capacity of the human mind that, furthermore, has been described as a key methodological tool to investigate human consciousness and facilitate virtuous feedback between our own first-person experience and the cognitive sciences. Of course, this approach also enables a better perspective on mindfulness itself. This is stressed by Kabat-Zinn, in his foreword to Varela et al., when he states that the authors "clarify a deeper understanding of mindfulness grounded in lived experience and, in particular, in relationality itself and in what they term 'enaction'" (Varela et al. 2016, p. xii). Kabat-Zinn is pointing to the core of the enactive approach. Not only does it stress a tight relationship between research on cognition and first-person experience – a relationship in which mindfulness could play an important role – but also that cognition is itself a relational phenomenon.

Presented as "a middle way for neuroscience" (Varela 1984, p. 215), the enactive approach states that the world that a cognitive agent perceives and acts upon is neither a representation of a pre-established and independent world nor is it an ideal projection of a solipsistic mind, but a relational phenomenon, because, given the adaptive autonomous organization and self-producing activity of any biological cognitive system, its surroundings acquire a "surplus of signification which haunts the understanding of the living and of cognition, and which is at the root of how a self becomes one […]. There is no food significance in sucrose except when a bacteria swims upgradient and its metabolism uses the molecule in a way that allows its identity to continue" (Varela 1997, pp. 79–80).

Following Varela, the sucrose as "food" may represent all other meaningful components of what we perceive when our world of experience is *enacted*: significance and status as a biological, cognitive, or cultural object is acquired only in the relational domain entailed, in the first place, by the self-producing and self-differentiating metabolic activity of ourselves as organisms, our *autopoiesis*, but also in higher levels of complexity by the autonomous and sense-making activities of our immune, nervous, and linguistic systems. Crucially, these systems could not do so in isolation; they depend, at the most basic level, on the physical properties of the environment which are indispensable, in terms of materials and energy, for their physical existence.

This autonomous and adaptive – but nonetheless, relational – "sense-making" activity is the hallmark of cognition according to the enactive approach (Dreyfus and Thompson 2007; Varela et al. 1991). In other words, as illustrated by the example of the bacteria, the very activity that defines life, i.e., autopoiesis, entails the co-emergence of both a distinctively bio-cognitive *perspective* on the environment and a *world* endowed with basic forms of meaning and value. To stress the point, according to the enactive approach, things such as food or the color red do not pre-exist, *qua food* and *red*, out there independently, but are enacted through the autopoietic and sensory-motor coupling of the organism (as an operationally autonomous and adaptive physicochemical entity) with its physical environment.

Moreover, this biologically emergent perspective that any living creature would have upon the world "is a precursor to the interiority of consciousness… This inwardness underlies the deep continuity of life and mind, and is the context in which the emergence of consciousness must be understood" (Thompson 2007, p. 225). Just as the fundamental forms of meaning and value emerge in the relational domain of the autopoietic activity of unicellular organisms coupled to their physical surroundings, a conscious perspective upon a world of experience emerges in the relational domain of the more complex autonomous and embodied sensory-motor activity of organisms endowed with nervous systems coupled to their physical, biological, and social environments (Thompson 2007). This means that according to the enactive approach, cognitive agents in general, including mindfulness practitioners, are seen as continuously engaged in bringing forth their own domains of meaning and value, with an active role in shaping their worlds of experience in an unceasing process in which both world and self co-emerge and co-define each other upon a background of precarious and unstable material conditions that constantly challenge the very permanency of life. In this approach, mindfulness is used as a key tool to refine our awareness in such a way that the co-definition of the cognitive agent and its world becomes salient, as is the absence of any enduring and independent pre-given world.

The enactive approach has been continuously developing since *The Embodied Mind*, including its perspective on the social dimension of cognition and intersubjectivity. A key advance is the concept of "participatory sense-making" (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007) which occurs when social interactions acquire a form of autonomy and the sense-making activities of individual actors are affected by the interactions themselves, generating new domains of sense-making that were not available to the individuals in isolation. This is stepped forward by De Jaegher and Froese (2009), who argue that the autonomy of social interactions and the respective phenomenon of participatory sense-making entails that not only may social agents constitute social interactions but that social interactions are also constitutive of social agents. Both works, whose arguments are presented mostly in enactive dynamical terms, are complemented by Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) with a phenomenological account of "mutual incorporation," in which the dynamical coupling and participatory sense-making among social agents is described in terms of reciprocal embodied experiences of self and other. They call this dynamical and phenomenological approach "enactive intersubjectivity."

Further to our brief exposition of the concept of enaction, and the enactive developments in social cognition and intersubjectivity just described, the relational foundation of the enactive approach is eloquently illustrated by one of the quotes Varela and collaborators make of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* in the first pages of *The Embodied Mind*: "The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects" (quoted in Varela et al. 1991, p. 4). A clear illustration of the strong interdependence between self and world they embrace.

This is the rejection of any stable metaphysical foundation either in the mind of the subject (idealism) or in the reality of the physical environment (material realism); it is, in contrast, the central place they confer to the relationship between self and world: what they call "groundlessness." Moreover, and even more important for present purposes, this profound relationality is strongly influenced by the Buddhist view of the *codependent arising* of the illusory sense of an independent and permanent self and its objects of perception, volition, action, etc. and of the doctrine of emptiness (*sunyata* in Sanskrit) that we already mentioned, according to which everything is empty of self-being, i.e., nothing exists independently. Indeed, Varela and collaborators assert that "It is […] *sunyata* with respect to codependent arising, that most naturally fits with the logic we have been exploring in the discovery of groundlessness and its relationship to cognitive science and the concept of enaction" (Varela et al. 1991, p. 221).

4.4.1 The Neurophenomenological Program: The Scientific Method Under the Enactive Approach

In Sect. 4.2 we showed how and why the current scientific approaches toward mindfulness have neglected an experiential approach. In the best of cases, subjective experience has been replaced by reports on introspection (e.g., self-report questionnaires). In Sect. 4.3 we argued that mindfulness does have an essentially phenomenological nature that also entails a relational intersubjective domain. Now, after having advocated for the enactive paradigm as the best approach to mindfulness, constituted by physical and phenomenological attributes, this subsection will explain the scientific methodology best suited to this paradigm. This is the neurophenomenological approach.[10]

In his influential work titled "Neurophenomenology: A methodological remedy for the hard problem," Francisco Varela (1996) proposed that the study of consciousness must include both objective explanations and subjective descriptions.

[10] Nowadays, there are other methodological proposals that integrate third- and first-person data, such as affective neuro-physio-phenomenology (Colombetti 2013) and cardiophenomenology (Depraz and Desmidt 2018). As a consequence of the limited space in this chapter, however, we will focus on Varela's neurophenomenological program (1996)

This method investigates the temporal relationship between conscious experience and neural activity (Lutz and Thompson 2003; Thompson et al. 2005) based on the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory. To define brain activity patterns relevant to conscious experience (Le Van Quyen 2003), this methodology analyzes neural networks to register the occurrence of large-scale integration patterns (Varela et al. 2001). As explained by Thompson and company, "each moment of conscious awareness involves the transient selection of a distributed neural population that is both integrated or coherent, and differentiated or flexible, and whose members are connected by reciprocal and transient dynamic links" (Thompson et al. 2005).

The neurophenomenological program looks to explain consciousness by integrating data from phenomenological experience with that of quantified, large-scale brain neurodynamics (Lutz 2002). As a scientific alternative, it differentiates itself based on the mutual validation of neurodynamics and phenomenological information obtained from the structure of experience. Bringing together both phenomenological and neuroscientific approaches (Froese and Fuchs 2012), the creators of the neurophenomenological program note that collected data (biological and phenomenological) should be considered as capturing two complementary aspects of a unitary experiential process.

According to Varela (1996), the study of consciousness requires data on both physical quantities and subjective qualities; the necessity of these two elements, then, implies the use of different research tools. On the one hand, to measure the physical quantities, neurobiological information must be captured through the use of technological instruments (EEG, MEG, fMRI). On the other hand, to assess the subjective quality, one may obtain more profound information than that which is collected through introspective reports by adopting a Husserlian phenomenological stance. Subjective data collection methods in neurophenomenology focus, in one approach, on showing subjects how to describe a phenomenon when it appears in their consciousness – simple to use with meditators because of shared elements between meditation practices and phenomenological methods (Varela 1996), but potentially more challenging to use with non-meditators. In another approach, it is designed to assist non-meditators, guiding them through an interview to help them be aware of and describe their phenomenological experience (Olivares et al. 2015).

Some contemporary research has investigated the effects of this first neurophenomenological method on mindfulness. For instance, one study found that certain aspects of the phenomenological experience during meditation practice are directly related to the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) (Garrison et al. 2013). Another, using first-person descriptions and magnetoencephalogram (MEG) recordings, found that those different experiences of self (self-awareness, minimal self-awareness, and selfless awareness) have different dissociable frequency-dependent networks (Dor-Ziderman et al. 2013). And finally, in a neurophenomenological study on meditation assessing the effectiveness of a phenomenological training protocol for naive meditators to improve the reliability of reports – with comparisons between magnetoencephalography (MEG) data and phenomenological self-reports – Abdoun et al. (2019) found that phenomenological training was effective and improved overall self-report quality.

In sum, the enactive approach understands cognitive experience – and mindfulness in particular – as existing in a relationship among the internal organizations and activities of living beings and their environments at different levels of complexity. Crucially, and in deep resonance with the original Buddhist framework of mindfulness, this view commits itself to the strong interdependence between self and world and to mindfulness as a key to enhancing our awareness of such relationality. Moreover, since our human experience of a shared objective world presupposes and includes other human subjects, consciousness and intersubjectivity are intimately bound therein. Given the arguments in our previous sections – namely, that mindfulness should be understood as an intersubjective experiential practice – we consider that our brief discussion of the enactive approach shows it to be a naturally well-suited scientific framework for studying mindfulness.

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Chapter 5
Relationship Enactive Perspective as a Principle of Relational Mindfulness

Claudio Araya-Véliz

5.1 Introduction

This article aims to present the enactive relational perspective as an alternative to understanding relational mindfulness. In its quest to understand the human mind and how it is known, the enactive relational perspective would have some characteristics that would allow to have one integrated way of the different dimensions of human knowledge, which can complement and expand the vision offered by the cognitive-computational perspective and by the enactive perspective.

It will seek to base from enactive relational the theoretical and practical developments of relational mindfulness, since mindfulness risks being interpreted from an individual or instrumental paradigm.

This topic is meta-theoretical and theoretically relevant, because the perspective of knowledge adopted significantly influences the questions that are asked and how these questions are scathed, since what is defined as valid knowledge is delivery by the framework of understanding that is established.

In science has prevailed the modern perspective, a which has as one of its nuclear premises develop a theoretic vision of knowledge, rather than the knowledge placed and concrete, theorical abstraction has been a common factor in the search for scientific knowledge considered to be valid.

With the purpose of making a critical review of the theoretic perspective, this chapter will seek to offer a coherent alternative that supports the development of relational mindfulness from enactive relational. It will be a review about the modern representational paradigm and the impact that it has and then move on to the alternative of enaction, and finally the proposal of enactive relational will develop.

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5.2 Representation Perspective of Knowledge

Below we will describe the representational vision of knowledge, and to do so, I will share a metaphor that can account for this look.

Imagine that you leave home and decide to go to visit an anthropological museum; imagine that you are interested in knowing as deep as possible the Mapuche culture. You walk through the corridors of the museum and stop in front of a display case, inside which you see a ceramic Mapuche. You look at the ceramics carefully and admire the care and details; you read the review that tells you the characteristics of the ceramic, its dimensions, the type of paint and materials used in its creation, etc.; little by little you get an idea of ceramics and you make an image of the Mapuche culture from the ceramics that is static in the display case, and while you look at it, you ask yourself the following question: This "image" that you made of the Mapuche culture, is it faithful to the Mapuche culture? Can we say we knew something significant about her?

The look at ceramics again we think that we are somehow knowing a vestige of that culture, since we are becoming "an image" of it, but will it be a faithful image? Can I really say that I am knowing the culture of those who designed and made ceramics? Suddenly the doubt arises whether or not the way ceramics were presented to us (in a display case, such as flowering in an ether) will or will not influence the way we know it.

If we observe it closely, see the pottery in the display case and get an idea of it allows us to know certain things, but at the same time leaves out many others, as for example: it is outside the historical-cultural and social context where it was built, the broader material context, also the relationships that people had at that time, the particular meaning that ceramics had for those who made it and for whom it was realized, let out the affections involved and the bodies that made it, in short, it seems that more things are left that these can be included in the showcase, is left out the world of life where the ceramics were built, and it is outside the concrete and historical context that gives meaning and value to ceramics. In conclusion, contemplating a decontextualized object in a display case influences that we also make ourselves a decontextualized "image" of the object and culture it represents and that image seems to be only a pale reflection of something that is richer, more dynamic, and alive and can lead us to believe that we are actually knowing something, when we are not really doing it.

The metaphor of ceramics is a illustration that as we have traditionally understood knowledge the West, where we think that knowing is acquiring a knowledge particular, but decontextualized, making us an abstract idea of it, is conceived as a static knowledge, as if it were floating in an aseptic ether. We see ceramics still in the display case, but in the world of the life, we never find the ceramic like that; ceramics exist in a world full of meanings and in a dynamic world. If we are left alone with the abstract representation of the object, we run the risk of believing that we know something, when we have a limited and partial knowledge.

The theoretic representational perspective of knowledge has prevailed in science; it is intended to find a general and abstract knowledge and has had mathematical and geometry as model disciplines, which has influenced other disciplines that have followed in its footsteps, such as the social sciences and psychology.

To be considered true, the mental representations have to be analogous to the logical-formal representations, thus generating a symmetry between these two dimensions, so we assume that one's mental representation is coincided with the formal representations, just as the reflection of a mirror gives account of an object reflected before it (Rorty 1983).

The representational perspective has greatly influenced the development of science and the perspective of the third person, which is characterized by being a knowledge perceived by an observer from an external perspective to the observed experience and which makes an "objective" description, seeking to account for an "objective" knowledge, independent of the observer. The Cartesian claim to account for clear and distinct knowledge (Berman 2007) is present here.

If we put the focus on the search for this well-known objective, captured by a third-person observer, causes the knowledge that can emerge from other perceptual positions to emerge from other perceptual positions, on the one hand the experience lived in the first person, with the subjective experience; and also the relational experience lived in the second person with the inter-subjective experience (Araya-Véliz et al. 2017; Arístegui and Araya-Véliz 2019).

According to Varela et al. (1991) and Varela (1996), the perspective of knowledge as representation has at least three assumptions about it which are based, and that could be discussed, to analyze them critically; these assumptions are:

1. That we inhabit a world with particular and defined properties, which means that we work on the assumption that objects and people have definitive and own properties.
2. We humans would have the ability to capture these properties mentioned above and represent them "internally," in a space or "inner mental world."
3. Finally, from this "inner mental world," there would be a subjective and "internal" "us" separated from the world and separated from who is doing things. Thus a perspective of dualistic knowledge is developed, where there would be, on the one hand, a world of ideas and thoughts and, on the other hand, a world of experience. Knowing would be given in the creation of a mental representation, adopted from an unbiased and uninvolved point of view of the experience, from an "eye of god" that looks at the experience but without participating in it.

Although the representational paradigm has prevailed in science, it is far from the only alternative in the philosophy of science, and there are many authors (Clark 1998; Johnson and Lakoff 2002) who have made significant criticisms of this approach, perhaps the most nuclear of them is that in their desire for objection, it leaves out significant knowledge, the experience lived in the first person and the relational dimension in the second person, and leaves out valid domains of knowing, and there is a risk of forcing or seeking to fit the experience to the objective dimension, risks exercising a type of "epistemic violence" (Spivak 1988) where, in the

desire to translate to objective guidelines, they are given out and without integrating areas of other areas of knowledge. In this exercise of translation into objectivity, you run the risk of leaving out the richness of the subjective dimension (first-person experiences) and the intersubjective dimension (second-person experiences)

These assumptions of the representational perspective define and frame the vision of knowledge and, in it as understood, for example, the mind and brain that it knows. From the representational view, the cognitive-computational perspective of the human mind is derived.

5.3 The Computational Metaphor of the Mind and the Predominance of the Symbolic Representation

In cognitive sciences the first scientifically influential perspective that appeared to try to explain the way of operating the mind was the cognitive-computational perspective, which has as computer a guiding metaphor of the mind (Pylyshyn 1984, 2002), where there would be a hardware that gives structure to mental processes and, on the other, a software, where symbolic representations would be operated.

The computational metaphor gave a strong impetus in the beginning of neuroscience and has been used to seek to understand the human mind, defining the questions and answers offered in neuroscientific and psychological study; a simple example has been how it has conceived to human memory, where the first models analogated it to the memory of a computer.

We would say that the cognitive-computational perspective has predominated and has been the prevailing paradigm in mindfulness research. Much of the neuroscientific and psychological research in its desire for validation and scientific support has been sustained from this paradigm.

As a meta-theoretic alternative to the perspective of representation and cognitive-computational has emerged integrative and presentational approaches (rather than representational), within which is the outdated or corporatized perspective of knowledge, which we will review below.

5.4 Foundations and Characteristics of Enaction

Various authors such as Clark (1998), Johnson and Lakoff (2002), and Varela et al. (1991) defended a non-representational view of knowledge, and they propose a perspective called enactivism. The word enactive is derived from the English verb to enact, understood as put into action, in the act, a predominance of the performative dimension associated with immediate and integrated action.

From the enactive perspective, we seek to understand knowledge and cognition in a context of mind-body integration, implying that from their origin, both

dimensions are intimately united and that you cannot conceive a mind without a body and vice versa. The corporatized mind is an intermediate path between objectivism and subjectivism, seeking to establish a bridge between the dimensions of the third person and the first person.

Varela et al. (1991) have sought to include this enactive paradigm in neuroscience research, trying to integrate the perspective of the third person, associated with objective knowledge, with the dimension of the second person, associated with first-person experience. Francisco Varela (1996, 2010) made a significant effort to integrate objectivist methodology, such as those used in neurosciences, integrating them with the first-person experience reports of the meditators and seeking also to include in their analyses the experience of these while practicing; this led Varela to develop his neurophenomenological perspective, a perspective that integrates the neurobiological vision, observable in the third person, and the phenomenological dimension, recognizable in the first person, seeking to establish a bridge between the two perspectives.

To account for the body-mind integration, Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, (1991) prefer to speak of embodied mind or corporatized mind, mind and body in the same term.

The perception of the world and the others emerging from enactive perspective is diametrically different from those that merge from a representational vision.

5.5 A Renewed Vision of the Body

An important point to note is that this perspective of the embodied mind is not analogous to the idea of pointing out that everything is corporality, which could lead to a materialistic conception, and with it we run the risk of falling at another reductive vision, the embodied mind, rather seek to inform an intermediate way where mind and body form a couple of terms that make up a broader vision.

From the perspective of the embodied mind changes the conception of the body how it was traditionally conceived from a representational perspective, in the embodied mind is conceived from a double dimension (Varela et al. 1991), on the one hand as a lived experiential structure, we live in it the world of life, while at the same time the body is conceived as the context and the area where cognitive mechanisms of action take place, these cognitive mechanisms at all times occur in the body, in it they make sense, and without it can not develop. We can recognize that this vision of the body is opposed to the instrumental perspective of the body (Varela et al. 1991). We can see that there is an offered alternative vision to the idealistic and transcendentalist conception, which comes from Plato, which conceive to the body as the prison of the soul, a tradition that has been largely maintained and marked in the vision of the predominant body in the West.

From the enactive perspective, the body is an inhabited and lived body. An example, If I´m in my room reading or working and suddenly I hear a cry of my son from the living room, in that micro-moment I hear his crying something happens to me in

the mind-body, I have an intense emotional experience, I stand up and think that maybe something fell or happened to it that requires my attention, listening to the crying begins to occur in my a series of simultaneous and co-determianized cognitive and emotional processes, and I live them mainly in my body, my heart is accelerating and I get up quickly, my whole body and my mind react in unison in a moment, and it is not a linear or mechanical process, where on the one hand the mind listens and processes cognitively the sound and then react to the body, as if we thought disembodied and then have an emotion in a body that only reacts to stimuli, body and responsive mind imbrincate and interdependently

Thanks to the development of the enactive perspective that today, bridges have been established between contemplative practices and scientific research (Varela 1997), a work in which Varela and Dalia Lama have contributed and a growing community of scientists. Much of the development that has had mindfulness in recent years (Black 2019) and the effectiveness it has shown (Wielgosz et al. 2019) is largely due to the floor put by the active project. Thanks to this bridge that a conversation has developed between contemplatives and researchers.

The integration of knowledge perspectives is relevant in the human sciences in general, but it is more important in the field of study of the consciousness, because the consciousness is at the same time that it is studied it is also the one who researches, thus fulfilling a double and complex role.

Neurophenomenology has emerged as a project that can provide comprehensive frameworks to integrate knowledge into first and third person, seeking to establish a bridge between the subjective dimensions with the knowledge that emerges from the "objective" observation (Arístegui 2017). We can recognize this proposal as necessary, daring, and meritorious. Along with the merits it has, we can also recognize some important limitations, being the most of them that is not developed the knowledge that emerges in the relational plane as a valid scope of knowledge, not explicitly including the dimension of the second person

5.6 Steps Towards a Relational Enaction

As a way to complement the enactive approach (which seeks to integrate knowledge into the first and third person), it is proposed to include explicitly the relationship dimension as the valid sphere of knowledge to the field (arises from the second person).

The enaction approaches do not explicitly include the relational perspective, thus leaving out the intersubjective perspective as a valid field of scientific knowledge (Araya-Véliz 2018; Araya-Véliz et al. 2017).

Enactive knowledge is not given without a context, and without a comprehensive framework, at all times it is given in a common relationship. If you have an excessive emphasis on seeking to integrate the two perceptual positions of first and third person risks, not considering the perceptual position of the second person, the intersubjective dimension. Human knowledge never occurs in an empty; it occurs

between those who live an experience and between those who inquire, and among them is established a link, which is given in a shared language that constitutes in their action a meaningful knowledge.

In every human experience, all knowledge is given in a context and is also relational and social, which gives meaning to the experience. By placing it in an example, no human being can be born alone and isolated; at birth we are received by others; all knowledge is given in the world of life, which is social from the moment someone receives us; we are born in a world with others, and we are thrown into life in relation; even if we are not close to anyone, we have to relate to ourselves and with our mediate and immediate environment. Human beings are especially sensitive and relational; we inhabit the world from there, so it seems reasonable not to ignore this dimension as legitimate scientific knowledge.

Including the intersubjective dimension of the second person to the enactive perspective imposes a huge epistemological and methodological challenge, since it is not a question of forgetting or replacing objective knowledge or subjective knowledge, but rather it is a question of including the relational dimension, where the bridge between knowledge is established. Put simply with a metaphor, if the second person is the bridge between two territories (first and third person), he can also say that the road is also a territory.

The enactive relational perspective could be transformed into an integrative perspective in the understanding of knowledge and particularly could contribute to the understanding of mindfulness, by dialogue to the subjective understandings of mindfulness (e.g., experiences of those who practice) with the objective perspective (linked to those who investigate), not only including both dimensions in a dialogue but also incorporating the dialogical dimension itself as a space for scientific knowledge.

We would like to understand relational enaction as integration that is not only logical but also necessary, because it would include a unified field of consciousness, where objects appear, the very experience of consciousness, and also appear the phenomenon of communicating, which are to the same path and territory.

With the enactive relational perspective appears the possibility of broadening the horizons and limits in the research on consciousness, since you can consider the "objective" knowledge that appear in the present moment, but we can also include in observation how we relate to the objects of our consciousness and also consider the explicit relationship that we establish with other people; in the same act of sharing and communicating, we could include the relationship as a dimension of the field of consciousness.

The relational enactive perspective would include the integration of the mind and the body and the relational interaction given in the encounter itself at the present moment.

After this tour, it would be only pending to investigate how relational enaction can contribute specifically to the realm of relational mindfulness.

5.7 Relational Enaction as the Foundation of Relational Mindfulness

The relational enactive perspective opens the possibility of including the relational dimension as a legitimate dimension of knowledge, and from it include phenomena that are not limited only to individual understanding (Araya-Véliz et al. 2017; Arístegui and Araya-Véliz 2019), thus opening up the possibility of addressing from science phenomena such as bond, empathy and compassion, not understood as a sum of individual phenomena, but rather understood as an emerging phenomenon that occur in the relational field, in an between experienced and corporatized in the second person.

We can then see mindfulness from the relational second-person perspective, as a phenomenon that occurs in between, which can be understood not as an individual phenomenon that occurs in the intrapsychic world but as a presence that occurs in the world with others.

Including the phenomenon of mindfulness within the field of research is particularly delicate, since from science it is the object of observation, and it is herself who realizes herself and also realizes that she lives in a world together with others, in a relational and social context.

There is a risk of interpreting mindfulness from a purely individual and representational perspective, since it reduces and objects to an experience that is more complex in itself, and there is a risk of losing the richness and potential that the understanding of mindfulness that emerges from a relational active framework can offer. The risk is in understanding mindfulness instrumentally, as another tool within personals development, and not seeing it as a way of inhabiting being in the world, with a full science in the world and with the people who inhabit it.

If we include relational dimension in the field of mindfulness, we recognize that presence is at all times co-presence, a presence that is expressed in the relationship. Thus it generates not a sum of individual experiences, but rather opens a space of with-experience, where those who meet recognize and validate their own experience as experience and another, in itself and not according to their own interests, I respect and validate the alterity of the other.

Relational mindfulness is not just to realize that what happens to us in the present moment is to realize primarily that we have no definitive limits or a priory plots; we are relational and interdependent beings from a matrix of relational coexistence that allows and gives meaning to our individual experience.

Relational mindfulness has the potential to expand the areas of consciousness, not only to individual consciousness and to particular emotions, sensations, and perceptions but also to the realm of the relationship that we establish others and with the world we inhabit, thus generating a unified field of consciousness that goes beyond the individual vision.

Finally, the relational embodied perspective gives us the opportunity to understand the common humanity, where personal and subjective experience is found in the space of coexistence with the subjective experience of the other and does not

reduce the experience of one to the other; it is not instrumentalized to the other; it is not conceived as an extension of one's own being but as someone different, valid in itself, and even more, we recognize that the existence of the other allows us to be. The thoughts themselves, emotions, and sensations only make sense in the space of relationship and bond that give it meaning, expressed with an example, "I am not happy in abstract or solitary, I am happy to meet you and to see you are well"; in this space, mindfulness becomes relational mindfulness.

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Chapter 6
The Contribution of Francisco Varela to the Emergence of a New Paradigm in Social Sciences and the Practice of Relational Mindfulness

Jorge Leiva Cabanillas

6.1 Introduction

In this work I will approach the relationship of the scientific developments of Francisco Varela to observe that they contribute to a relational understanding of the practice of mindfulness. It seems to me previous and necessary to present a synthesis of the theoretical developments that this scientist has been making and that have marked the emergence of a new paradigm in the social sciences, to appreciate what the contribution they contain for understanding mindfulness as a relational practice. Varela values the contribution of Merleau-Ponty in his scientific work, because he recognizes that in the western tradition, he seems to be one of the few who concentrates all his work on "the exploration of the fundamental entre-deux between science and experience, experience and the world". In this respect, Varela affirms that the subject's experience is inseparable from the world experience that accompanies it.

I understand that it is in this context that it is possible to place Varela's contribution to the practice of relational mindfulness more clearly. In the joint developments with the biologist H. Maturana, the relationship that both establish between ethics and human transformation can be found. They understand the foundation of all ethics as a reflection on the legitimacy of the presence of the other, assuming that it is in language where the act of coexistence that gives rise to the human is created with others.

In the background of his thought, Varela harbors the purpose of showing and questioning the vision of an "economic self" typical of the traditional social sciences, which faces human activity at the individual and group level in terms of the exchange of inputs and outputs and of pay and receive. He states that he sees the self

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as a territory with limits, whose goal is to carry within those limits all the good things ahead. Responding to the question that the tradition of mindfulness/open awareness can bring to enactive cognitive sciences, he replies that "the alert and open focus of experience reveals that moment by moment this alleged self emerges only in relation to the experience with the other" (1992).

6.2 From the Biocybernetic Perspective: The Emergence of a New Paradigm in Science

It is interesting to state in this work that the emergence of a new paradigm in science is hinted at in the development of the history of cybernetics. Let us synthetically agree that cybernetics is the science that studies the stability and change of systems. It is possible to observe that this development the path drawn by Francisco Varela (1988) of the history of this discipline, to show that there are two moments in its evolution: a first moment that is related to the emergence of cybernetics as a scientific discipline and that shapes a first cybernetics of open systems with an input and output relationship with the environment. This stage is the best known of this discipline, for its gigantic achievements framed in what is known as the postulation of the construction of a possible artificial intelligence.

The manifest intention of the cybernetic movement (1988) was to create a science of the mind, and in its first stage, it leaves centrally raised as its inheritance the one that I just mentioned, which is known as the cognitive hypothesis (1988). The central idea of this hypothesis is that intelligence, including human, computing is so similar that cognition can be defined as computation of symbolic representations. Finally, the cognitivist argument is that intelligent behavior supposes the ability to represent the world in certain ways.

A second moment in the history of cybernetics relates to the passage from cognitivism to a stage of development in cognitive science (1988) that is presented as an alternative to symbolic orientation. This new approach focuses on emergence and self-organization, that is, connectionism, association, and network dynamics. In this approach, cognition is the emergence of global states in a network of simple components. This is what has been called second cybernetics or second-order cybernetics.

In this work I try to show as a hypothesis that there is a third moment. This would give rise to a third cybernetics. At this moment it is what Varela (2000) called "enaction."

If we follow the reasoning that cellular biologists make (1984 Pag. 116–121) that the nervous system participates in the knowledge-seeking phenomena for the survival of the living system in its environment in two ways, which are complementary, we can observe the emergence of a third cybernetics (1984 Pag. 116–121).

These biologists maintain that the first is the one that allows the expansion of state domains possible thanks to the enormous plasticity of the system through the

generation of sensorial effector configurations activated in its interaction with the environment by the neural network. This is a first level of observation of the operation of the living being in its environment, which makes it possible to be described as a relationship of input and output metaphorically by an observer. In its operation the system is not an open system as evidenced by the scientific research of these cell biologists, so that only as a domain of observation is it possible to assume the cognitive hypothesis that gives rise to the first cybernetics.

The second form of participation complementary to the previous one of the nervous system in the experience of living beings is to open new spaces of coupling with the environment, by enabling the organism to associate many different internal states to enable it to enter with the diversity of interactions with their environment.

The observation of this phenomenon gives rise to a second stage in the development of cognitive sciences that is presented as an alternative to symbolic orientation. According to Varela (1988), this new approach focuses on emergence and self-organization, that is, on connectionism, association, and network dynamics. In this approach, cognition is the emergence of global states in a network of simple components.

This network of components works through local rules that govern individual operations and exchange rules that govern the connection between elements. These biologists observed that this phenomenon occurs in their operation with an operational closure. For Varela (1979), the understanding of the term operational closure is used in a sense of operation within a space of transformations and not as a synonym for closure or absence of interaction.

What it tries to do is characterize a new form of interaction mediated by the autonomy of the system. The principle of operational closure allows us to understand in the light of research that in nature all organisms, from the simplest to the most complex, are structurally determined systems, and nothing external to them can specify or determine what structural changes they undergo in an interaction. Living beings are systems that in their structural dynamics constituted and delimited as closed networks of production of their components and substances they take from the environment. This is the operation of living systems as autopoietic systems, which will be specified later in this paper.

It is this way of observing the phenomenon of operating of the living being in which the interaction with the environment is mediated by the autonomy of the system, which has given rise to a second cybernetics.

6.3 The Emergence of a New Paradigm as a Third-Order Cybernetics

Now, when such a rich nervous system occurs in an organism, these scientists add, the interaction space makes possible the generation of new phenomena. In the case of the human being, this possibility of new dimensions of structural coupling is what has made the emergence of language possible.

Just as at the cellular level, there are interactions between metacellular organisms; it is clear that from the internal dynamics of one organism, the other represents a source of disturbances. Given the nature of operational closure of the system, these disturbances are indistinguishable from those that come from the "inert" environment, these biologists maintain. This indistinguishability is what leads them to affirm and prove that in the experience itself, the nervous system does not distinguish "illusion of perception." This is only possible after experience, and this is because humans have language, which allows us to make a distinction, because we reformulate the experience in language. In addition, in this way it is possible that these interactions between organisms in a continuum of inter-disturbances between them acquire in their ontogeny a recurring character. In this way, the relational spaces in language would be generated, through networks of conversations, which we call it social media.

When these couplings arise between organisms with nervous systems, according to these biologists, a third-order coupling phenomenology emerges.

According to this scientific perspective, this third-order coupling phenomenon is not strange given that they are possible because the same mechanisms that speak of the constitution of autonomous second-order units are mobilized. What makes a new phenomenon emerge that will be of increasing complexity and degrees of stability is the condition of recurrence, which is the way the living system has to ensure its survival, that is, its conservation, and guarantee its reproduction as a species.

Here is the foundation of what Varela (2000) states when stating that "organisms are fundamentally a process of identity constitution and that the emergence of this provides the living system, logically and mechanically, the point of reference for a domain of interactions."

In the same way, it supports the perspective that this biologist affirms when he maintains that "every evolutionary series is secondary to the individuation of the members of the series." He adds that "the process of individuation contains emergent or internal capacities that make the evolutionary series not only explained on the basis of external selection, but also requires the intrinsic properties of the autonomy of the individuals that constitute it."

One of the consequences of these propositions is that living systems give rise to meanings, that is, they are autonomous, not guided from without. The construction of meanings requires in the case of human living systems the presences of language. Cognitive being would be explained, according to Varela (2000), as the way in which the organism, through its self-produced activity, becomes a different entity in

space, although always coupled to its environment, through a relational space in language.

Language would be an ontogenetic relational behavior that occurs in a structural coupling, in the coordination of actions between organisms, and that an observer can describe in semantic terms and, from his domain of observation, qualify it as "communication." That is, communication is secondary to language in this perspective. And it is the comment of an observer present in the relational space.

Thus, Varela's (2000) statement is clear that "the interpretive phenomenon is a central key to all natural cognitive phenomena, including social life. The significance arises in reference to a well-defined identity, and is not explained by an information gathering from an exteriority."

This, it is explained that the cognitive term has two constitutive dimensions: first, its dimension of connection and connection with its environment, which allows it to maintain its identity, and, second, its interpretative dimension, that is, the surplus of significance that a physical interaction acquires. Here the key is given by the possibility that language opens to give a semantic interpretation to experience.

It is from this double articulation that a third-order coupling phenomenology emerges. The phenomenon between autopoietic identity and the history of couplings characterizes the two essential qualities of living systems plus the emergence of language as a relational phenomenon, therefore, social. It also explains how a natural totality can pursue a project that is not prescribed or determined and that is only understandable through its historical epigenesis and that Varela distinguishes as an emerging story of structural coupling.

Similarly, the development that this biologist makes and that he calls the enactive process or "enaction" makes sense. This emerging dynamic that he describes as parallel and distributed is inseparable from the constitution of worlds, which is nothing other than the surplus of meaning and intentions involved in each situated behavior. If ties to the environment are unavoidable, he argues, the uniqueness of the cognitive self resides in this constant genesis of meaning.

Here it also becomes more visible because it is possible to speak of a new paradigm from these scientific philosophical approaches. Popper distinguishes three worlds or universes: the world of physical objects, the world, and the world of states of consciousness or of the mental states; thirdly, this philosopher sustains the world of the objective contents of thought. It grants this third world a status of autonomy before the other two, according to Habermas (1987), thus solving the mind-body relationship. But according to this last philosopher, in order to do this, Popper "has to question in both cases, the fundamental conviction of empiricism, according to which the subject confronts the world without further mediation, receiving his impressions of him through sense perception, or intervening in the states of the world through their action."

These are the convictions coming from the explanatory path of the human phenomenon proper to philosophy, which is questioned on a scientific basis, and from the explanatory path of biology as science, which gives rise to the emergence of a new paradigm in the social sciences. However, it must be recognized that Popper, without distancing himself completely from the empiricist epistemological

perspective in his conception of this "third world," to give it a status of autonomy, maintains that it represents a guarantee that both knowledge of and intervention in the states of the objective world are mediated by discoveries of the specific logic of inner links of meaning. He maintains that "hence, it is not possible to interpret the third world as a mere expression of the second nor the second as a simple reflection of the third."

Varela (El fenómeno de la vida, 2000) outlines and uses the methodology of an emerging neurophenomenology to discuss the transverse emergence and the production of distributed systems interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship".

His claim that the uniqueness of the cognitive self is meaningful is this constitutive absence of meaning that must be constantly supplied in the face of permanent disturbances and ruptures of motor-perceptual life. He states that cognition is action in relation to what is lacking; it is filling the fault from the perspective of a cognitive self.

A close look at these developments allow me to affirm what the editors of Varela (1988) announce when they affirm that today a new continent of knowledge emerges, that of cognitive sciences, and that at the intersection of computer science, neurobiology, and psychology to which linguistics would add, a unified approach to the phenomena of perception and understanding is constructed. I believe that this unified field marks the emergence of a new paradigm that is expressed in a *new social biocybernetic science*.

6.4 Foundation of a Social Biocybernetics: The Autonomy and Biological Unity of the Living Being

The central concept that this approach tries to show is that a characteristic feature of the human phenomenon is that of its autonomy and that it is deeply rooted in the natural history of the organization of the living being. This phenomenon is expressed in the biological organization at all levels starting with the cell. For Varela autonomy has its roots in biology, as much as we saw for Popper; it is the product of his philosophical reflection. They are two different explanatory paths, although at one point they converge.

There is a very deep bond in a human being as an individual subject and his natural condition as a living being. From biology F. Varela (Conocer, 1996) maintains that once a system is postulated, it can be observed in its constitutive conditions. He adds that the primary thing for that observation is an analysis that starts from the assumption of two distinctions that are complementary. On the one hand, there is what remains unchanged in the system and, on the other, what changes, which therefore allows us to observe what remains unchanged.

In this statement, this scientist introduces the cybernetic approach. Let us remember that the origin of cybernetics finds its roots in developments coming from the field of medicine. In 1868 Claude Bernard, a French biologist and doctor, formulated

the idea that living organisms are in constant physical-chemical interaction with the environment around them. This interaction is bidirectional and is oriented to one end: the self-preservation of said organism or its interaction with others for the preservation of the whole. Bernard observes an analogy between the process of self-preservation and those of regulation of steam engines and that of living organisms against external or internal changes that could disturb metabolism. Here you feel a first intuition that over time will give way to a new look at science.

It was Walter Cannon in 1932 who gave the name "homeostasis" to this tendency of living organisms to maintain internal balance. From there the emerging cyber science is recognized as the science that studies stability and change in systems.

Varela (Cognitive Science a cartography of current ideas, 1998) points out that these necessary ties between constituent elements give a system its invariant identity; he will call them organization, reserving the name of system structure for those who change without ceasing to be subject to the organization of the system, which constitutes your identity.

In a conference held in October 1961, under the auspices of the German Sociological Association, in which the theme of the presentations was the logic of the social sciences, what starts the controversy is an exhibition by Karl Popper and a communication from Teodoro Adorno to this conference in which the first presents the approach of critical rationalism and the second the concept of totality.

In philosophy this debate is expressed in the analytic-synthetic distinction. This distinction shows that there are two types of propositions: first whose truth value can be determined by reason of the meaning of the terms involved in the proposition and second the synthetic that requires a type of empirical contrast to determine their value really. These distinctions came to constitute what are known as the two dogmas of logical empiricism, that is, of positivism in science.

This distinction has a long history in philosophy that cannot be addressed in this paper. Let us say for reference only that Gottfried Leibniz spoke of truths of reason and truths of fact, David Hume of relations of ideas and questions of fact, and Immanuel Kant of analytical judgments and synthetic judgments.

It is from the philosophy of language that the main questioning of these two dogmas arises, and it is W.V.O. Quine (1951) who supported the concept of proposition in the language who repeats saying that it is not the word but "the phrase as a whole that renders examination before the court of experience," that is, the whole not the parts. This leaves the holism of meaning raised in the philosophy of language and, certainly, with repercussions in science.

The relevant scientific finding of these cell biologists was to identify as a key feature of life the dynamics of autogenesis that this network performs, to continue reproducing, as a process of folding back on itself, thus producing its own components. In this way it is generated as a different unit, separable from the chemical factor in a self-produced and autonomous way.

In summary, these investigations show that the organization of a minimal living system simultaneously possesses the following two properties: a network of processes that produce and destroy components, which in turn continuously regenerate the network that produces them, and a structural barrier made up of elements

produced by the network, which makes the dynamics of the network possible. This operating with biological operational closure is what they called *autopoiesis*.

These scientists argue that once this self-constructive character of cell identity has been specified, a history of interactions becomes possible. They called this second complementary dimension of basic biology, which is the nature of the relationship between autonomous autopoietic units and their environment.

Once a system has been established, a history of its interactions with the environment becomes possible. The nature of this interaction history will depend on the type of identity of the system

In the case of a system that has an autonomous identity, all interaction will be perceived by it as a disturbance of indefinite origin, and the system will compensate for it, either by changing its structure and continuing its history or by disintegrating. This coupling story, which is unique for each individual, is the expression of the active facet of their identity, of their organizing activity, and of their behavior.

Studying the evolution and development of the thought and research of Francisco Varela, the Doctor of Philosophy and Professor at the University of Louisiana, John Protevi (2011), describes this stage marked by the concept of autopoiesis as a first stage of these development scientists. He refers to them as characterized by the use of "recursive mathematics to deal with synchronous emergence, that is, behavior focused on the part of an organic system that is achieved by restricting the behavior of the components of the system; synchronous emergence can be seen as the question about the relationship between the part and the whole".

Protevi distinguishes a second moment in Varela's scientific developments that would begin in the late 1980s. This second stage is characterized by the use of "differential equations to model dynamic systems in order to cope with the diachronic emergency, the production of new functional structures." In my opinion, these two moments that Protevi distinguishes correspond to the passage from the study of first-order systems, where the center is the concept of autopoiesis, to the study of second-order systems, where the central concept of Varela is that of "in action." This concept is a distinction of Varela, to account for the relationship between metacellular organisms that make it possible for a structural coupling to be established throughout their ontogeny that enables the identity of these systems to be maintained in the long and recurring evolution of their interactions.

This professor from the University of Louisiana distinguishes a third period in the scientific developments of Varela, marking its beginning in the mid-1990s until 2001, the year of the premature death of this scientist. According to this academic, here he "uses the methodology of neurophenomenology to discuss transverse emergence, the production of systems distributed and interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship". At this stage the central concept is that of radical incarnation. According to Protevi, "the focus of research is awareness (both basic awareness or "sensitivity" and higher-level reflective awareness or self-awareness) that arises from the interaction between affect and cognition." He adds that "with the emphasis placed on affect when it comes to theorizing concrete consciousness and enacted by a distributed and interlocking brain-body-environment system, we approach the political issues of the other and of concrete social perception

and, therefore, at a micro-scale of political physiology, the formation of 'eventual' political bodies or political encounters."

The interesting perspective that Protevi uses to follow Varela's scientific development allows us to observe two relevant facts of this development. The first is that this period shows the change in Varela from the study of second-order systems to systems of having order. That is, the study of social phenomena is defined by both cellular biologists (1984) as those phenomena "associated with the participation of organisms in the constitution of third order units."

The second fact is that at this stage, Varela begins the approach of a task that leaves posed for the future of cognitive sciences, when in one of his guidelines he points out that consciousness is ontologically complex and that there is a co-determination of descriptions in first and third person. Textually, he points out that the intuition that animates this point is the following: "the depth inherent in direct lived experience, permeates the natural roots of the mind. You can't do neuroscience without giving an answer to this question." He adds that the contribution of autopoiesis by highlighting the autonomy of living beings is key. But this new biological analysis requires a complement to a phenomenological discipline of experience: a neurophenomenology.

He goes on to state that the central problem of this research program is that if we do not want to reduce the experience to a purely neural perspective, an appropriate methodology will have to be developed for its examination. In relation to the methodology, he argues, one of the greatest challenges is to expose each of these aspects of the way of accessing phenomena in the first person, in flesh and blood, to establish a phenomenological pragmatics. Then he warns us of a risk that, in light of the development of neuroscience in particular, is not less, and that is, if we want this line of research to provide answers, we cannot ignore the constitutive basis of the mutual reciprocity that makes it so mental and experiential, bodily, and neural, hold together. This mutual reciprocity constitutes the nature of this region that is proper to the organic/lived.

In this stage of Varela's scientific development that is interrupted with his death, it is where he proposes his enactive approach. In the enactive perspective, the mind-body relationship is not considered as an ontology; it is suggested that mental reflection is "embodied" in everyday life. We always operate in the immediacy of a given situation. Our lived world is so close at hand that we have no control over what it is and how we inhabit it. We have a disposition to the action of each specific situation; therefore, the human experience is an emergent phenomenon incarnated, situated, and enacted by a distributed and interwoven brain-body-environment system.

The study of the human phenomenon understood from this perspective is what, in my opinion, is beginning the emergence of a social biocybernetics as a new paradigm in the social sciences.

6.5 Importance of a Social Biocybernetics for Social Sciences

I will consider three aspects in which the presence and the possible contribution that make social science a biocybernetic approach are visible.

Let us accept that ultimately the raw material of social science is human experience in the double dimension: individual and social. In the field of study of this science, changes are evident in the approaches with which professionals in this discipline work. The outstanding British neuroscientist Susan Greenfield (2005) argues that the roots of the current change in the orientation of social science research, thereby understanding the changes in our conception of the products to be sought and the most appropriate techniques for moving forward in their search, are better understood if we locate their origin in the fundamental change that has occurred in the common experience of being in the world.

This same scientist argues that when we carry out research in the social field, therefore, if we want to answer the question of how to enter someone's head and how to see the world as this person sees it, we have to address three important issues that they bring together the writer and the neuroscientist. The first is the most obvious problem of the discrepancies between the world's explanations in the first and third person; the second theme is the idea of life as narration. And the third is the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness.

A close look at this demand from social research shows us the necessary convergence of explanations to respond to disciplines such as biology, which provides us with scientific data on the operation of living beings; cybernetics, which provides us with scientific data on how social systems work; and linguistics, which informs us of their research on the use we make of language.

As can be seen in the face of this requirement, each of these disciplines convened will provide answers that are supported by different explanatory traditions in science. Therefore, from the point of view of the one who "calls" these disciplines, it is necessary to first define the domain of explanations in which he moves. That is, he must declare his onto-epistemological platform of observation from which he does science. In other words, what is its scientific paradigm. This is crucial, because from there he will answer or address the three important themes that bring together the writer and the neuroscientist, according to the English neuroscientist.

Let's remember that a paradigm in science, according to Kuhn (1962), is a system of beliefs, principles, values, and premises that determines the vision that a certain scientific community has of reality, the types of questions and problems that are legitimate study, as well as valid methods and techniques for finding answers and solutions. Consequently, the approach or paradigm in which a study is inscribed supports the method, purpose, and objectives of the research.

On the other hand, Guba (1990) points out that paradigms can be characterized according to the way in which their representatives answer three cutting questions:

1. What is the nature of the knowable or what is the nature of reality? This is the ontological question.

2. What is the nature of the relationship between the one who knows (in this case the researcher) and the knowable (susceptible of being known)? This is the epistemological question.
3. How should the researcher proceed in the search for knowledge? This is the methodological question.

The biocybernetic-social paradigm that is postulated in this work answers these three questions, constituting what Gergen (1996) characterizes as a nucleus of epistemic intelligibility. For this social scientist, the auxiliary bodies of discourse in the sciences, that is, theory, scientific meta-theory, and theory of methodology, are constituents of what he calls the "nucleus of intelligibility." This is a body of interrelated propositions shared by the participants of a scientific enclave and that provides its members with a sense of explanation and/or description.

Varela's enactive approach, taken on by this scientific perspective, questions the causalist explanatory tradition regarding seeking explanations in external realities to justify the occurrence of the phenomena that we observe. According to it, in living systems the changes that occur within them depend on their own structure (autopoietic condition), as we have been pointing out. Therefore, the answer to the ontological question of paradigms is answered in terms that we do not have access to an external reality that validates the experience.

In this way, this view is situated in the phenomenological perspective in science. Reality is constructed by the observer, and there are as many realities as there are observers. The step to the epistemological response involves using the phenomenological Husserlian "epoché" and placing reality or objectivity in parentheses. Varela recognizes one of his phenomenological inspirations in Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), an existentialist philosopher who studied the phenomenology of the body in perception and society. As a synthesis to observe the answer to the question of a paradigm that must answer a researcher from this perspective, this French philosopher makes four important statements that are present in the developments that we have analyzed from the enactive bioneurological perspective.

(a) That holism explains behavior better than dualism
(b) That perception, like behavior, has a gestalt character, that is, of totality
(c) That incarnation can become the central concept of psychology
(d) That the internal and the external cannot be distinguished

It is now easy to understand the methodology of a social biocybernetic perspective, which takes over a phenomenological perspective in science and, therefore, accepts and practices the study of the structures of consciousness from the perspective of the first person who experiences them. Being a philosophical discipline, phenomenology is related not only to ontology and epistemology but also to logic and ethics.

We are now in a position to fundamentally understand this approach proposed by Varela (2000) who, as we have said, outlines and uses the methodology of an emerging neurophenomenology, to discuss the transverse emergence and the production

of distributed systems interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship and that behave and operate as a whole.

In this way, this scientific perspective that assumes that living systems are identity construction systems, and that it is cybernetically given by what is conserved in the interaction with its environment, is in a position to answer the question of how to enter someone's head and how to see the world as this person sees it.

It raises the first problem that S. Greenfield points out, which according to her is the most obvious. Discrepancies between first and third person explanations of the world: Varela points out the depth inherent in direct lived experience and permeates the natural roots of the mind. In relation to the methodology, one of the greatest challenges is to expose each of these aspects of the way of accessing phenomena in the first person, in flesh and blood, to establish a phenomenological pragmatics. Varela's explanatory model addresses the second topic, which is the idea of life as narration. The history of structural coupling can be constructed as a narrative by the subject of experience, in the way that accessing phenomena in the first person, and the third, which is the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness, states that consciousness is ontologically complex and that for this region to manifest, three elements will have to be linked to interweave a warp of continuity between the material and the experiential and the natural and the transcendental. The first is a formal level, since the description of the mental contents participates in a way of ideality; the second is the natural process (neural, bodily) considered at its appropriate level, bridging the global emergency and local mechanisms; and the third is the pragmatic level of examination that leads to the organic/lived transition since only this level allows us to access a non-dual position, which does not exclude experience or the body. The second aspect that I will consider in which the presence and the possible contribution that science makes to a biocybernetic-social approach are visible is that it takes charge of the complexity in the systemic functioning.

Complex systems, their supporters point out, have two basic characteristics: first they are emergent systems, and second, they are self-organized. It was the 1977 Nobel Prize in Physics winner, Philip Warren Anderson (2018), who defined complexity as the science of the emerging. For this scientist the best demonstration of this is the liquidity of the water that does not follow from the presumed liquid character of the water molecules taken individually.

The second characteristic of complex systems is their self-organization. Scientists argue that the complexity involved is the idea that the common denominator between the study of embryos and neurons in biology, such as hurricanes in meteorology or magnetic materials in electromagnetism, operating as systems that originate under conditions, both homogeneous and random, will invariably end up giving rise to large systems in a spontaneous way.

These two conditions are those that we have analyzed in the developments of cybernetic biologists and are included in the concept of structural determinism and structural coupling of living systems.

This conception of living systems in a social biocybernetic paradigm makes it possible to account for the production of distributed systems interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship, that behave and operate as

a whole, and that consider and extend the concept of self-construction from living systems to social systems, respecting the warning to protect Varela's statement about not going beyond the neo-cybernetics interested in organizational closure of information systems.

Overcoming this apparent difficulty in social systems, language understood as coordination of actions becomes central, that is, performative, an inescapable topic in organizations in today's world.

This analysis perspective allows us to pick up the guiding concept of Francisco Varela's proposal and of the complex systems that we have mentioned, the emergency phenomenon in astrosystems. Following John Protevi's provocative reflection, the coordination of actions in social systems has to do with the synchronous emergence of the relationship between the parts and the whole in organizations. This is expressed in the self-regulating operation of first-order living systems. In third-order systems or social systems, the conditions must be provided so that synchronous functioning is articulated with the diachronic emergence of social dynamics. This is possible if we investigate through action research methodologies using the first person as a communication tool.

In this way, it is possible to observe how the emergence of a social biocybernetic paradigm converses and is intertwined with a conception of complex systems.

6.6 The Paradigm Crisis in Social Sciences

The third aspect is related to the paradigm crisis. In this aspect, what I will consider among which the presence and the possible contribution that science makes to a bio-cyber-social approach visible is paradoxically one that is not exactly very visible. I refer to consider what Varela points out in one of his guidelines on the future of cognitive sciences, making reference to the fact that cognition is enactively emergent affirming that there is a co-determination of neural (local) elements and cognitive (global) subject in the functioning of the biological system.

This is one of the aspects that is reproduced in social systems and that makes them complex in their operation. This phenomenon is linked from biology to what Varela (2000) calls the key point of circulation. This implies addressing how distributed systems that encompass local and global processes are interwoven to result in systemic functioning with behavior as an organic whole.

This implies having models of observation and action against phenomena that in their operation cross micro processes with macro processes and synchronous systemic relationships with diachronic systemic relationships. This aspect is essential to understand the production of distributed systems interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship, which is the center of a social biocybernetic paradigm.

Some scientific observation models developed to observe these emerging processes have been designed from normal science in mathematical studies on probabilities. The so-called stochastic models seek to fulfill this function since they

perform mathematical measurements of random quantities called stochastics that experience variation over time. These models seek to observe a succession of variables that evolve as a function of another variable that has their own probability distribution function, without necessarily being correlated with each other.

We could say that these observation models work on systemic complexity. The disagreement with the emerging scientific system readings is that they start from different onto-epistemological perspectives. They are based on the distinction of an observer who accepts the existence of a reality independent of him, while the emergent observation of systems distinguishes and observes autonomous and self-organized systems. And here the paradigmatic disagreement arises that gives rise to a crisis in the sciences in general and in the social sciences in particular.

These last observations on autonomous and self-organized systems are directed at phenomena that occur when a system of "relatively simple elements is organized spontaneously and without explicit laws until they give rise to intelligent behavior." That statement is made in the New York Times newspaper in a 2001 edition in which he comments on a newly edited book by Steve Johnson. In this text (2003), this professor from New York University presents a book where he tries to prove that there are common patterns of organizational interaction between Arizona granivorous ants, neurons, software, and cities. The existence of these patterns, maintained in the journalistic commentary, "would allow us to reaffirm the validity and significant presence of what he calls emergent systems, not only as an object of study, but above all as a reality that has been present in permanently in the development of life."

Paul Krugman, (1996), professor at Princeton University, Centenary and the London School of Economics, in addition, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2008, raised in his critique of theorists of the Market economy, along with assuming the concept of systemic emergency, also assumes the idea "*according to which the common denominator among the study of embryos, hurricanes, magnetic materials and sets of neurons is that they are all self-organizing systems*".

According to these investigations, it is from cybernetics that in Varela's studies it is called first order, where scientists such as Alan Turing (1992) gave rise to the physical design of computers and many others encouraged an intelligence project artificial. Ultimately, they would lay the foundations of complexity theory. This has turned out to be a key step in science to think of a unified field for the study of these complex systems, creating important technical tools in the area of physics, informatics, genetics, and molecular biology.

These new theories have been configuring a paradigm shift that makes it possible to understand complex systems. Where apparently chaos was observed, systems that synchronously and simultaneously involve a not insignificant number of interrelated factors in an organic set can be observed today. In them it is possible to find the explanation of how individual behavior can give rise to collective behavior.

These recent investigations show that these self-organized systems, like the human one, are not specified in their relationship with the environment (their structural coupling) by an adaptation system. That is, there is no such thing as a stem cell,

a pioneering program, the myth of a hidden structure that explains the result of guiding behavior that preconceivedly guides individual behavior. However, in the end an unplanned collective, consistent, and coherent response emerges that is characteristic of a self-organized system.

Johnson and Krugman studies both investigate spontaneous organization of systems. One observes cities and the other the economy, but both discover the same pattern in which in one and another observed system, lower-level agents adopt behaviors of a higher level: ants create colonies, embryo cells, neighboring cities, and hamlets. In all these systems, a relationship between micro and macro processes is observed.

It is clear in the light of these studies that more and more social science will have to pay attention to these processes to understand how human groups are organized, relying on the theory of organized complexity. Emerging systems are expressed as a constructive way of thinking, for example, social phenomena such as urban developments, social organization to meet the needs of education, health, production of goods and services, etc.

The emergency operates bottom-up. Thus, the micro and macro relationships can be observed to understand that when a system makes a good crossing between micro and macro processes, a virtuous and generative process emerges and, when this crossing does not occur, a vicious and destructive circle appears. This is clear in the design of public policies in which the planners, operating with the eyes of traditional science, are unaware of these processes and end up failing the projects with enormous cost and waste of resources, as has happened in the case of urban transport, education, and health in many of our countries.

There are many examples in urban reality that show that most cities are not the product of a planned process; they just emerge. This is the case of the distribution that occurs in some urban centers when inmigrants who enter them who go on to constitute neighborhoods occupied by a majority of them. What he does not want decides that there are no centers that are planned. But in the case of immigrants, it is possible to understand how social systems are integrated.

In this regard, there has been a long controversy in the field of social science that two great figures of social scientific thought carried out in the 1980s: Jurgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann (1985). The first argues that the systemic integration of social systems runs through channels of social integration, that is, it takes place in a society through cultural traditions, religious worldviews, norms, moral values, legal and political institutions, etc., so much so that for the second, it only follows channels of articulation and systemic balance. It is clear to observe that the Luhmannian perspective is the one that has finally prevailed in the West.

The fact that the practical theoretical horizon of the dominant social science responds to Luhmann's view is not trivial. In his systemic approach, this theorist maintains that systems are constituted to reduce complexity and, therefore, they are basically "decision-making" systems to fulfill this purpose. He adds that these decisions are systemic and not made by individuals. This is because they are left out as subjects and are on the periphery of the system. Although they are an integral part of it, they do not constitute it since the system itself is its decisions. Invited to

respond because he leaves the subject out of the system and because he ends up replacing the subject, he responds that his interest is to build a universal theory of systems, and for this, the subject or people are a disturbance. Certainly they are if you consider their autonomous and self-organized character as a living being.

No wonder Franz Hinkelammert (1970) argues that most modern ideologies, according to him, remain prisoners of this paradox. For this author, the concept of "spontaneity in social systems" is a limiting concept of the social. He calls this contradiction "transcendental non-feasibility." This is a point of enormous importance practiced today. This author maintains that one cannot go from spontaneous disorder to spontaneous order, which would give rise to a contradiction within all historical structures. According to him, social institutions operate in the "coordinates of historical time," while the limit concept of the totalized society moves in the coordinates of transcendental space/time.

I bring to hand this reflection that has come from philosophical sociology because somehow many sociologists, including Luhmann, are of the belief in the existence of this "spontaneous disorder." This makes them argue that there are only two ways to develop social organizations. One is to assume this disorder and recognize that social institutions are a denial of spontaneous order, or follow the path that Hinkelammert points out, that the only liberating human praxis would be one that consciously operates on this contradiction.

The problem posed by these two paths is that the first ends up generating an identity between structure and value and the second ends up ideologizing social praxis. I maintain that a social biocybernetics is the way to overcome this dialectical contradiction, because it assumes the not only emergent character of the systems but also their condition of self-organization through a systemic structural coupling with the environment in a co-drift in which they both change together.

However, the dominant way today in the field of social practice is to understand that the institution is the negation of the spontaneous order. Thus the value that the institution seeks to realize is realized if the structure is realized. It is this gaze that replaces the subject with the system that is causing the serious crisis that the world of so-called modernity is experiencing. All that interests him is to maintain the "systemic balance"; for this they must work. This is behind the not at all innocent expression loaded with ideological connotation that "institutions must be allowed to work." So supposedly they will realize their value and call it equality, justice, diversity, solidarity, etc.

It should not go unnoticed that for this to happen and for the dominant systemic vision to be expressed, any spontaneous attempt or self-organization of the systems must be stifled. After observing the development of social biocybernetic science, would we say then that this dominant view is unnatural? I would answer yes. The system is unnatural as shown by the systematic destruction it is making of the ecosystem, both in its physical and human dimensions.

6.7 Mindfulness as a Step from Observation Models to Experiential Practice Models

Up to here we have followed the thought of Francisco Varela, and for descriptive purposes, I have assumed the distinctions made in its development by the professor at the University of Louisiana, Doctor J. Protevi (2011). Let us return to the distinction of a third period in its development in which Varela "uses the methodology of neurophenomenology to discuss transverse emergence, the production of systems distributed and interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship." At this stage the central concept is that of radical incarnation. He maintains that "with the emphasis placed on affect when theorizing concrete consciousness and enacted by a distributed and interlocking brain-body-environment system, we approach the political issues of the other and of concrete social perception …" This author points out that at this stage of the development of his thought, Varela tells us about a microscale of political physiology, the formation of "eventual" political bodies or political encounters.

Here, in my opinion, is Varela's first point of approach to mindfulness, setting his eyes on the floor for a relational conception of it. At this point in Varela's analysis of thought (2000), we could say that we are at the stage in which he faces the task that he poses in his guidelines on the future of cognitive sciences, where he points out that consciousness is ontologically complex and that there is a co-determination of descriptions in first and third person. Let us remember that he states that: "the depth inherent in direct lived experience permeates the natural roots of the mind. You can't do neuroscience without giving an answer to this question." Recognizing the contribution of autopoiesis to this process, he adds that this new biological analysis requires a complement to a phenomenological discipline of experience: a neurophenomenology.

We should regret the fact that this stage of Varela's scientific development is interrupted with his death and with it the deepening of his enactive approach. We have seen that for him in the enactive perspective, the mind-body relationship is not considered as an ontology; it is suggested that mental reflection is "embodied" in everyday life. Our world is presented to us in the immediacy of a given situation. Our lived world is so close at hand that we have no control over what it is and how we inhabit it. Thus Varela concludes (1996) we have a disposition to the action of each specific situation; thus being the human experience is an emergent phenomenon incarnated, situated, and enacted by a brain-body-environment system distributed and intertwined.

The study of the human phenomenon understood from this perspective is the one that, in my opinion, is giving rise to two responses from science that are insinuated as emerging and that can be evidenced in Varela's approach to mindfulness: the first, a paradigm of social biocybernetics as a new paradigm in the social sciences, and the second, with a relational conception of mindfulness to a neurophenomenology of human experience.

However, this scientist warns us that a research program of this nature requires the latter discipline; otherwise we will reduce human experience to a mere neural perspective. The greatest challenge that Varela observes for the development of a methodology appropriate to the examination of human experience in the way of accessing phenomena in the first person. The following line warns us of a risk that we alluded to previously. In light of the development of neuroscience, in particular, it is not minor, and it is that, if we want this line of research to provide answers, we cannot ignore the constitutive basis of the mutual reciprocity that makes the mental and the experiential, the bodily and the neural, stay together. This mutual reciprocity constitutes the nature of this region that is proper to the organic/lived and ends up pointing out to us.

It is my point of view that here is the scientific contribution that Varela makes to the conception of a relational mindfulness practice. Contrary to the opinion of a scientist who limited me in a personal communication that Varela was approaching Buddhism to resolve his resistance to assuming the Husserlian "phenomenological epoché" of objectivity in parentheses, it is that his approach has to do with the report of the first-person experience of Buddhist meditation.

A "contrario sensu" in his conversation with the Dalai Lama (1997), Varela maintains that "in general practitioners in the West have kept for years their scientific mind in one compartment and their practicing mind in another compartment." He points out that in "The western mind would always have this separation when it comes to analyzing the self, that tendency to continue believing in the conception of an objective world." This conception, he emphasizes, makes it difficult for both compartments to come together, although he is optimistic and in this conversation he affirms to his interlocutor that one of the motivations of being in it is that there may be points of contact between Buddhist practices and his neurophenomenological perspective.

It is clear that this perspective supported by the conception of experience as "embodied and enacted" makes the practice of mindfulness a relational experience at the time that it is in turn "situated." However, Varela (2000) asks, can the experience be explored? And an own objection is raised "How can one know if, by exploring experience with a method, one is not, in fact, deforming or even creating what one experiences?" In this regard, he will say that the exploration of the experience will suffer cultural expectations and instrumental biases, like any other methodological research, but there is no evidence that the phenomenal data collected is not equally limited by the reality of the contents of consciousness. Hence he argues that "all descriptions that we can produce by first-person methods will not be pure descriptions, nor solid <facts>, but rather potentially valid intersubjective items of knowledge, quasi-objects of the mental type. Neither more nor less." These statements by Varela make the practice of mindfulness inevitably a relational practice.

It is my opinion that from this point of view, the practice of relational mindfulness is possible, as a methodology of a nascent neurophenomenology, to observe the transverse emergence and the production of distributed systems interwoven by lines that encompass the brain-body-environment relationship.

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Part II
Applications of Relational Mindfulness

Chapter 7
Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living: Cultivating Relationality with 'Heartful Mind' and 'Mindful Heart'

Erik van den Brink and Frits Koster

7.1 Introduction

In a recent interview Jon Kabat-Zinn (2018), the founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), said: "When reporters ask me what mindfulness is, and they want a one-word answer, I give them two words: *awareness* and *relationality.*" Mindfulness, as taught in MBSR and similar secular training programmes, was never intended to bring just bare awareness to moment-by-moment experience. It was also meant to alleviate suffering and cultivate practical ethics by learning to distinguish between what heals and what harms. In mindfulness courses participants learn to shape their relationality to life in a wholesome way, with the invitation to relate to their experience kindly, non-judgementally and with compassion.

In MBSR growing compassion is part of a spectrum of teaching intentions, together with experiencing new possibilities, discovering embodiment, cultivating observation and moving towards acceptance (McCown et al. 2010). The healing attitude of kindness and compassion is taught implicitly throughout the curriculum

The following text was reproduced and adapted from a chapter the authors originally wrote for the German textbook "Trainings- und Interventionsprogramme zur Förderung von Empathie – Ein praxisorientiertes Kompendium" *[Training and intervention programs to foster empathy – A practice-oriented compendium]*, eds. M. Roth, V. Schönefeld, & T. Altmann, Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2016, pp. 93–109, with kind permission from the editors and publisher. The paragraphs 'Introduction' and 'Deepening MBCL with interpersonal mindfulness practice' were added, and 'Empirical evaluation' was updated.

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and explicitly by introducing the practice of loving kindness meditation in the all-day silent session later in the programme. The founders of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) emphasise the importance of embodying compassion by the teacher but advise against introducing kindness and compassion practices too explicitly to participants with recurrent depression (Segal et al. 2013). When we ourselves taught an integrated programme of MBSR/MBCT to mixed groups of outpatients within a Dutch mental health clinic, we sympathised with this advice as we observed that many participants had difficulty with the loving kindness meditations (Van den Brink and Koster 2015). People with a harsh inner critic felt indeed challenged when asked to be kinder to themselves. If mindfulness skills were not adequately established, adverse reactions, such as fear, sadness, irritability and mistrust, could more likely occur, fuelling feelings of failure and self-criticism. However, at the end of the course, participants often shared that what they appreciated most was that they had become kinder with themselves, as well as with others. For many it felt this was just a beginning, and frequently they expressed a need for further support in deepening the practice of relating kindly to life. In response, we developed the follow-on course described in this chapter, which builds on mindfulness skills learned in MBSR/MBCT. It offers more explicit mindfulness-based practices in compassion towards oneself and others. All these practices are essentially relational, even when practised individually. We can distunguish three flow directions of compassion on which practices alternately focus: from another to oneself, from oneself to another, or from oneself to oneself (Gilbert, 2017).

Whereas in foundational mindfulness courses the explicit practice is about cultivating heartful mindfulness, in this follow-on course, cultivating mindful heartfulness is brought centre-stage. Gillis Chapman (2012) simply named this ‘mindful heart’ and ‘heartful mind’. Ancient cultures and languages often made no distinction between mind and heart, whereas in modern cultures, we tend to get caught in an artificial heart-mind divide. This divide opens the pitfalls of ‘heartless mind’, bare awareness without compassion (e.g. using mindfulness to perform better in unethical actions), and ‘mindless heart’, ‘foolish’ compassion without mindfulness (e.g. pouring an alcoholic friend yet another drink). Healthy relationality with ourselves and others needs both heartful mind and mindful heart. One cannot be cultivated without the other, as expressed in the Zen saying: *For the bird of enlightenment to fly, it must have two wings – the wing of wisdom and the wing of compassion.*

Below we give an overview of the MBCL programme, including its aim, applications, theoretical background, content, practices and empirical support.

7.2 Aim of the Programme

The overall aim of the Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL) programme is to alleviate suffering and enhance physical, psychological and social well-being by offering a science-based training in (self-) compassion, building on mindfulness skills. Nowadays, mindfulness courses are widely offered in

preventative and clinical health care, and there is interest in follow-up programmes. MBCL offers participants practical ways of deepening their mindfulness skills with compassion.

'Compassion' is defined as the capacity to be sensitive to the suffering of ourselves and others and the willingness to relieve and prevent it (Gilbert and Choden 2013). It is not the same as empathy, although the concepts overlap. We follow Gilbert's view (2009) on empathy as being one of the attributes of compassion. Others are care for well-being of self and others, which is the basic motivation; sensitivity to the needs of self and others; sympathy or the ability to resonate with the inner state of others; courage to face difficulties and tolerate distress; and wisdom, which comes from the ability to observe situations mindfully and non-judgementally. If one of these attributes is lacking, compassion is incomplete. True compassion without empathy is impossible. However, empathy, defined as the capacity to 'feel into' and understand what goes on inside one another, is not necessarily compassionate. If it lacks a caring motivation, it can even be harmful. We can harm others when we empathise with them in order to manipulate them for our own gain. We can harm ourselves and suffer from distress and burn-out if we become too empathic and over-involved with others, which is common among professional and other carers who forget about self-care (Figley 2002). It has therefore been suggested to replace the term 'compassion fatigue' by 'empathy distress fatigue' (Klimecki and Singer 2011). Of course, we can also become over-involved with ourselves and wallow in self-pity, ignoring the needs of others.

Compassion has a transpersonal quality, as it involves commitment to alleviate and prevent suffering, *whoever is the (potential) sufferer*. It is emphasised from the start in the MBCL programme that whenever we speak of 'compassion', we include 'self-compassion'. Many recognise their tendency to overlook themselves while trying to be compassionate, and the subjective goals most often expressed by those who apply for the course are to develop a kinder and warmer relationship with themselves; to find a healthy balance between caring for others and caring for themselves; and to find ease with life's inevitable pain and 'disease'.

More specific teaching intentions are:

- Acknowledging pain and suffering as part of human life.
- Understanding how our brain has evolved to help us survive and that the imperfect design is not our fault.
- Gaining insight into three basic emotion regulation and motivation systems: the threat system, the drive system and the soothing system.
- Understanding how influences from outside and also from inside, such as an 'inner critic' and persisting maladaptive patterns, can easily cause imbalances.
- Learning practices in (self-) compassion, such as soothing breathing, kindness meditation, compassionate imagery, compassionately relating to inner difficulties and cultivating an 'inner helper'; 'taking in the good' (what nourishes us and contributes to happiness).

- Cultivating a sense of common humanity and learning how to connect with what we call the Four Friends for Life (loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity).
- Integrating what has been learned in daily life and exploring how to continue the practice of 'heartful mind' and 'mindful heart' after the programme has ended.

7.3 Area of Application

MBCL is designed as a group training for participants who previously followed a mindfulness training, preferably Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn 1991), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal et al. 2013) or an equivalent training. Our books on MBCL can be used as self-help guides, but a group training with a competent teacher is recommended, as they can offer a safe holding for one's inner process and a setting of common humanity and learning from each other. MBCL is very much a training and not a (group) therapy. As with MBSR and MBCT, participants learn to become their own mentor, coach or therapist. They can share their inner processes, but do not have to.

It can be offered as a preventative programme as well as to those with current health problems to support conventional treatments. It is trans-diagnostic in scope as it provides a way of dealing with suffering in whatever form it presents itself, not as a substitute for methods aimed at *cure* but to complement these by cultivating an attitude of *care*.

MBCL is not only for clients and patients but can also benefit healthcare workers, therapists, counsellors and other professionals. Although MBCL started in the mental health care, nowadays it is also offered in general health care, education, pastoral care, management, the workplace and in domains of personal growth. In fact, it can be offered to everyone who benefitted from mindfulness training and would like to deepen their practice with 'heartfulness' in order to care better for themselves as well as for others.

7.4 Theoretical Underpinnings

MBCL combines ancient wisdom from contemplative traditions with modern insights from neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, attachment theory, positive psychology and third generation behaviour therapies, such as mindfulness-based approaches, compassion-focused therapy (CFT; Gilbert 2010, 2014, 2017) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes et al. 2012). From the evolutionary perspective, compassion is not a luxury but a basic necessity for survival. The more vulnerable and fewer the offspring of a species, the more important it is that individuals care for each other. The human brain evolved to become highly sensitive to seeking, receiving and giving care, which will be addressed more closely in the following.

7.4.1 The Evolving Brain

MacLean (1990) described three layers in the brain corresponding with phases in evolution, enabling us to adapt to our environment in various ways. There are the very old automatic reflexes of *the reptile brain* (brain stem) and the emotional reactions of *the old mammalian brain* (limbic system) – together referred to as 'old brain'. *The new mammalian brain* (neocortex) or simply 'new brain' is much younger and evolved when our predecessors became 'smart'. The most substantial parts support a vast repertoire of social behaviour, enabling us to survive in ever more complex communities. The more new brain reflection – involving language and imagination, memories of past events, fantasies about future events and images of self and others – the more possibilities to learn new behaviour. Thanks to our new brain, we can intentionally overrule automatic old brain reactions. Vice versa, new brain processes can easily be hijacked by old brain instincts, sometimes with devastating results. Our new brains can be both a curse and a blessing. We can be boundlessly cruel and boundlessly compassionate. Gilbert (2014) speaks of 'a tricky brain' as the interaction between old and new layers is far from harmonious and can exacerbate suffering.

At some stage in our lives, we encounter trauma, loss, illness, aging and eventually death. This primary suffering is inevitable. Buddhist and Western psychologies agree that the more we try to avoid what is unavoidable and try to hold on to what is impermanent, the more we suffer (Hanson 2009; Hayes et al. 2012). However, a lot of secondary suffering is generated by unwholesome reactions to primary suffering. Fortunately, secondary suffering can be alleviated by our capacity to observe the processes in our mind and transform unconscious automatic reactions into conscious responses. A very young part of our brain can be referred to as *the mindful brain* (corresponding with parts of the medial forebrain), which becomes stronger with practice (Siegel 2007).

Gilbert (2009) emphasises that it is not our fault that the design of our brain is not perfect. We have neither chosen the many imperfections wired into our brains and bodies, nor the family and culture of our upbringing. Although it is not our fault, it is our responsibility to deal with it wisely and compassionately. It is a wholesome response to the realisation that we find ourselves in an imperfect, impermanent and vulnerable existence, prone to suffering. Whereas the capacity for mindfulness is relatively young, compassion has deep roots in the motivational and emotion regulation systems of the old mammalian brain.

7.4.2 Three Emotion Regulation Systems

From the perspective of evolution, all emotions, both pleasant and unpleasant, are useful messengers, designed to inform us whether we are on the right track of survival. CFT uses the model of the three basic emotion regulation systems, which

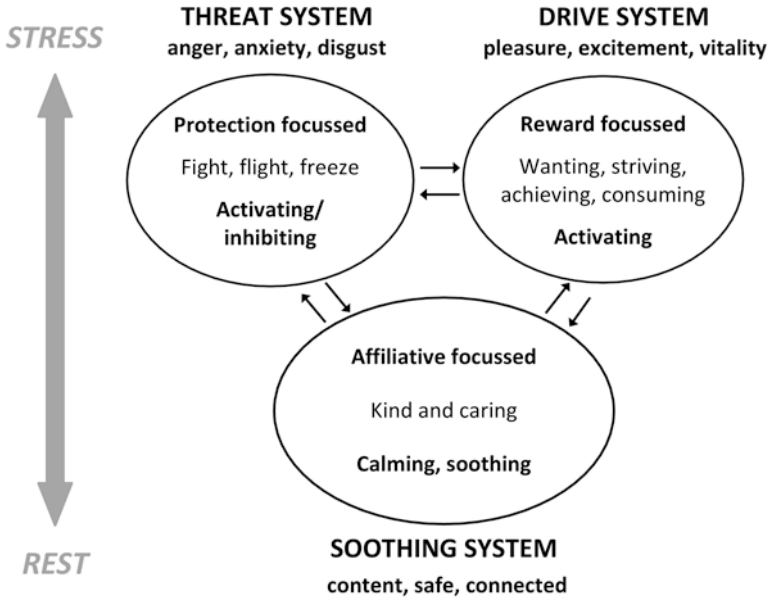

Fig. 7.1 The three emotion regulation systems. (Reproduced with kind permission from *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living* by Van den Brink & Koster, 2015)

are deeply rooted in the old brain and strongly motivate our behaviour (Gilbert 2010, 2014). Figure 7.1 is an adaptation of this model that we use in MBCL.

The **threat system** is focussed on protecting ourselves from danger. Unpleasant emotions (anxiety, anger, disgust) alert us, and behaviour is characterised by *fight*, *flight* or *freeze*. In mammals a fourth instinctive stress reaction became known as *tend and befriend* (Taylor 2006), characterised by protecting the young and vulnerable and gathering group members in case of threat. The threat system is crucial for physical survival and escape from external threats. Porges (2007) described its high sensitivity as 'neuroception', operating like a subconscious radar, continuously scanning the environment for threat. In humans, imagined threats activate the old brain's alarm system just as easily, causing a similar cascade of neurophysiological reactions (LeDoux 1998). The threat system is the oldest and most fundamental. Its urgency immediately takes us over and dictates what is stored in our memories. It is better to be safe than sorry, and this is the evolutionary advantage of the so-called negativity bias, which is the tendency to perceive and remember negative events more than positive events (Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzman 2001).

The **drive system** is focussed on reward and access to resources such as food, sex, material or immaterial gains. Here also, real or imagined needs can be the triggers. Emotions are predominantly pleasant. Chasing after a reward gives transient excitement and vitality, and getting what we want gives intense but short-lived satisfaction (Depue and Morrone-Strupinsky 2005).

Whereas the threat and drive systems were already part of reptilian life, the **soothing system** evolved in mammalian species where social bonding and

attachment became important. Here attention is not narrowed by the threat or reward focus but evenly open to kind and peaceful affiliation, characterised by soothing behaviour, wonder, play and creativity. Here emotions are also pleasant, but they differ from the drive system in that they are longer lasting and characterised by calmness and contentment (Depue and Morrone-Strupinsky 2005). They are linked to the release of oxytocin, believed to play a key role in generating the warm feelings that accompany social bonding (Olff et al. 2013). The threat and drive systems increase levels of stress and consume energy. They are designed for short-term survival. The soothing system is necessary for recovery and nourishment, a state referred to as *rest and digest* and characterised by activity of the vagus nerve associated with calmer breathing, lower blood pressure, slower heartbeat, increased heart rate variability, relaxed muscles and increased activity in digestive and immune systems (Porges 2007).

We cannot access our soothing system as easily as many other mammals, and we often stay entangled in our threat and drive systems for much longer than they are designed for (Gilbert 2009). With our new brain abilities, we can *imagine* all kinds of possible threats and unfulfilled needs. Thus we can become chronically stressed and develop a range of stress-related health problems. Prolonged sympathetic activity is physically and emotionally exhausting and health undermining. We need the counterbalance of the parasympathetic rest and digest state to recover and be nourished. Barbara Fredrickson's research team demonstrated that the experience of emotional well-being, social connectedness and vagal tone is intrinsically linked in a positive reinforcing spiral (Kok et al. 2013). All three emotion regulation systems are important for survival, but they need to be in balance for well-being. MBCL offers exercises to support this.

7.4.3 The Evolving Mind

Minds and brains evolve interdependently, while we relate to the world (Siegel 2007). What in the previous section has been addressed on the level of the old brain and biological systems is here described on the level of the new brain and processes in the human mind. Habitual mind-sets are referred to as patterns, modes or mentalities, more or less durable constructs offering some stability in the flux of life. Common patterns evolved to a large extent around interpersonal relating: distinguishing friend from foe; competing for rank and status; cooperating and sharing; and seeking, receiving and giving care. Various archetypal patterns emerged during human evolution, which Gilbert (2014, 2017) refers to as *social mentalities*. These are grounded in particular motivations, which focus our attention, imagination, thinking and reasoning, colour our emotions and direct our behaviour. Basic patterns are linked to the emotion regulation systems. A *threat mode* dominates when our mind is preoccupied with social threats (shame, blame, abuse, neglect or rejection). A *competitive mode* prevails when our mind is set on gaining social reward (approval, power, success). We can be driven by desire for superiority or fear of inferiority. Social comparison and self-evaluation are common strategies for judging

and securing our position in rank and status, which can fuel our threat and drive systems. If we perceive a gap between our actual self (how we are) and our ideal self (how we think we should be), we easily develop a habit of criticising ourselves. Here also, negativity bias easily creeps in. It comes more naturally to say we are no good or should do better than to accept and befriend ourselves. Many of us suffer from a harsh inner critic, while we actually need an inner helper, motivated by a *caring mode*. On top of these universal patterns of humankind, more specific patterns develop in individual lives. For example, schema therapists distinguished various maladaptive patterns that stem from early childhood and persist into adulthood, hindering psychological health (Young et al. 2003).

There appears to be a spectrum of wholesome and unwholesome attitudes towards ourselves. This is demonstrated by the work of Neff (2003a, b), who developed the Self-Compassion Scale, which consists of three subscales: *self-kindness*, *common humanity* and *mindfulness* of suffering. Those who score low on self-compassion, score high towards the opposite ends of these subscales: *self-criticism*, *self-isolation* and *over-identification* (as opposed to mindful non-identification). Germer (2009) recognised in these opposites the psychological equivalents of *fight*, *flight* and *freeze*. These psychological strategies undoubtedly have survival value. Self-criticism – fighting against (parts of) ourselves – may protect us from being criticised by others. Self-isolation – hiding (parts of) ourselves from others – may prevent us from being ignored or rejected by others. And over-identifying with our views and opinions – a psychological way of freezing – may feel safer than opening ourselves to unpleasant emotions and unfamiliar perspectives.

Many patterns did not evolve to make us happy but to help us survive in the complexities of social life and manage threats from outside (social rejection) or from inside (emotional pain). Patterns that we rigidly repeat leave deep traces in neural networks, which make it more likely that they persist. But the brain is an organ with great plasticity that changes with experience (Davidson 2012). Although deeply ingrained habits are difficult to unlearn, we can still learn new and healthier behaviour (Brewin 2006). Initially this may feel like diverting from the motorway and struggling on a barely visible path, but this is how our minds (and brains) evolve. The more we travel it, the more visible the path becomes. When we practise mindful compassion, new repertoire is wired into our brains. Instead of feeding an inner bully, we feed an inner helper. Although maladaptive patterns may be very persistent, they are less likely operating on autopilot when we recognise them mindfully and learn to relate to them compassionately, flexibly and playfully.

The founders of ACT point out that experiential avoidance and 'fusion' (over-identification) with the constructs of our mind play a key role in psychopathology (Hayes et al. 2012). Psychological health begins with experiential acceptance (including inevitable pain) and 'defusion' (dis-identification) from unhealthy views, opening the way to commit ourselves to what we really value. Practices in MBCL help us to 'meet our pain', with gentleness and courage, and respond compassionately. They also invite us to 'take in the good' (Hanson 2013), and here we apply insights from positive psychology (Fredrickson et al. 2008; Kok et al. 2013; Seligman 2002).

By broadening our awareness for nourishing, engaging and meaningful experiences, we build resources and create positive spirals that work as an antidote against negativity bias and narrow mind-sets.

When we cultivate a *compassion mode*, this offers a gateway to more connectedness, well-being and happiness. The common humanity perspective is introduced by exercises in kindness and compassion that expand from oneself to others. Thus, participants begin to understand the transpersonal dimension of suffering by extending the practice to dear, neutral and difficult persons. This way one realises that the practice is not limited to family, group, species, race or nation. It can expand boundlessly, to all beings – even the ones we dislike.

7.5 Development of the Programme

We first developed MBCL for out-patients attending the mental health services. As qualified mindfulness teachers, grounded in many years of meditation and Buddhist psychology, we already had extensive experience in training patients as well as professionals, in an 8-week mindfulness course, integrating MBSR and MBCT. Many participants who valued the course also expressed a need to deepen their practice and particularly do more work on being kind with themselves.

The attitude of kindness and compassion is usually implicitly present in mindfulness courses. Many seem to develop self-compassion along the way (Shapiro et al. 2005, 2007; Kuyken et al. 2010). The founders of MBCT have expressed their reservation about offering explicit compassion exercises to patients vulnerable to depression, as it may increase feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness (Segal et al. 2013). In their view it is enough for trainers to embody the compassionate attitude and thus convey it to participants. In a primary care setting, Neff and Germer (2012) developed an 8-week Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) course, which offers explicit practice in self-compassion alongside mindfulness from the start. We respect both approaches. However, we find it a great advantage that participants in our MBCL groups (whether clients or professionals) have already acquired mindfulness skills before doing the more challenging compassion exercises. It helps to have sufficient stability in mindful awareness particularly when meeting our pain, so we can see it clearly and open our hearts to what is needed.

The basic plan for a compassion training emerged in 2008, and the MBCL programme was developed over a period of 3 years, during which we closely collaborated as trainers of client groups, professional groups and teacher training courses. We trained in compassion-focussed approaches (CFT, ACT, MSC) with founding teachers and integrated elements of their work in MBCL. Extensive qualitative evaluations and session-to-session feedback from participants on content, guidance, workbook and audio material were used to shape the curriculum into its current format.

7.6 Description of the Programme in an Overview

The MBCL programme is similar in structure to an MBSR/MBCT course, with eight thematic sessions and a silent session with guided meditations only. We bear in mind the advice often given to teachers of MBSR to teach the whole course as one session. In MBCL also – depending on the process and needs of the group – certain didactic teachings or exercises are sometimes offered earlier and sometimes later in the course, while the course as a whole gives the entire spectrum of themes and practices (see overview). We designed our manual as a guideline to be followed flexibly rather than a protocol to be obeyed rigidly. All exercises build on skills acquired in previous mindfulness practice, and most are guided in the group sessions. They are given as audio material and transcripts in the workbook to support home practice. An important difference with MBSR/MBCT is that in MBCL, a range of suggestions for home practice are given following each session, rather than specific homework. This supports participants to tune into their deeper needs and to compassionately choose the exercises that connect best to their learning process. Each session a number of exercises are added to be explored in the session and at home. Participants can always continue practising what was offered in earlier sessions or return to basic mindfulness exercises.

Several elements are secular adaptations from traditional practices, such as *metta* (which we have incorporated in MBCL as 'kindness meditation'; Salzberg, 1995), where one mindfully sends kind wishes to oneself or others; *tonglen* (renamed 'compassionate breathing'), where one imagines inhaling what is painful in oneself or in other persons and exhaling a wholesome quality which relieves the pain; or the *brahmaviharas* (the Four Immeasurables, which we call 'Four Friends for Life'), where one practises with four self-transcending attitudes that complement each other (kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity). Soothing breathing rhythm and compassionate imagery ('a safe place', 'a compassionate companion', 'embodying compassion') and compassionate letter writing are adapted from CFT (Gilbert 2009, 2010). Compassionately relating to resistance and desire and forgiveness exercises are inspired by Brach (Brach 2004). The self-compassion reminder (SCR) is derived from Neff (2011). 'Compassionately relating to inner patterns' is adapted from Young et al. (2003) and Germer (2009); exercises focussing on taking in the good are inspired by positive psychology (Hanson 2013) and orientating on values by Hayes et al. (2012).

We adapted the practices found in other sources in such a way that they can be guided and explored in a style congruent to the practices in MBSR/MBCT. Some practices we designed ourselves, e.g. those built around metaphors like The Horse Whisperer and The River of Life. Important short informal practices are the Breathing Space with Kindness (to be practised any moment) and the Breathing Space with Compassion (to be practised in difficult moments), extensions from the 3-Minute Breathing Space in MBCT (Segal et al. 2013). Calendar exercises are meant to help with practising mindful compassion in daily life.

Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9 give an overview of themes, formal and informal practices per session.

Table 7.1 Session 1: How we evolved – threat, drive and soothing systems

Themes	Defining compassion. Evolutionary brain model: the design is not our fault
	How the three emotion regulation systems can get out of balance
	How to nourish the soothing system
Practices	Soothing breathing rhythm (part of formal and informal exercises). Nourishing the soothing system through the senses; pleasure walk; helpful objects; and symbols
	A safe place: *Imagine you are in a place without others where you feel at ease, welcomed and accepted just as you are*
	Kindness meditation: self. For example, *May I feel safe/healthy happy/at ease*
Informal	Breathing Space with Kindness
	Calendar: soothing system

Table 7.2 Session 2: Threat and self-compassion

Themes	Fight/flight/freeze (physical threat); self-criticism/self-isolation/over-identification and rumination (psychological threat); three components of self-compassion as their antidotes (see self-compassion reminder below)
	How imagination can work for and against us
	Wisely and compassionately attending to obstacles and 'backdraft' (adverse reactions to self-compassion)
Practices	Compassionately relating to resistance: explore a stressful situation; experiment with embodying a resisting and an accepting attitude
	A compassionate companion: *Imagine you are in the presence of a compassionate being, committed to your well-being*
	Kindness meditation: a benefactor. For example, *May you feel safe/healthy/happy at ease*
Informal	For difficult moments: Breathing Space with Compassion
	Self-compassion reminder (SCR; Neff 2011), i.e. silently repeating
	1. *This is a moment of suffering* (mindfulness)
	2. *Suffering is part of life* (common humanity)
	3. *May I be kind/compassionate to myself* (self-kindness)
	Calendar: threat system

Table 7.3 Session 3: Untangling desires and patterns

Themes	Understanding desire and inner patterns, such as threat mode, competitive mode, caring mode
	Function of inner critic and self-conscious emotions (shame, shyness, guilt)
Practices	Compassionately relating to desire: *Explore an area of troublesome desire/attachment, urge-surfing. Is there anything underneath?*
	Compassionately relating to inner patterns: exploring a familiar maladaptive schema
	Kindness meditation: a good friend. For example, *May you/we feel safe/healthy*
Informal	Breathing spaces, SCR
	Calendar: drive system

Table 7.4 Session 4: Embodying compassion

Themes	Attributes of compassion: care for well-being, sensitivity to needs, sympathy, empathy, courage and tolerance of distress, wisdom
	Skilful means of compassion: attentional, sensory exploration, imagery, thinking and reasoning, emotional, behavioural
Practices	Embodying compassion: *Imagine you embody compassion in all its qualities*
	Doing as if
	Kindness to the body and walking and moving with kindness
	Kindness meditation: a neutral person. For example, *May you come to terms with vulnerability, aging and dying*
Informal	Breathing spaces, SCR
	Calendar: inner critic

Table 7.5 Session 5: Self and others – widening the circle

Themes	Understanding images of self and others as impermanent. How over-identification can be restricting and non-identification can be liberating
	How practising kindness to others can disclose areas in need of self-compassion (e.g. worry, jealousy, old pain)
Practices	Writing a compassionate letter (from one's compassionate self to one's suffering self)
	Compassionate breathing: based on the soothing breath, imagining inhaling what hurts and exhaling what heals
	Kindness meditation: a 'difficult' person. For example, *May you/we live in harmony*
Informal	Breathing spaces, SCR
	Calendar: Inner helper

Table 7.6 Session 6: Growing happiness

Themes	Imperfection and the wish to be happy and free from suffering connect all human beings
	The Four Friends for Life, self-transcendent qualities that can be practised boundlessly: loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity
	Discovering what contributes to happiness
Practices	Forgiveness (forgiving oneself, asking and offering forgiveness)
	Savouring and revisiting the good: exploring all senses
	Silver lining. Gratitude. Core values
	Kindness meditation: groups and all beings. For example, *May all beings live in peace*
Informal	Breathing spaces, SCR
	Calendar: Receiving compassion

Table 7.7 Silent session

Programme of guided practices embedded in silence. For example, imagery exercises, appreciative body scan, pleasure walk, savouring, movement exercises with kindness, compassionate breathing, kindness meditation (whole sequence), The Horse Whisperer: a metaphor for patience and equanimity

Table 7.8 Session 7: Weaving wisdom and compassion into daily life

Themes	What motivates us moment to moment? Recognising the motivation from threat, drive and caring modes
	Cultivating heartful mind and mindful heart in daily life; from formal to informal practice
	Practical ethics
Practices	Equanimity meditation. For example, *May we accept what we cannot change/ find peace amidst life's ups and downs*
	Sympathetic joy meditation. For example, *May we savour the goodness in life*
	A day in our life: exploring self-care and care for others in daily activities
	Compassionate prevention plan
Informal	Breathing spaces, SCR
	Calendar: Giving compassion

Table 7.9 Session 8: Living with heart

Themes	Healing ourselves and others with compassion
	How to continue practising?
	Evaluation of the course
Practices	Appreciative body scan
	The River of Life: a metaphor for intimate connectedness and boundless openness
	Choosing formal and informal practices to continue after the course

7.7 Duration, Before and After the Course

There are eight sessions of 2.5 hours which are held weekly to fortnightly. The sessions offer guided exercises, sharing and inquiry (into insights and difficulties during the exercises), didactic parts and discussion of home practice. Participants are expected to spend 3/4 to 1 hour daily on formal practice and also do informal exercises during their daily life. There is an additional silent session between the 6th and 7th session which, for logistic reasons, may have to be kept of equal duration. If circumstances allow, however, it is recommended to schedule a half or full day.

MBSR and MBCT are usually offered on a weekly base in 8 successive weeks. MBCL teachers may choose a more flexible frequency depending on the participants and the setting in which they offer the course. In order to appreciate the rich content of the sessions more fully, a fortnightly or even monthly frequency may be feasible with participants who are grounded in the practice and able to hold themselves

in-between sessions. In the mental healthcare setting, weekly sessions are, particularly in the first half, desirable to facilitate the group process and holding environment. In the second half, a fortnightly frequency may be an advantage to give participants more time for practice.

Individual pre-course interviews with the teacher are recommended to assess the participant's experience with mindfulness practice, their motivation for compassion training, their willingness to explore more difficult areas in themselves and whether the course fits their expectation. Also, teachers can use assessment questionnaires, offer a pre-course orientation session and offer telephone, online or face-to-face interviews as required. After the course individual interviews should be offered to those participants who wish so, for individual evaluation and advice on further support.

7.8 Available Versions

Just as the programme is flexible for individual participants, it can also be flexibly adapted by trainers to suit the groups they teach and to suit their teaching competence. So far, no other versions of MBCL have been published, but we know of teachers who are adjusting the programme to suit more specific groups, such as patients with cancer, recurrent depression, eating disorders, borderline personality disorders, chronic psychiatric vulnerabilities and various nonclinical settings, such as preventative health care, at work, in education, pastoral work or management. Also online adaptations are being developed. This can lead to variations in the number, frequency and duration of sessions, as well as in the emphasis on particular themes or exercises. The high flexibility of the programme can be a disadvantage for systematic evaluation. Therefore, the research team at Radboud University, Nimwegen, in the Netherlands, where MBCL was studied in an RCT for patients with recurrent depression, developed a more protocolled and somewhat reduced version of the programme (without reducing sessions or practice time).

Professionals, who may have no opportunities to follow an eight-session experiential course, can follow a 3-day MBCL foundation course or a longer MBCL retreat, where all key themes and practices are offered experientially, or an MBCL online course. For mindfulness teachers there are intensive MBCL teacher trainings. These can also be attended by other professionals with adequate experience in mindfulness-based interventions, who wish to deepen their work. However, to become a certified MBCL teacher, one must first be a certified mindfulness teacher (MBSR, MBCT or equivalent).

7.9 Deepening MBCL with Interpersonal Mindfulness Practice

When we teach professionals or clients who are motivated to practice mindfully in dyads or small groups, we often enrich the programme with interpersonal mindfulness practice. Besides plenary inquiry, which is a cornerstone in teaching MBSR/MBCT, it is also valuable to guide participants in mutual inquiry, to let them explore their experience of the MBCL practices or to contemplate on key themes from the course while being present with one's moment-by-moment experience. Working in dyads, one can first divide roles in speaker and listener and, when each has had their turn, continue with open mindful dialogue. We followed training in mindful communication through various programmes, such as Deep Listening (Oliver 2013) and *The Five Keys to Mindful Communication* (Gillis Chapman 2012). We also certified as teachers in the Interpersonal Mindfulness Programme (IMP), which is – like MBCL – a secular deepening programme of eight sessions and a silent day, designed for MBSR/MBCT graduates, based on *Insight Dialogue* developed by Gregory Kramer and colleagues (Kramer 2007; Kramer et al. 2008; Meleo-Meyer 2016). The guidelines are very helpful when guiding interpersonal meditation:

- *Pause*: reminding of mindful presence, stepping out of reactivity, acknowledging what shows itself right here, right now.
- *Relax*: allowing relaxation by soothing breathing, softening muscles, feeling grounded, accepting thoughts and feelings as they are.
- *Open*: opening to internal, external and interpersonal space, giving and receiving in mutuality.
- *Trust Emergence* or *Attune to Emergence*: having no agenda, not-knowing, allowing communication to unfold, attuning to change with beginner's mind.
- *Listen Deeply*: being receptive with the whole body to what the other communicates, how it is communicated and how it resonates inside, mindfully listening with the heart.
- *Speak the Truth*: voicing the subjective truth of the moment, with discernment, embodied, congruently and authentically, mindfully speaking from the heart.

We increasingly weave in these guidelines for interpersonal practice in our teaching, particularly in MBCL intensives and teacher trainings but also in groups of clients with sufficient grounding in mindfulness. In our experience, IMP and MBCL strongly complement each other. Compassion practice deepens interpersonal practice, and interpersonal practice deepens compassion practice. By practicing relationality at intra- and interpersonal levels side by side, participants support each other in awakening heartful mind and mindful heart.

7.10 Empirical Evaluation

The rapidly expanding research into compassion shows that there are strong correlations between self-compassion and physical, mental and social health (Homan and Sirlois 2017; MacBeth and Gumley 2012; Seppala et al. 2012). Also, compassion to others is associated with individual and social well-being (Crocker and Canevello 2012). Positive effects of compassion-focused interventions have been shown in clinical and nonclinical populations, and the first systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been published (Hofmann et al. 2011; Galante et al. 2014; Kirby 2016; Kirby et al. 2017). Most of the ingredients of MBCL, such as kindness meditation, compassionate imagery and compassionate letter writing, were empirically evaluated in intervention studies with positive outcomes. For a more extensive review, we refer to the research chapter in Van den Brink and Koster (2015, pp. 30–42). Below we list a number of studies of compassion training programmes that overlap with MBCL, evaluated with at least one RCT. These are offered as stand-alone programmes, and – unlike MBCL – they do not require that participants have followed a foundational mindfulness course before.

A *Loving Kindness Meditation* programme was studied among employees of a software company who showed, compared to the control group, an increase in positive emotions, mindfulness, experiencing meaning and social support and a decrease in depressive symptoms and physical complaints (Fredrickson et al. 2008). A first RCT of the *Mindful Self-Compassion* programme showed significant improvements on measures for mindfulness, compassion for oneself and others, social connectedness, well-being and happiness and a decrease in measures for depression, anxiety, stress and avoidance of unpleasant thoughts and feelings (Neff and Germer 2012). *Compassion Cultivation Training*, developed at Stanford University, offers practice in three domains: compassion for others, being the recipient of compassion from others and self-compassion. A first RCT showed significant improvement in all three domains of compassion (Jazaieri et al. 2013, 2014). Among the effects were also increased mindfulness and happiness, as well as decreased worry and emotional suppression. Results correlated with time spent on practice. *Cognitive-Based Compassion Training* (CBCT) is a secularised programme based on a Tibetan tradition in which *tonglen* practice has a key role. Two earlier studies among healthy subjects and an active control group (receiving health education) did not show significant differences, but the results suggested that engagement in compassion meditation reduces stress-induced immune and behavioural responses, as those who had practised more than average showed better results than those who had practised less than average (Pace et al. 2009, 2010). As programmes such as these have been developed fairly recently, long-term effects are not known as yet. However, as participants learn to integrate the practice of mindful compassion into their daily lives, sustainable effects are likely.

Regarding the relation between compassion and empathy, another study of CBCT showed in the intervention group significantly more empathic accuracy than in the active control group, which correlated with neurobiological changes on fMRI

(Mascaro et al. 2013). A Swedish RCT pilot of a Buddhist meditation programme, built around the *Four Immeasurables* and *tonglen*, showed significant increases in mindfulness and self-compassion and a significant decrease in perceived stress (Wallmark et al. 2013). There was also a trend towards an increase in empathic concern for others in need, which significantly correlated with practice time. A Swiss-German study showed that subjects who received *short-term compassion training* (STCT) showed more pro-social behaviour towards strangers in a training-unrelated task, unlike the control group who received short-term memory training (Leiberg et al. 2011). An American study confirmed this: brief compassion training increased altruistic redistribution of funds to a victim encountered outside of the training context (Weng et al. 2013). In both studies, the increase in pro-social behaviour correlated with fMRI changes in the brain. Another study by Singer's team using fMRI showed that STCT may offer a new coping strategy that fosters positive affect, even when confronted with others in distress (Klimecki et al. 2013a). In a subsequent study, the intervention group first received training in empathic resonance, followed by STCT (Klimecki et al. 2013b). Watching others in distress following the empathy training increased negative affect and activated brain regions associated with empathy for pain. The increase in negative affect was reversed following STCT, and a non-overlapping brain circuit was activated similar to that in the previous study. These findings suggest that empathy and compassion indeed rely on antagonistic affective systems and that even brief training in compassion can counteract empathic distress.

Key themes and practices of CFT have found a place in the MBCL curriculum. *Interventions based on CFT* have shown positive results in clinical and nonclinical settings (Leaviss and Uttley 2015; Sommers-Spijkerman et al. 2018). In their meta-analysis, Kirby et al. (2017) conclude that overall compassion-based interventions hold promise as a form of intervention to help cultivate both compassion and self-compassion, reduce suffering (specifically depression, anxiety and psychological distress) as well as increase well-being. So far, the evidence is predominantly based on studies with relatively small sample sizes, and in the future, bigger controlled studies are recommended.

Research into the *MBCL programme* as an intervention is beginning to emerge. The first feasibility studies were carried out among a heterogeneous sample of psychiatric out-patients (Bartels-Velthuis et al. 2016), a sample of out-patients with recurrent depression (Schuling et al. 2017) and self-referring individuals with high self-criticism who followed an adapted MBCL online programme (Krieger et al. 2016). Results were promising with good feasibility and significant reductions in measures of depression, anxiety and perceived stress, as well as significant increases in measures on mindfulness and self-compassion. Meanwhile a first randomized controlled trial studying MBCL was carried out at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands (Schuling et al. 2016, 2020). Included in this study were patients diagnosed with recurrent depression (three episodes or more), who had previously participated in MBCT and who were randomly assigned to the intervention group (N=60) and the control group (N=62) who received treatment as usual. The intervention group showed a significant decrease of depressive symptoms and a

significant increase of levels of self-compassion, mindfulness and quality of life. The results were maintained and had further improved at 6 months follow-up. In a Swiss RCT (Krieger et al. 2019), self-referring individuals with increased self-criticism were randomly allocated to care as usual with MBCL online intervention (N=47) and care as usual only (N=44). The self-help programme consisted of an introductory module to basic mindfulness practice, followed by six modules derived from MBCL, with texts to read and audio material. Guidance/assistance by a psychologist was at request only. Results showed a significant decrease in symptoms of depression, anxiety and distress, as well as self-criticism, existential shame and fear of compassion. There was a significant increase in self-compassion, mindfulness, self-esteem and satisfaction with life. Results were maintained at 6 months follow-up. A team from Slovakia (Ondrejková et al. 2020) researched in an RCT a brief online version with a daily task from the MBCL programme on 15 consecutive days. The results showed a significant decrease in level of self-criticism and significant increase in level of self-compassion in the experimental group compared to controls, which persisted at follow-up.

Up to date there has been little research into the *IMP training*. A feasibility study was carried out among healthcare professionals in the Netherlands (Bartels-Velthuis et al. 2020). The programme appeared feasible and was highly appreciated by participants. Compared to controls, the IMP training had a significant positive effect on measures of self-compassion, empathy and compassion fatigue.

7.11 Concluding Remarks

MBCL addresses the relationality aspect of mindfulness practice in a thorough and explicit way, with a range of practices to relieve suffering and promote well-being by deepening wisdom and compassion – heartful mind and mindful heart. The first empirical support for the MBCL programme is emerging from scientific studies. Clients as well as teachers are generally very positive in qualitative evaluations of MBCL. After participation nearly all mention the helpful insights into the workings of their minds and into the common humanity of their experiences, an increase of kindness and ease in their relationships with themselves and others and being less troubled by the inevitable suffering in one's life. Even very experienced mindfulness teachers and healthcare workers mention how enriching the programme is for their personal and professional lives. Drop-outs are unusual when participants are screened on realistic expectations, motivation and willingness to meet and explore their inner difficulties. It is important that exercises are attuned to the needs of participants. Those with backgrounds of trauma and neglect often experience difficulty receiving warmth and kindness, which activates their threat system rather than their soothing system – a phenomenon Germer (2009) called 'backdraft'. It is important to value and normalise this as part of the practice and to invite participants to a slower pace, with gentle exposure to what is feared, in order to learn that kindness and compassion can be safe.

The strength of the programme is that it builds further on the similarly structured MBSR/MBCT courses and deepens skills already practised in basic mindfulness training. The trans-diagnostic scope and choice in exercises serve participants with different backgrounds and needs and help them relate to suffering – whether physical, emotional or relational. It allows for a wide variety of applications and adaptations in different settings, clinical and nonclinical. This advantage may be a disadvantage for those participants and trainers who need more structure and for researchers wishing a step-by-step protocolised manual. MBCL requires experienced and flexible teachers who can offer a safe holding and respond sensitively to different needs of individual participants. Experienced teachers can deepen the programme with interpersonal mindfulness practices. As with other mindfulness-based programmes, it is important that teachers received adequate schooling and teach from their own practice.

Resources

- Van den Brink, E. & Koster, F. (2015). *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – A new training programme to deepen mindfulness with heartfulness.* London: Routledge. Written for professionals with detailed scientific references.
- Van den Brink, E. & Koster, F. (2018). *A practical guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – Living with heart.* London: Routledge. Written for a broad audience, to be used as self-help resource or workbook during the group training.

Both books come with downloadable audio files and worksheets.

For further information on experiential foundation courses, retreats and teacher trainings in MBCL, see www.mbcl.org and www.compassionateliving.info.

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Chapter 8
Mindfulness, Compassion, and Embodiment Practices in Contemplative Psychotherapy: Shifting Self-Enclosed Processing to Relational Processing at All Levels of the Human Mind-Brain

Joseph Loizzo

8.1 Beyond Simple Mindfulness: The Relational Insight and Arts of Contemplative Care

As evidence for the health benefits of mindfulness grows, more and more psychotherapists of all orientations are integrating mindfulness practices into their work to help clients accelerate healing and deepen transformation (Germer et al. 2005; Loizzo et al. 2017). This chapter reviews the clinical neuropsychology of the mindfulness revolution, focusing on the latest advances in contemplative psychotherapy based on the integration of relational forms of mindfulness—mindful dialogue, mindful compassion, and mindful embodiment.

Given its origins in the Asian Buddhist tradition of contemplative healing, many find it surprising that mindfulness has gone from relative obscurity to becoming an increasingly mainstream practice in contemporary psychotherapy. Modern psychology and psychotherapy have developed in part as scientific alternatives to humanity's ancient traditions of contemplative psychology and healing. Freud for one took great pains to distance the new science of psychoanalysis and his technique of psychotherapy from the spiritual psychology and meditative methods of our major religious traditions, Western and Eastern (Freud 1930). Yet the more we learn about the mechanism and benefits of mindfulness, the more obvious its growing acceptance and adoption by therapists seems. The practice of training in unbiased awareness of one's own mind/body processes bears a strong family resemblance to Freud's

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"fundamental rule of free association" and his related advice that analysts practice "evenly hovering attention" to monitor their conscious and unconscious minds (Freud 1912; Epstein 1996). Even the mechanism of mindfulness—joining mild relaxation with heightened attention to enhance insightful dialogue and self-regulation—is quite compatible with how psychotherapy is thought to work: enhancing self-awareness, emotional sharing, and social learning to expose and transform unconscious defenses and self-protective instincts (DelMonte 1995; Loizzo 2000).

The deep family resemblance in aims and methods between mindfulness and psychotherapy goes a long way to explaining why simple mindfulness has been so readily and widely adopted by researchers and clinicians in recent decades (Loizzo 2017). Unfortunately, this early adoption has involved grossly oversimplifying and decontextualizing the psychology of mindfulness, so that it can be more simply incorporated as an attention-training adjunct into modern therapies (Neale 2017). Popular concepts of mindfulness as "non-judgmental, present moment awareness" and the dilution of mindfulness practice to "mindfulness of the body here and now" effectively reduce the totality of the basic science and healing art to which it belongs to less than 5% (Loizzo 2012). Worse still, the narrowing and dilution that have made it easier to appropriate that ancient science and art have had the unintended consequence of obscuring their timeless aims and methods, along with their full therapeutic potential.

So the first step in going beyond simple mindfulness is to contextualize the practice of mindfulness as only one of three basic disciplines that are each mutually indispensable to psychological healing according to the tradition. As simple mindfulness has been used by current modalities like acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) to enhance attentional presence and hence facilitate cognitive learning and behavior change, so too in traditional contexts it was seen as a discipline of attention meant to support the cultivation of insight or wisdom on the one hand and healthy behavior or ethics on the other (Germer et al. 2005). This explains why the broader practice we call mindfulness—sati in Pali, smrti in Sanskrit—is traditionally seen as basic training for the practice of insight mediation—vipassana or vipasyana (Salzberg 2017). This is not simply a matter of terminology. Since the purpose of simple mindfulness is to gain clarity about our mind/body processes so that we can objectively judge if they are healthy/to be cultivated, or unhealthy/to be eliminated, any literal reading of Kabat-Zinn's description of mindfulness as "non-judgmental" risks obscuring the ultimate purpose and benefit of practicing mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Neale 2017). From a traditional point of view, the word "non-judgmental" must not be taken to literally mean "without judgment," but rather "without biased or mistaken judgment"—since for mindfulness to be properly practiced and applied, we must be able to use accurate, impartial judgment not just to assess the effectiveness of our practice but also to correctly interpret/act on what it reveals. This is to say nothing of the way or extent to which the wisdom and ethical disciplines of traditional Buddhist psychology differs from the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of most if not all modern therapies. Since I have unpacked

those differences elsewhere (Loizzo et al. 2009a, 2017), suffice it to say here that Buddhist psychology is far more optimistic and ambitious about our human potential for healing and well-being than modern psychotherapies and far more challenging in recommending changes in motivation and lifestyle it sees as necessary to support optimal healing and well-being.

Beyond this more robust understanding of mindfulness as a training for insight, learning, and behavior change, the tradition offers a more complex method of practice and application. This method includes a complete training system of four progressive applications of mindfulness, meant to prepare the mind and nervous system for insight and motivational-behavioral change (Gunaratana 2002; Loizzo 2016a). Based on the grounding of breath-body awareness, the second application focuses on sensitivity: cultivating awareness of default reactivity to pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral experience, along with the tolerance, acceptance, and equanimity that support mindful sensitivity and responsiveness. Relying on the first two applications of body awareness and mindful sensitivity, the third application of mindfulness shifts the focus of attention to mind, in order to cultivate a more open awareness that can expose limiting biases and habits and clear/expand the field of attention with metacognitive awareness and flexibility. This capacity is the foundation for the final application of mindfulness to transform our personal and interpersonal experience and life, through the cultivation of freeing insight, loving-kindness/compassion, and interpersonal skill in motivation and action (Loizzo 2012).

Already here we can begin to glimpse the full therapeutic potential of mindfulness, as well as its fundamentally relational tone, intent, and application. While these have been fleshed out to some extent by growing interest in mindful dialogue (MD), loving-kindness (LK), and mindful self-compassion (MSC) (Germer and Siegel 2012), the legacy of early mindfulness adoption has left the false impression that this psychology is more focused on present moment acceptance than long-term insight and change and primarily focused on cool introspective awareness rather than on intersubjective sharing or warm social emotional relationships to self and others (Purser 2019). Of course, the field continues to evolve rapidly, and this volume on relational mindfulness is one of the many signs of a shift towards a fuller and more authentic adoption of the traditional psychology and practice of mindfulness.

In addition to continuing to evolve our understanding of the psychology of mindfulness, there are also several new frontiers in understanding mindfulness opened by our more recent encounter and dialogue with two other systems of Buddhist psychology that are even more overtly relational (Loizzo 2017). The first of these is the psychology of compassion, which deepens the focus of contemplative learning to the freeing insight of our interdependence with all life and things while also expanding the cultivation of positive social emotions like love, compassion, joy, and equanimity to include all living beings (Gilbert 2017; Thurman 2017). The second is the psychology of embodiment, which further deepens the practice of insight into the intuitive realm of embodied openness to all life and things and cultivates embodied compassion by developing our natural capacity to access and harness transformational affects like awe, delight, ecstasy, and bliss (Wolf 2017; Jennings 2017).

Not only do these two further systems of relational mindfulness involve different theories of mind and diverse methods of healing and change, but they emerged in distinct historical eras and were preserved in various Asian cultural traditions. I have described the psychology, methodology, and history of these different systems elsewhere (Loizzo 2012, 2017) and direct curious readers to those extended treatments for more detail. In this chapter, let me briefly say that the Indian Buddhist psychology of mindfulness evolved roughly from 500 BCE to 150 CE and is mainly preserved in the Theravada traditions of South and Southeast Asia; the psychology of compassion evolved roughly from 150 CE to 650 CE and is mainly preserved in the Mahayana traditions of East and Southeast Asia; and the psychology of embodiment evolved roughly from 650 CE to 1250 CE and is preserved mainly in the Vajrayana traditions of Central Asia. In all my writing, research, and teaching, however, I treat these three systems as one cumulative developmental psychology, following the tradition of contemplative science and practice developed at Nalanda University in ancient India and fully preserved in Tibet. So the neuropsychological model I present here to explain the mechanisms and benefits of these three forms of relational mindfulness will not only follow that traditional developmental framework but also propose how it may relate to neural structure and function on the one hand and contemporary forms of psychology and psychotherapy on the other. My closing remarks on the therapeutic integration and application of relational mindfulness will also follow the comprehensive gradualism of the Nalanda tradition.

8.2 The Neuropsychology of Relational Mindfulness: Background and Context

Although scientific psychology in ancient India lacked the mechanistic theories and objectivist methods that gave rise to modern neuropsychology, it did assume a naturalistic outlook and intersubjective method similar to those that gave rise to modern scientific psychology and psychotherapy (Wallace 2006; Loizzo 2009a, b). In fact, as many recently have observed, using only introspective data gathering, intersubjective validation, and qualitative forms of analysis, the ancient Indian psychology of yoga and mindfulness I call Indic contemplative science anticipated many of the findings of modern science (Ricard and Thuan 2001).

Indic contemplative science anticipated our recognition that humans evolved naturally from simpler life forms and that human development recapitulates that long evolutionary history. It anticipated the insight that human life in particular reflects the culmination of eons of social evolution embodied in the rise of mammals and primates. It anticipated the psychological breakthrough that personality develops as an interplay of nature and nurture, with physical heredity in intimate emotional dialogue with parents. It anticipated the discovery that mind is embodied in a nervous system, constantly interacting with neural energy and chemistry, and that mind has the power to shape and reshape that nervous system and the body it regulates. It anticipated the knowledge that the mind and nervous system involve three major

levels: the gross level that supports waking consciousness; the subtle level that supports dreamlike consciousness; and the subtlest level that supports deep sleep, near death, and orgasmic consciousness. Finally, it anticipated the realization that our minds and bodies can be driven in one of two modes: either by the self-protective biology of survival we understand as stress and trauma or by the socially engaged biology of thriving, compassion, and altruism. So while the neuropsychological model I propose relies on current neuroscience, it also happens to be compatible in a general way with the contemplative neuropsychology of the yogic and meditative traditions of India (Loizzo 2014). As the model that has informed my clinical research and practice, it also has the benefit of empirical validation in four pilot studies in breast cancer survivors and in over 20 years of private contemplative psychotherapy practice (Loizzo et al. 2009a, 2010; Charlson et al. 2014; Offidani et al. 2017).

The neuropsychological model I propose intentionally simplifies the increasing volume and complexity of data being gathered about the brain into a framework that is plausibly evidence-based yet heuristic. Its intent is to help clinicians and patients readily grasp how meditation and yoga benefit mind-brain-body health and well-being. It assumes the evolutionary background of comparative neurobiology and the developmental context of attachment theory; and it combines these with current functional concepts of neural processing that are relevant to meditation and yoga research. The functional elements of the model include current research on neural networks, focused on six key networks that mediate stress reactivity vs. social engagement at all brain levels; research linking the negative neuroplasticity of stress and trauma to stress-reactive networks; and research linking the positive neuroplasticity of meditation and yoga to socially engaged networks.

As background, this neuropsychological model assumes an evolutionary perspective on the human brain: as a complex organ that incorporates distinct processing systems evolved across successive epochs. A corrected version of neurobiologist Paul MacLean's heuristic model of brain structure (MacLean 1990), popularized by Carl Sagan in the late 1990s, this tripartite framework identifies three main structural systems. These are (1) the primal vertebrate brain—the brainstem, cerebellum, midbrain, and basal ganglia; (2) the limbic brain, subcortical and cortical structures of the limbic system including the amygdala, hippocampus, cingulate cortex, hypothalamus, and thalamus; and (3) the fully developed neocortex with its distinctive infolding and cellular architecture. Commonly misidentified as the "reptilian," "mammalian," and "primate" brain, these three systems relate to (1) non-cortical regulatory structures inherited by all vertebrates—fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals—from a common ancestor 500 million years ago; (2) the newer social processing structures of the limbic system that evolved from the reptilian cortex or "pallium" with the transition to early mammals 250 million years ago; and (3) the newest cognitive processing structures that evolved from the outer layer of the reptilian pallium with larger mammals starting 200 million years ago, culminating in the neocortex of primates (65 million years ago), hominids (20 million years ago), and humans (2 million years ago).

Given the delineation of these broad structural systems, our neuropsychological model next aligns each system with equally broad domains of information process-

ing. With the caveat that all three systems overlap and cooperate in the processing of most if not all information, for heuristic purposes I align each system with one broad functional domain. Broadly speaking, the primal vertebrate system is most involved in basic homeostasis and self-regulation, including the regulation of sensory-interoceptive input, cardiovascular rhythms, wake-sleep cycles, autonomic responses, and motivation/reward. Equally broadly, the limbic system is most involved in social emotional processing and behavior, including the evaluation of the emotional salience and valence of experience, the empathic reading of the body language and motivational states of others, and the mobilization/reinforcement of both traumatic stress reactivity and prosocial engagement. Finally, broadly speaking, the neocortical system is most involved in cultural information processing and role execution, including language and symbolic logic, the social construction of perception, cultural skill mastery, and complex task planning and execution.

In line with this evolutionary background, this neuropsychological model assumes the developmental context of attachment theory. Given the consensus that the rise of mammals with progressively larger and more complex brains reflects the advantage conferred by the intergenerational transmission of learned information, the trend towards more prolonged periods of dependency and development is inextricably linked with the evolutionary structure and function of the human brain (Dobzhansky 1964; McNally et al. 2012). The fact that our brains evolved for social learning helps explain why the initial learning that takes place between caretakers and their young sets the stage for the functional development of the human mind-brain throughout the lifespan (Kappeler and Van Schalk 2005; Jablonka et al. 2014). While much has been made of the range of different styles of early parent-child attachment, this model emphasizes the underlying common denominator shaping early attachment and development: the degree to which parent-child interaction is driven by the self-protective biology of stress and trauma versus the generative biology of prosocial engagement (Porges 2011).

In this light, the model links the four main patterns of attachment described by developmental psychology—fearful avoidant (disorganized), anxious (ambivalent), dismissive avoidant (avoidant), and secure—to the four main modes of the mammalian stress response: sympathetic "fight," sympathetic "flight," dorsal vagal "faint-freeze," and ventral vagal "chill," respectively. The bottom line is that the full healthy development of the human brain is directly correlated to the degree of social engagement experienced by the developing child's brain and inversely proportional to the degree of traumatic stress reactivity experienced by the developing brain (Sullivan 2012). In other words, while attachment reflects the interpersonal capacity of the parent-child dyad for mutually sharing information and experience, at bottom that capacity is a function of the extent to which the three main systems of both brains in the dyad are operating in social engagement mode or in stress-protective self-enclosure in real time (Lahousen et al. 2019). As that state variable becomes installed as a default trait setting within the child's brain, it remains the key structural and functional determinant of the degree to which attachment patterns conditioned in development support or obstruct healthy interpersonal relationships in adult life.

8.3 The Neuropsychology of Relational Mindfulness: From Stress to Engagement

The evolutionary background and developmental context of our model brings us to its second dimension: the key functional elements that make up the main pathogenic and therapeutic variables impacting mental health and treatment. These are key resting networks for stress protection vs. social engagement; the variable impact of stress and trauma vs. self-regulation on those networks; and the pivotal role of contemplative practice in overriding negativity bias and shifting from negative to positive neuroplasticity, from stress reactivity to social engagement.

One of the key features of the new functional approach to the brain is the ongoing refinement of connectionist models of neural processing in the study of resting networks (Calhoun et al. 2014). As part of a paradigm shift away from the reductive, localizing program of early neuroscience, one key avenue of current research studies brain function in light of the dynamic connectivity between distinct modules within and across brain systems and regions that link together to support specific information processing functions. Resting networks are networks which remain active even in the absence of task-oriented processing and behavior, suggesting that they take part in supporting the consistent psychological processes we recognize as mental states and traits (Shen 2015). Of particular interest to mental health and treatment are three pairs of functionally complementary networks involved in supporting stress-reactive versus socially engaged processing within the three main systems of the human brain (Woodward and Cascio 2015). Simply put, these complementary networks are incorporated within the neuropsychological model I propose to explain the functional opposition within each of the three main structural systems of the human brain between the self-enclosing, stress-protective processing that supports psychopathology and the open, socially engaged processing that supports mental health and well-being (Grayson and Fair 2017).

To begin with, at the neocortical level, much has been made recently of the discovery of the default mode network (DMN), the main network governing neocortical processing when it is not involved in goal-oriented task performance. The DMN links prefrontal regions like the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) with the middle temporal lobe and cortical regions including the posterior cingulate, precuneus, and angular gurus of the parietal cortex. Though it is typically described as a "task negative" or "resting" network, in light of the fundamentally social nature of human evolution and development, I see it more as an internally focused or self-focused network that drives neocortical processing when we feel disengaged from our social community and cultural context. This is supported by the findings that the DMN appears to be linked with self-referential processing as well as with a wandering or hypervigilant mind and negative affect, all of which are consistent with the aversive experience of a social animal isolated from its group and seeking to avoid danger and pursue scarce resources (Killingsworth and Gilbert 2010). Given the evolutionary background and recent findings on this network, it figures in this model as the key network that supports the stress-protective, self-enclosed mode of neocortical functioning.

An equal amount of research and thinking has gone into characterizing another neocortical network, the frontoparietal or central executive network (CEN), involved in supporting the socially engaged mode of neocortical processing and cultural role performance (Sherman et al. 2014). The CEN links the executive module in the dorsolateral PFC and the social cognition module in the dorsomedial PFC with the frontal eye fields of the motor cortex and the supramarginal gurus of the parietal cortex. The network is thought to regulate attention control, reasoning, impulse inhibition, task execution, and social cognition, along with eye gaze and spatial orientation. Typically described as "task-positive," this network is critically involved in paying present moment attention and staying engaged in complex social contexts and role-oriented task performance. In other words, it supports the optimal role of the neocortex in conditions of social safety and belonging, allowing us to fully engage in goal-oriented, cultural forms of group activity, including work and play (Miller et al. 2018). Given this, it figures in this model as the key network that supports the securely attached, socially engaged mode of neocortical functioning.

Turning now to the older mammalian structures of the cortical and subcortical limbic system, there are two additional networks that feature centrally in the model. First we consider what is commonly called the salience network (SN), a set of linked limbic regions which constantly scan external sensory and interoceptive input for negative versus positive valence, as well as for interest/relevance. The main cortical structures involved are the anterior cingulate and anterior insula, which support emotional intelligence and interception, while the network's subcortical nodes include the amygdala, thalamus, and striatum, which support emotional learning, association, and reinforcement.

Since this network generally operates under the threshold of conscious attention to scan all stimuli for valence before they reach the neocortex, it is thought to mediate preconscious perceptual-emotional reactivity as well as the subsequent assessment of the emotional valence of neocortical content (SN reference). This would explain why it appears to play a bottom-up role as an early warning network, alerting the neocortex of perceived opportunity and risk and shifting neocortical processing accordingly between CEN-mediated social engagement and DMN-driven self-enclosure (Provenzano et al. 2019). As an early warning detector and self-directed motivational processor, the function of the SN is consistent with the evolutionary challenge of a social animal anticipating and responding to the learned contingencies of individual survival (Ito et al. 2017). Given this evolutionary background and recent findings on this network, it figures in this model as the key network that supports the stress-protective, self-enclosed mode of limbic functioning.

Although less well studied and described, a second main network based in the limbic system is the empathy/emotional memory network (EMN), which scans the social environment for cues about the internal emotional states of others and works to assess and respond to those cues based on emotional memory stores. While this complex capacity is often seen as supported by three related networks—for cognitive empathy or "theory of mind," emotional empathy, and compassion—functionally it makes more sense to think of it as a single limbic system hub that recruits elements of other networks including the CEN, DMN, and SN (Fan et al. 2011). The

hub of the EMN lies squarely in the cortical and subcortical structures of the limbic system: the anterior, middle, and posterior cingulate, the amygdala and hippocampus, the ventral striatum and nucleus accumbens, the globus pallidus, and the putamen. It works together with the mirror neuron network in the temporal and parietal neocortex, as well as with other relevant neocortical regions—the anterior insula, orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), ventromedial PFC, and dorsolateral PFC—to interpret the emotional states of others (cognitive empathy), to compare them to implicit or explicit emotional memories (emotional empathy), and to mobilize socially appropriate empathic expressions and behavioral responses (compassion) (Gonzalez-Liencres et al. 2013).

In both evolutionary and developmental terms, this network is vital to our social emotional intelligence, fostering social engagement at the level of the limbic brain, regardless of whether those around us are experiencing positive or negative emotional states. While a good deal of emphasis has been placed on the potential for empathy to promote stress reactivity by evoking negative emotional memories triggered by empathizing with the distress of others, in fact such vicarious stress reactivity is more a product of the early warning function of the SN than the proper function of the EMN. Viewed in evolutionary and developmental context, such sympathetic distress or "social contagion" may be better understood as noise disrupting the empathy system, rather than as integral to its normal processing (De Waal and Preston 2017). This perspective is consistent with current research on compassion training, which shows that minimal training markedly diminishes vicarious reactivity while enhancing the prosocial emotional function of the EMN. That function includes fine-tuning cognitive empathy, reducing sympathetic distress, enhancing positive emotional empathy, as well as mobilizing and reinforcing prosocial responsiveness by recruiting both the CEN and the internal reward system (Decety and Ickes 2009). Given its evolutionary and developmental role in maintaining our vital social capacities for empathy and compassion, the EMN figures as the key network that supports securely attached, socially engaged mode of processing at the level of the limbic system.

This brings us to the oldest evolutionary system of the human brain, the primal vertebrate system, which is largely regulated by the last two opposed networks included in the model. Although most neural network research based on fMRI studies focus more on neocortical and limbic networks, more recent functional analysis of autonomic and cerebellar regulation reveals that networked regions in the primal vertebrate system are crucially involved in switching between self-enclosed and socially engaged processing at all levels of the human brain. The first of these is the stress response network (SRN), which links structures in the forebrain, midbrain, and brainstem to support the primitive stress-protective functions of autonomic nervous system (ANS) (McEwen and Stellar 1993). The SRN links the paraventricular nucleus of the hypothalamus with the pituitary-adrenal-endocrine axis and with the midbrain and brainstem nuclei that regulate the sympathetic "fight-flight" response—locus ceruleus, raphe, and intermediolateral nuclei—as well as the parasympathetic "faint-freeze" response, the dorsal motor nucleus of the vagus and intermediolateral nuclei. The SRN gathers top-down input from the SN—the amyg-

dala, cingulate, and insula—as well as bottom-up interoceptive input from the body, via the NTS, to assess the need to generate either mobilizing or immobilizing stress responses to stimuli perceived as threats (Ebmeier and Zsoldos 2019).

When top-down messages from the neocortical and limbic brain or bottom-up messages from the body alert the SRN of potential danger, it reflexively activates the vertebrate brain to run all our basic life-support systems and visceral organs in primal self-protective mode. As part of the negativity bias wired into the brain over eons of survival, the SRN has a hair trigger that kicks in at the least hint of danger, preparing our entire mind and body to fight, fly, faint, or freeze. Once this primal threat protective system is engaged, it locks the limbic system and neocortex into survival shutdown, stabilizing the self-enclosed mode of the neocortex and limbic system. At the same time, it also works via the HPA axis and autonomic system to shift our cardiorespiratory, digestive, reproductive, and immune systems into survival mode (Ford 2009). Unfortunately, whether this extreme measure is warranted by an immanent physical threat or a false alarm based on our negativity bias, our whole mind/body process is subjected to the wear and tear its activation exerts on tissues and cells (McEwen 2000). Given this evolutionary background and recent findings on this network, it figures in this model as the key network that supports the stress-protective, self-enclosed mode of limbic functioning.

Although less well studied and described, a second main network based in the primal vertebrate system is the social autonomic/reward network (SAN), which links the newer, myelinated branch of the vagal nerve based in the ventral vagal complex (VVC) together with the nucleus of the solitary tract (NTS), four other upgraded cranial nerves (V, VII, VIII, IX) cross-wired with the new "smart vagus," the supraventricular nuclei of the hypothalamus, and the internal reward network based in the midbrain—the periaqueductal gray, the substantia nigra, and the nucleus accumbens of the striatum (Porges 2011). The SAN reflects the newer evolutionary legacy of the mammalian transition, which equipped the vertebrate brain with neural and neurochemical changes that upgraded the brain's capacity to share social emotions in intimate relationships and extended social groups. The SAN gathers top-down cues of safety and connection from the prefrontal cortex, the empathy/emotional memory network, and the social cranial nerves to activate the smart vagus and stimulate the hypothalamic release of oxytocin and vasopressin, which both stimulate the VVC and the internal reward centers of the midbrain and forebrain. In the presence of positive social connection, the SAN calms the primitive stress reflexes of the sympathetic and primitive parasympathetic systems and activates the ventral vagus and reward networks to shift all three brain systems out of self-protective mode into social engagement mode, to support the capacity for embodied presence, emotional connection, and cultural communication (Porges 2009). Given this evolutionary background and recent findings on this network, it figures in this model as the key network that supports the self-transcendent, socially engaged mode of brainstem functioning (Table 8.1).

Given this map of key resting networks, we can begin to flesh out how neural processing at all levels of the brain is impacted by perceived stress and by a range of meditation techniques. Assuming the four-phase model of stress and trauma

Table 8.1 The three evolutionary CNS systems and their main resting networks

Evolutionary system	Engaged network	Enclosed network
Neocortical system	Central executive (CEN)	Default mode (DMN)
Limbic system	Empathy/emotional memory (EMN)	Salience (SN)
Vertebrate system	Social autonomic/reward (SAN)	Stress response (SRN)

developed by Sheldon Cohen (Cohen et al. 2016), it is simple enough to link the first three phases of the cycle—worst-case appraisal, reactive emotion, and visceral stress reflexes—with the self-protective networks at the neocortical, limbic, and vertebrate level of brain processing. It turns out that negative anticipation, worst-case constructs of self and world, and a cognitive style of self-referentiality and hyper-vigilance are all consistent with what we now know about neocortical processing in the DMN (Killingsworth and Gilbert 2010).

Likewise, the triggering of traumatic emotional memories, including stress-reactive emotions like panic, rage and shame, and all the implicit biases and unconscious assumptions bound up with them are also very consistent with what we know about the alarm and mobilization function of limbic processing in the SN. Third, the visceral dimensions of stress, including the elevated heart rate, sweating, startle, and muscle tension of the fight-flight response and the sudden exhaustion, somatic rigidity, and psychomotor paralysis of the faint-freeze response are also very consistent with what we know about brainstem processing in the sympathetic and primitive vagal components of the SRN (Porges 2011).

The final phase of the stress cycle, long-term adaptation, in turn can be linked with the functional transformation of the brain and body through the tonic hyperactivity of all three self-protective networks, along with the neuroplastic hypertrophy of key stress-reactive structures like the orbitofrontal cortex and amygdala (McEwen 2009). Of note, the long-term adverse impact of this hyperactivity and hypertrophy includes a corresponding hypoactivity of the socially engaged networks of the CEN, EMN, and SAN, along with neuroplastic atrophy of key stress-modulating structures like the dorsolateral PFC, medial PFC, and the hippocampus.

So it should be no surprise that chronic stress tips the balance between the engaged and enclosed networks at all levels of the brain towards stress-reactive self-protection and away from social engagement. Given the predominantly social and cultural challenges we face in civilized life, it is easy to appreciate how tonic hyperactivity in stress networks not only subjects our minds, brains, and bodies to undue wear and tear but also undermines the socially engaged networks our human brain needs to adapt effectively to the challenges of our daily lives. This natural predicament is compounded by another remnant of our eons-long struggle for survival: our negativity bias. Estimates of our brain's default negativity bias are sobering, ranging from a five- to tenfold minimum to a maximum of a hundredfold bias (Vaish et al. 2008). This built-in tendency to privilege self-protective, stress-reactive processing over generative, socially engaged processing all but guarantees that our brains, left to their own devices, will default to chronic stress processing as a baseline, no matter how maladaptive that is given our civilized lifestyle of unprecedented safety, comfort, and connection.

Table 8.2 Evolutionary CNS systems, phase of stress, and contemplative practice type

Evolutionary system	Phase of stress cycle	Contemplative practice
Neocortical system	Cognitive appraisal	Fourfold mindfulness
Limbic system	Emotional reaction	Self-other compassion
Vertebrate system	Visceral response	Fourfold embodied practice
Three linked systems	Cumulative adaptation	Integrated practice

Fortunately for us all, the breakthrough findings of neural plasticity and conscious self-regulation offer a promising solution to this age-old predicament (Kandel 1998). In the radical discovery that all the systems and networks of our brains are plastic, we have real hope that our evolutionary and developmental bias towards self-enclosed processing can not just be reduced but even reversed. This is where the young fields of stress-reduction, conscious self-regulation, and meditation research come in. Given that neuroplasticity occurs preferentially in the field of attention, it became clear in the wake of Eric Kandel's Nobel Prize in 2000 that attention training through meditation may be exerting its beneficial impact on the mind, brain, and body by facilitating the conscious self-regulation of plasticity and learning (Loizzo 2000). Within the following decade, a growing body of studies showed that meditation was in fact reducing the activity of self-protective stress networks and enhancing the activity of socially engaged networks at all brain levels while simultaneously prompting neuroplastic changes that reversed those wrought by chronic stress (Lutz et al. 2004; Lazar et al. 2005). Specifically, mindfulness practice was found not just to enhance activation and socially engaged processing in the CEN (Gard et al. 2014) but also to reduce activation and self-enclosed processing in the DMN (Brewer et al. 2011). Perhaps not surprisingly, these shifts in activation were accompanied by neuroplastic growth in key socially engaged structures like the PFC and hippocampus, as well as shrinking of stress-reactive OFC and amygdala (Hölzel et al. 2011). More recently, compassion training has been shown to increase activation and socially engaged processing in the EMN while decreasing activation and emotional reactivity in the self-protective SN (Leiberg et al. 2011; Desbordes et al. 2012; Weng et al. 2013; Kalimantan et al. 2014; Singer and Klimecki 2014). And finally imagery, recitation, and abdominal breath control have been found to promote smart vagal and hypothalamic regulation of the primitive SRN and to prompt a mixed, modulated arousal of the older sympathetic and vagal systems that generates a socially engaged flow state supported by the SAN (Amihai and Kozhevnikov 2014; Koshevnikov et al. 2013) (Table 8.2).

8.4 Clinical Application: The New Paradigm and Approaches of Positive Neuroplasticity

As for clinical application, this model offers a major paradigm shift in our understanding of mental illness as well as a radically new transformational approach to treatment. Based on their groundbreaking work in the field, pioneering researchers

Kandel and McEwan both proposed revolutionary paradigms of psychopathology and treatment based not on intrinsic brain defects and biological interventions but rather on the adverse impact of stress on the brain and the salutary effects of positive neuroplastic practices like psychotherapy and meditation (Kandel 1998; McEwen 2000). While the modern reductive model of mental illness and health presents psychopathologies as a variety of discrete, genetically determined biochemical/structural brain defects, this model sees them as a broad spectrum of largely functional disorders that reflect different facets of a general pathogenic process: chronic, stress-related wear and tear on socially engaged networks and structures at all levels of the brain. Although the particular expression of stress-related mental illness likely reflects variations in genetic vulnerability and environmental exposure across populations, the lion's share of pathogenesis is functional and predominantly stress-related. Research findings on the mind/brain impact of stress and trauma have increasingly challenged this received view, showing that most if not all the major diagnostic categories of mental illness to a large degree share the common underlying pathology of chronic overexposure to stress and trauma (McEwen and Stellar 1993; Schulkin et al. 1998). This is clear in common conditions like anxiety, depression, addictions, and PTSD, but also applies to personality disorders based on developmental trauma, and possibly even to psychotic conditions like the range of bipolar and schizophrenic disorders (Kandel 1998; McEwen 2009).

In terms of treatment, a handful of clinical researchers have fleshed out a radical new approach to treatment inspired by the therapeutic optimism of the new paradigm and advancing a range of conventional and novel approaches that harness the power of positive neuroplasticity to deepen healing and accelerate transformation. The conventional approaches that have advanced the new paradigm come from clinical researchers like Norman Doidge (Doidge 2007), Daniel Siegel (Siegel 2007), Louis Cozolino (Cozolino 2010), Bessel van der Kolk (Van der Kolk 2014), and Stephen Porges (Porges 2017). Their approaches emphasize the general pathogenic role of stress and trauma, as well as the healthy developmental impact of neural networks that support the self-regulation of stress and the growth of social engagement; and they all share a therapeutic optimism based on the science of neural plasticity and the confidence that cognitive-behavioral learning can help overcome stress-related pathology and promote lasting well-being. Alongside these conventional approaches, the new paradigm has also supported the development of a range of novel contemplative approaches to healing and transformation, resonant and interacting in many ways with the contributions of Siegel, van der Kolk, and Porges. These novel contemplative approaches include mindfulness methods like acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) (Hayes et al. 1999), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Teasdale et al. 1995), and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) (Linehan et al. 1991); compassion-based methods like mindful self-compassion (MSC) (Braehler and Germer 2017) and compassion-focused therapy (CFT) (Gilbert 2009); and embodied, integral methods like internal family systems (IFS) (Schwartz 1995) and somatic experiencing (SE) (Levine 1997).

While it is impossible in the limited space of this article for me to unpack any of the new conventional and contemplative approaches I've cited, elsewhere I have

addressed at length the ways they overlap with each other and with the contemplative neuroscience model presented here (Loizzo et al. 2017). For those who may be unfamiliar with either type of novel approach, it may help to align them with more familiar approaches to psychotherapy, since I believe that their therapeutic efficacy is based on the same or similar neural mechanisms as the three types of contemplative practice outlined above. Although the diverse schools of modern psychotherapy often present themselves as rivals, the research clearly suggests that the lion's share of their efficacy depends on common underlying mechanisms rather than on differences in theory or technique (Norcross 2011). That certainly seems consistent with what neuroscience is telling us about how positive social engagement and learning impact the brain and body. In fact, both current neuropsychology and traditional contemplative science see positive neuroplastic practices like psychotherapy and meditation as falling into broad categories that work by affecting three different levels of neural structure and function. So part of the model I present aligns mindfulness, compassion, and embodied contemplative practices respectively with the neocortex (traditionally the "coarse" nervous system), the limbic system (the "subtle" nervous system), and the primal vertebrate brain (the "extremely subtle" nervous system) (Loizzo 2014). We can then extend that basic model into a framework of clinical application, in which mindfulness-based therapies mainly impact the neocortex, compassion-based therapies mainly impact the limbic system, and embodied practices mainly impact the primal vertebrate system. In addition, these contemplative therapies may also be aligned with more conventional new approaches: Doidge's approach lining up with mindfulness-based methods; Siegel and Cozolino's lining up with compassion-based methods; and van der Kolk and Porges' approaches lining up with embodied methods. Finally we can align these newer conventional approaches with more traditional schools of psychotherapy: classical dynamic psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy mainly impacting the neocortex as with mindfulness; relational, interpersonal, intersubjective, and family systems approaches mainly impacting the limbic system; and Kohutian, Jungian, and Reichian approaches mainly impacting the primal vertebrate system (Loizzo et al. 2017) (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3 Interdisciplinary, intercultural framework of contemplative psychotherapy

Disciplines	Mind-centered	Heart-centered	Body-centered
Psychology	Personal self-healing	Social transformation	Embodied integration
Buddhist tradition	Individual/Theravada	Universal/Mahayana	Process/Vajrayana
Contemplative practice	Mindfulness	Compassion	Embodiment
Neuroscience	Neocortex	Limbic system	Brainstem
Psychotherapy	Psychodynamic/ behavioral	Interpersonal/ relational	Embodied/ transformational

8.5 Conclusion: Relational Mindfulness, Psychotherapy, and the Contemplative Model

In our brief overview of meditative and yogic methods of self-regulation, we saw that contemplative practice is relational not just in certain forms but across the whole spectrum: from basic mindfulness to insight meditation; from loving-kindness to self-other compassion; and from embodied imagery and recitation to breath-work and movement. The neuropsychological model of contemplative practice I outlined here helps explain why. Mindfulness, compassion, and embodied practices all work to activate the socially engaged networks and structures that allow the human brain to adapt and thrive in our intensely social and cultural lives. And this model also helps explain why we need positive neuroplastic practices like meditation and psychotherapy in order to maximize our potential for healing, transformation, and well-being. Such practices are indispensable to enable us to override the default survival mode that biases our brains towards stress-reactive processing and against the prosocial processing on which our health and well-being depends. Hence, the new paradigm of mental health revolving around the pathogenic role of stress and the therapeutics of positive neuroplasticity gives a clear scientific rationale for a broad range of novel and promising conventional and contemplative neuroplastic approaches.

When it comes to relational mindfulness, the latest findings of neuroscience and psychology line up surprisingly with the timeless models and methods of Indic contemplative science. Specifically, both modern science and ancient tradition challenge the popular Western view of mindfulness as a self-contained cognitive practice with no real affective, relational, or embodied component. Instead, both perspectives see mindfulness in particular and meditation in general as the cognitive dimension of a spectrum of embodied mind in which heightened, introspective attention is conjoined with enhanced social emotional connectivity and a mind/body state of deep relaxation sustained by increased vagal tone. The fundamentally relational and embodied dimensions of mindfulness and other contemplative states further help explain why they have been so readily adopted by modern psychology and integrated into a range of contemplative psychotherapies.

Beyond anticipating modern neuropsychology and psychotherapy, the contemplative science and practice of the Indic tradition also brings a broad spectrum of unprecedented assets and contributions to the table. First and foremost, the depth, scope, and rigor of Indic contemplative practices offers us a whole new tool chest of powerful mind-altering methods of harnessing positive neuroplasticity at all levels of the human brain (Goleman and Davidson 2018; Loizzo 2018). In addition, the fact that these methods have been developed and used for centuries as teachable self-care and self-healing practices means that they promise to help complement the allopathic framework of modern mental healthcare, offering clients simple, effective tools to actively engage in their care. This not only promises the benefit of accelerating healing and transformation but also raises the possibility of increasing the impact and reach of mental health treatment by facilitating public education and training in the preventive mindset and skills of self-care (Bruce et al. 2018). This

self-healing component becomes increasingly key in light of the new paradigm which emphasizes the functional component of mental illness and health. Finally, the group educational format in which contemplative skills have traditionally been taught and practiced offers another much-needed complement to the individual-centered format of modern medicine, psychiatry, and psychotherapy. This social healing component of contemplative approaches is equally key in light of what we're learning about the importance of prosocial relations in creating the safe healing environment people need to optimize learning, growth, and change.

As a final concluding note, in addition to offering more cost-effective group learning approaches, there is one more key way in which contemplative science and practice may help expand the impact and reach of mental healthcare by facilitating public health education and training. That final contribution is one I have written about elsewhere (Loizzo et al. 2009a, b; Loizzo 2014). That contribution relates to the heuristic neuropsychological model of contemplative practice unpacked above. Unlike contemporary neuroscience, which is generating realms of new data on brain structure and function each day, the contemplative model I have presented here is informed by traditional maps of the nervous system, intended specifically to support public education and training in the art of contemplative self-regulation. While such maps lack the microscopic detail to be useful for research or professional education, they share several features which make them ideally suited to helping the public learn about brain function and self-regulation in an interoceptive, intersubjective way. In other words, they present the brain's differential response to stress vs. meditation in ways that are scientifically plausible, yet simple enough to resonate with the lived experience of embodied human awareness shared by professionals and nonprofessionals alike.

I am grateful to Dan Siegel for helping to revive the heuristic model of neural structure and function developed by neuroscientist Paul MacLean, since it offers a scientifically plausible and readily graspable context for teaching about the brain. More specifically, Dan has popularized the use of the "fist model" of the human brain as composed of the three main systems MacLean described in his "triune brain" model. For those unfamiliar with Siegel's "fist model," it uses the wrist to physically represent the spinal column, the base of the thumb to represent the primal vertebrate brain, the thumb curled into the palm to represent the limbic system, and the four fingers folded over the thumb to represent the neocortex. Many of us find this simple heuristic device helpful in making the most basic facts of neuroanatomy accessible to the general public.

Beyond this, I like to add another element of MacLean's original model that helps the public get some working sense of the latest findings of stress research. MacLean describes the complex relationship between the brain's three evolutionary systems using the analogy of the brain as a motor vehicle that carries three passengers/drivers, each of which, under specific kinds of stress, takes turns "driving the car." Personifying the neocortex as a primate, the limbic system as an earlier mammal, and the vertebrate brain as a reptile, he humorously portrayed the hierarchy of autonomic stress responses: under conditions of safe connection, the primate system drives the brain (smart vagal dominance); under social stress, the old mammal drives (sympathetic dominance); and under immanent threat, the reptile drives (primitive vagal dominance).

I find MacLean's analogy of the stress-response hierarchy very helping in teaching clients and the general public and routinely add two more dynamic elements to his illustration that help portray all the key elements of the neuropsychological model I propose. First, I illustrate the biphasic role of the six main resting networks by comparing the adaptive mode, in which the socially engaged networks at each level are fully engaged, to each passenger driving the system in forward gear, and the maladaptive self-enclosed mode to each passenger driving the system in reverse. Second and last, I flesh out the lived experience of the nervous system using an embodied mapping of the main evolutionary systems at points along the neuraxis, including some points where vagal afferents support interoceptive neurofeedback monitoring of central nervous system processing.

Extending Dan Siegel's embodied description of the CNS as including not just the "head brain," but the "heart brain" and "gut brain" as well, I map the embodied brain along the neuraxis as follows: the two poles of the primate system (engaged and enclosed) at the mid-brow and crown; the two poles of the mammalian system at the throat and heart; and the two poles of the reptilian "gut brain" at the navel and pelvis. As you may have noticed, this embodied mapping of the interoceptive experience of CNS function can readily be aligned with the traditional "subtle body" map of Indic contemplative neuropsychology (Loizzo 2014). And this embodied map may be further enhanced by adding an interoceptive mapping of the three main components of the mammalian autonomic nervous system—smart vagus, sympathetic vagus, and primal vagus—as three core pathways running along the neuraxis, with the smart vagus depicted as the central, modulating pathway and the other two as polar opposing pathways arrayed alongside it (Loizzo 2016a, b).

In closing, I hope I have presented a coherent overview of the relational neuropsychology of contemplative practice that helps explain not only its neural mechanisms of action but also its potential clinical applications. I based my overview on a brief synopsis of the role of resting networks in neural processing and of the biphasic impact of negative neuroplastic factors—stress and trauma—versus the positive neuroplastic practices of meditation and psychotherapy. Finally, I have tried to share how this overview can be plausibly organized into a heuristic interoceptive model of embodied neuropsychology that I have found consistently helpful as a health educational aid for teaching contemplative self-regulation to the general public in my clinical research and practice. It is my hope that this overview and neuropsychological model serve to illustrate the promise and potential of contemplative practices for mental health in particular and public health in general.

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Chapter 9
Mindfulness as Relational Ethics

Joaquín Gaete and Roberto Arístegui

> *Nirvana is not something that you get in the future. Nirvana is the capacity of removing the wrong notions, wrong perceptions, which is the practice of freedom. Nirvana can be translated as freedom: freedom from views. And in Buddhism, all views are wrong views. When you get in touch with reality, you no longer have views. You have wisdom. You have a direct encounter with reality, and that is no longer called views.*
>
> Hanh (n.d.)

Every person, and every society, lives with or by some conceptions of what constitutes a fulfilled life. For centuries in the West, there was a clear answer to this question. It was a life close to God. But we have moved from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic to, as Taylor (2007) aptly put it "one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace" (loc 114). We live in a secular age, an age where finding meaning in our lives, knowing how to live, becomes perhaps the most challenging question we have to face. We see mindfulness as a cultural answer to this question vis-à-vis "fullness". As we will see, at least three strands of answers within the same label – mindfulness – can be outlined. One of them is the one we favour, which we are calling mindfulness as relational ethics.

This is a cultural answer within a materialist era. The short story is: we are made from the same substance that everything else in the universe is made of (some combination of, say, elementary particles), and we are subject to the same laws of physics.

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Taylor (2007) offers a thicker description of this materialist era that he calls a "secular age". It is an era of tremendous scientific discoveries that are hard to context: we live in times where "the big bang" or "evolution" seems to be part of our basic data from which we construct our lives. Taylor (2007) suggests that these major scientific accomplishments did not appear in a vacuum; they can be regarded as the outcome of a wider cultural process that had been cooking for quite a long time. The keys to this cultural shift are what Taylor (2007) calls "disenchantment" and "disengagement", both of them particularly relevant to appreciate how mindfulness "as relational ethics" may differ from the other two less apt strands of mindfulness that we unpack later on this chapter.

It is an era of progressive *disenchantment*, as we have moved from an "enchanted" stance where we accounted for our world invoking the meaning things have for us, to a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, and spiritual élan is what we call (individual) minds; the physical world, outside the mind, is meaningless, spiritless – it must proceed by causal laws. Instead of being "porous" selves, vulnerable beings who needed God to avoid falling in Satan's (or whatever name for evil spirits we may have had) claws, we moderns have become "buffered" or somewhat invulnerable, on top of things, no spirit can "get at us", so to speak. Relatedly, we have moved towards *disengagement* in the sense of depriving the world from meanings (or at least bracket the meaning it has for us in our lives). The universe is impersonal; it goes as it goes and cannot care less about what is important (or not) to us. Nothing is "sacred", and thus everything becomes mere instruments that we can manipulate to make the world fit our needs (i.e., instrumental reason). We have become "homo economicus": a culture preoccupied with production, welfare. Better is what gives pleasure to the biggest number, hence good becomes a calculus of utility. And for that we need discipline: we send our children to school so that the can get "civilized" – so they become both masters/controllers both of the world around them and of themselves (their "passions", their "impulses").

9.1 Our Crisis of "Meaning"

A problem with this materialist vision is that it does not give us a satisfying answer to the ethical question – what constitutes a fulfilled life. It appears to as a mere moralism: self-discipline for better production and mutual benefit. This materialist view seem "too thin, too dry, concerned so exclusively with behaviour, discipline, control, that [has] left no space for some great élan or purpose which would transform our lives and take us out of the narrow focus on control. The obsession with getting myself to act right seems to leave no place for some overwhelmingly important goal or fulfillment" (Taylor 2007, loc 9052).

So, something important seems to be missing here, and we see mindfulness as "one answer" our current culture is making available to us. But we hold that not any version of mindfulness will do. Actually we see a growing dominant version that we call pop-mindfulness that is particular problematic for it is (a) individualist (or

centred in seemingly self-sufficient individuals); (b) instrumental (or techné-centred); (c) medicalized (or health-centred); and (d) disengaged and meaningless (or nihilist/deconstructivist and hyperfocussed in meditative practices aimed at "attending" rather than "understanding").

9.2 Pop-Mindfulness?

In plain English, the word "mindfulness" usually refers to the state or quality of being fully or deeply aware of something, as when politicians declare being mindful of peoples' needs. It means something like good judgement, understanding or *really getting* those "needs". Mindfulness in this plain English version may not be too far from what Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh calls "the practice of looking deeply". For him, it is the practice by which a person can "remove wrong perceptions [and] have no fear". Rich or *thick* descriptions, an anthropologist would say. Thickness he further unpacks invoking the Buddhist notion of "Nirvana", which we quoted above: "not something you get in the future"; "removing the wrong notions"; "practice of freedom"; "freedom from views"; "wisdom"; and "direct encounter with reality". From our Western background, Nhat Hanh's poetic descriptions evoked in us (JG/RA) the perhaps more familiar notion of "truth". Truth as something like *our best account on the world*; one which will set us free, in touch with reality. One you can *trust.*

Nhat Hanh's "practice of looking deeply" amounts, in our view, to a thick description of "mindfulness"; a description which we try to further interpret in this chapter using yet another description – "mindfulness as relational ethics[1]". Probably same as most chapters within this book, we redundantly added the word "relational" little more than as a rhetorical emphasis; perhaps as a form of micro-politics; a mindful protest. For how would "ethics" *not* be "relational"? How can the art and science of living well within an *ethos* not be relational? Ethics incorporate standards of correctness – of living well – and plainly such standards cannot not be relational. But we have noticed that current dominant uses of "mindfulness" within psychology (and the cognitive sciences) tend to be so individual-centred that it seems this relational/ethical background gets forgotten and thus "mindfulness" appears to become "thin" rather than thick. We see a loss of meaning, of potential; so our rhetorical/mindful use of "relational" is really an attempt to overcome such forgetfulness (according to a translator of the Buddha, the original Pali term *sati* derives from the verb *sarati,* which means "to remember").

[1] We (JG/RA) claim no expertise in Buddhist writings here. We are two (Western) psychologists, who see in "mindfulness as relational ethics" a great potential for applied psychology. This chapter reflects thus our own way of understanding "mindfulness", and it is neither intended to be a more "correct" translation of the Pali term *sati* within the Buddhist tradition nor an exegesis of Nhat Hahn's teachings or work.

For anybody wanting to learn the meaning of "mindfulness" as it has been recently used within psychology, a quick online search for the word "mindfulness" may help us better explain what we mean by such relational forgetfulness. For short, we will refer to this mindless use as *pop-mindfulness* (PM) in this chapter: version portraying mindfulness as an *instrumental technique* designed for (self-subsisting) *individuals*, so that they may achieve (personal) *psychological health*. At its worst, this instrumental, individualistic, and medicalized version of mindfulness may, quite paradoxically, invite us to *avoid* good judgement, for it may restrain us from even trying to understand our situations (or "needs").

Indeed, if this person looked for definitions of "mindfulness" in three of the most popular online dictionaries available to the public, she may obtain as a result something along the lines that we found:

– According to the dictionary Merriam Webster (n.d.)[2] "the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis".
– According to the dictionary Cambridge (n.d.)[3] "the practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, thought to create a feeling of calm. Mindfulness can be used to alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression".
– According to the Dictionary (n.d.)[4] "Psychology. (1) A technique in which one focuses one's full attention only on the present, experiencing thoughts, feelings, and sensations but not judging them: The practice of mindfulness can reduce stress and physical pain. (2) the mental state maintained by the use of this technique.

Of course, we understand here PM associated risks more as a potential (undesirable) effect in the general public than in the actual (perhaps desirable) intentions of psychologists or neuroscientists writing or talking about mindfulness, and whose propositions may or may not be accurately "translated" to online dictionaries or other available sources for general public. The main risk that we see in PM media can thus be put as this: potentially (mis?) understanding mindfulness as an invitation to mindlessness. As another very popular online source summarizes: "Mindfulness is the *psychological process* of purposely bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment *without judgment*, which one develops through the practice of meditation and through other training (…) a number of therapeutic applications based on mindfulness [have been developed] for helping people experiencing a variety of psychological conditions" (Wikipedia n.d.)[5]. In other words, PM may be used to impede rather than foster our best moral judgements.[6]

[2] Cfr. Bibliography Merriam Webster (n.d.).

[3] Cfr. Bibliography dictionary Cambridge (n.d.).

[4] Cfr. Bibliography Dictionary (n.d.).

[5] Cfr. Bibliography Wikipedia (n.d.).

[6] From the engaged perspective we are taking here, a moral judgement is not a disengaged "state-

9.3 Phronesis: Mindfulness as (Relational) Ethics

We (JG/RA) resonate with Thich Nhat Hanh's thick "looking deeply" description with our more familiar notion of "truth". As Gadamer (2004) put it in an influential study on the matter, when it comes to removing wrong notions and perceptions to better understand "what happens to us" (p. 320), or the Greek term *phronesis* (or "moral knowledge") may be offer "a kind of model". We would like to join Gadamer's (2004) attempt at rescuing a tradition of ethical inquiry, initiated long ago in the West, but at times overshadowed, almost forgotten, probably due to the disenchanting impact the natural sciences had in understanding the human world.[7] Phronesis is our primary mode of being in such human worlds; something we *do* at all times, sometimes better than others.

Rather than individualistic, moral knowledge (phronesis) is essentially relational: it is a capacity to be sensitive to *our* worlds – things that *matter to us*. Knowing our way within our surroundings, being able to evaluate judiciously what is good or better for us and others. It is a form of lived ethical knowledge, which can only be acquired over time, through practice within a community (*Ethos*), requiring going outside oneself in order to learn commonly shared points of views.[8] Of course, no scientific formula can be developed to interpret what happens to us, so that we can better figure out our way about in the "worlds" we inhabit. Moral knowledge is not objective, for it is relative to "what matters" (to a community or, in a plural society like ours, to several). Phronesis is not objectifiable in a manual or formula, for it is always relative to a particular situation. And yet, it is not subjective: for individuals cannot create standards of correctness alone. So, moral knowledge always transcends the individual. Gadamer (2004) linked phronesis to humanist philosopher Giambattista Vico's use of *sensus communis* as "a communal sense for what is true and right for a community" (p. 19).[9]

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ment"; acting involves "always already" a moral judgement. Being compassionate (or not) involves thus a moral judgement.

[7] A process sociologist Max Weber popularized as *disenchantment (Entzauberung)*. Perhaps this is partly why people (cognitive scientists included) started to look to the East in trying to be more "mindful" and make their knowledge more relevant for actual real life. During the last couple of centuries, moral knowledge has been despised by Western elites significantly influencing our disenchanted, "secular age" (see Taylor 2007).

[8] Gadamer (2004) elaborates on this idea using the German term "Bildung".

[9] To compare it with the other traditional Greek terms for other forms of knowledge, phronesis is not the type of knowledge we find in scientific theories (*episteme*), nor in craft-making manuals (*techné*). More recently, many Western philosophers and social scientists have adopted similar views linking phronesis to the more contemporary notion of *background*, probably influenced by M. Heidegger and/or L. Wittgenstein (e.g. Dreyfus 1991, 1992; Garfinkel 1967; Schatzki 2012; Taylor 1997).

9.4 From Contemplation to Movement, to (Positive) Freedom

One possible misconception of mindfulness in MP is, for us, to see the invitation to "looking deeply" as individualistic endeavour. Not just because mindfulness can be reduced to an egotistic search for individual enlightenment, betterment, and health; but because the very (relational) conditions of possibility of such searches are often overseen or "forgotten". Another possible misconception is to interpret the call for mindfulness as an invitation to avoid rather than commit more fully with our practical moral judgements. A version of this attitude is to interpret Nat Hahn's invitation to become free from wrong perceptions as if he were talking a sort of "negative freedom". From this version, freedom is understood as the absence of restrictions. Since moral ideas/ideologies may restrict a person's actions, (any) ideas and ideologies involve "wrong perceptions" and must be avoided; the subject is to become indifferent. For "caring" is dangerous; it is a (negative) form of attachment. An illusion that must be avoided; for they are a source of (individual) suffering. Meditative practices may instrumentally help people be more aware of such illusions, be more able to remove such "wrong perceptions", accomplishing thereby the "freedom from views" that Nath Hahn is (allegedly) talking about.

Freedom may be interpreted more positively, as we prefer to do. From this stance, to be free means becoming *more open* to be influenced by our moral sources; more sensitive to the kinds of powers revealed by our systematic practice of looking deeply. The orientation to a background of practices, in a context in which our life is presented and developed, is constituted by referential frames that include the orientation to the fullness or human flourishing (in search of good life). They mark a vision of meaning, and power to be that implies considering the structure of being-in-the-world with others.

Within the framework of distinctions of Heidegger (2016) available at hand (understand the person as "someone", a "who" as a free project open to possibilities) and present before the eyes (to be understood as "something", a "what" defined as a given essence), Ricoeur (1996) has set out an explanation of the identity problem. Giving rise to the characterization of the narrative identity (articulation of personal history) as the dialectic of ipseity (be open to being your own project while being open to others) and the sameness (the character or way of being given). He has explained that ipseity and sameness correspond to Heidegger's distinctions, available to the hand and present before the eyes. We find it necessary to explain the dimension of ipseity in the process of understanding mindfulness practice as relational ethics.

We go into the consideration of identity, in the practice of questioning mindfulness. That is, when it is circumscribed to the individual as an individual (delimited), separate being, in the modern age. Assuming the position of being in the world with others, we understand that the person emerges in a context of culturally situated practices (Wittgenstein 1953). In this sense, we propose to introduce the precisions of identity (according to Ricoeur), insofar as they allow to delimit the phenomenon

that we have described as pop mindfulness. Trying to reconfigure a path of decentralization of that position and open the way to the vicissitudes of its opening in a dimension of ethical and relational practice. In tradition, identity has been understood as being oneself with a given character (sameness). Misunderstandings arise in case there is no difference of conceiving identity in another way, which is the dimension of the project of being open with others (ipseity).

We assume that there are different ways of behaving with yourself over time to access the continuity of the sense of self. By remaining identical with ourselves and persevering through time, we are considering identity as character (sameness). By recognizing the dimension of permanent change in front of which we ask ourselves who we are and how we maintain ourselves before others while being ourselves, the dimension of a project open to being oneself with others arises (ipseity). The articulation of these two ways or ways of being in time, takes shape through the dialectic of identity as an articulation of personal history (narrative identity). Thus, in the project dimension of being open (ipseity), accessing oneself constitutes a dimension which implies that when opening oneself to another, one can return to oneself. And that one can return to oneself and recognize oneself from being a relational self to a relational being. In other words, it includes in this return to itself the relationship with another as constitutive of itself. This is central to ethical openness.

We believe that in the ability to carry out a reflection aimed at differentiating these two ways of conceiving the continuity of the sense of self in personal history (identity), lies the possibility of establishing a type of distinction regarding the narrow gaze of mindfulness alluded to at the beginning. We refer to the characterization of narcissism, in which each one is seen in relation to his character (sameness). Persevering in your ability to be yourself as one with your character (identical to yourself). To differentiate the deep gaze, it is necessary to consider the relationship from the open project to be yourself with others, not as a reflective self. Since the self is circumscribed to the gaze of the mind-body separation (either Cartesian or the "I think" that accompanies representation in the philosophical tradition (Kant)). Rather, being an open self (in ipseity) to the relationship with others (otherness) as constitutive of himself (his project of being open). This involves the individual's states of mind and his emotionality (his self with self-awareness, not only his reflective or thinking self). In this way a dimension appears personal where compassionate openness is considered as an ethical movement towards others, although not in the dimension of making oneself prevail, nor the other before itself, but rather a "we". We mean open "to the spirit".

This is where it comes into play to reflect not only on what happens when restricting mindfulness to a scientific (operational) definition, which elides the ethical dimension (which we have pointed out in the previous sections). Rather, we would like to advance in how to propose a way of assimilation of the deep gaze, the relational ethical dimension in mindfulness. What confronts us with the dimension not only of being oneself as a character (sameness), but of the project as an opening of being with others against the background of shared practices (ipseity). For this we think that it is necessary to reflect on how to access the background (Taylor 1994). What has just been exposed implies an approach of the self beyond the mind-body

division, in the way of contact in the encounter with others. At the same time, it implies affirming that the project of being with others (identity as ipseity) does matter. Unlike a conception where the way of being is circumscribed to character (identity only as sameness), which is confronted with the Buddhist interpretation of not-self (not self), without the recognition of the project of being open with others (the ipseity[10]). In other words, the relational dimension of the project of being with others (identity), where we find ourselves with the ethical position. In other terms, without reduction to a materialistic (naturalistic) vision of self-knowledge, as a given character with which the person identifies her way of being herself (sameness as being before the eyes, referential), because, in that frame, the reduction of the articulation of the personal history (identity) to a deconstructable mind-body complex operates.

9.5 Personal Resonance

We have inherited a form of subjective, Romantic expressivism, according to which human life is about becoming who one really is ("authenticity"). A world where self-realization or self-fulfilment is paramount; a hyper-good. But with a hint of a more contemporary naturalism, this Romantic spirit has become what some have called the triumph of the therapeutic (Rieff 1968; MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1989): our faith in science and technique – episteme and techné – portraits self-fulfilment as an outcome that we promote using evidence-based forms of therapy. A problem with this spirit, as we have been suggesting here, is the risk of inviting "looking shallow" rather than deeply. A view posing that nothing "good" seems to be outside the subject/individual; a view from which even politics may become an activity (discipline?) aimed at fulfilling "individual's values". Our affiliations with others, our communities without which we would not even exist as the types of moral beings we are, become mere instruments used by individuals to realize their (individual) capacities. And ironically, people end up losing the kind of autonomy needed to achieve authentic freedom – the helping professions become the new Vatican. Should parents follow their instincts or obey developmental psychologists (evidence-based) "recommendations" for good parenting?[1]

Fortunately, a deeper understanding of self-realization and self-understanding makes it evident that autonomy involves trusting one's own intuitions about what's good/better; that one's "own" intuitions are learned with others (that others and otherness are constitutive of our very beings); and that there are important things for us which clearly transcend individual selves. For it is clear, as Taylor (1989) aptly put it, that: "nothing would count as fulfilment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfilment" (p. 507).

[10] This dimension has been at the center of the distinctions in Arciero's (2005) position regarding identity and the relevance of otherness.

Plainly, we would not even be alive without the help of others. Many developmental psychologists have elaborated on our commonsensical intuition that we would not have a sense of a self or "I" without (good enough) caregivers. And we would not be able to understand ourselves or even develop a "mind" without having access to (e.g. by being described by others using such) self-languages, languages giving shape to our feelings, emotions, intentions, motives, relationships or identities. We would not even be able to refer to ourselves without a repertoire of (linguistic) devices to perform self-references (e.g. Gaete et al. 2017). Devices that we clearly did not invent ourselves; we inherit and learn self-making languages throughout our lives in interaction with others; others who also live in a human world, where some things are distinguished and inherited as more important than others. As Wittgenstein suggested, if a lion could talk, we would not understand a word (for we do not know what is important in a lionly world). In this sense, others particularly *significant* others making up our humanly worlds (Mead 1934) are inseparable of ourselves [2].

The slip of self-understanding towards instrumental subjectivism is tempting, as MP makes evident. But a deeper understanding will not be achieved by completely disposing of the subject. Objective/instrumental/detached science (episteme and techné) cannot tell us what is important *to us*. We need our bodies to resonate with, to respond meaningfully, to *feel* a kind of call. But it is not an emotivist (MacIntyre 1984), shallow, aboutlessness feeling. It is a response to something important to us, something that may transcend us. So, a permanent challenge for a deeper looking lies, it seems, in mindfully realizing/performing/expressing our ethics – what's important to us – from within this relational horizon; this middle ground of a relational (neither purely subjective nor objective) space. To use Taylor's (1989) subtler language, we may once again re-describe this looking deeply as virtuously, aptly attending to our *personal resonance* with such "moral sources"*:* an ongoing search for and virtuous enactment of sources "*outside* the subject" but accessible "through languages which resonate *within* him or her, the grasping of an order which is inseparably indexed to a personal vision" (p. 510). Looking deeply, mindfulness as relational ethics becomes thus a way to get access to these (inherently relational) realities which lift our very beings. In the Christian tradition: logos becomes flesh.

9.6 In Conclusion

When conceiving mindfulness as a state present before the eyes, the accent is placed on the representation or reflection associated with attention. You are in the position that corresponds to reality. If, on the other hand, it is not represented, but rather it is acted against a background with others, availability at hand and interpretation in the context of relationship with others prevail, or more profoundly, the understanding that arises when approaching the dimension of the gaze deep.

This means, the way in which one proceeds ethically in accordance with the specific situation, which requires the evaluation or application of self-knowledge

and not only as self-knowledge, but integrating the dimension of self-knowledge into oneself, self-care. Although we have taken an important step, when considering self-care before self-knowledge, what reflexively motivated us is the understanding of mindfulness as a relational ethic. The passage to the dimension of sense is more than the individual position.

Access to the deep path proposes access to identity as ipseity, in contact with the background of availability in the community of practice situated with others. Although it is important to suspend judgements as socially structured prejudices to create a decentralization of the position of the self in the conversation, precisely what appears necessary when meditating is not to suspend the practical approach to ethics as a type of pre-theoretical understanding. By remaining on the surface of the operational definition that confines an individually constrained interpretation, what appears to us as a different Gestalt (Dreyfus and Taylor 2016) – against the individualistic background – is a reconfiguration of the position of the self with respect to the coping embedded in the world to account for the daily way of being with others.[11] Which brings into play the deep look with potential to access the background from the shared form of daily life. In the space of mindfulness, the alternative appears of constituting the meaning of communication based on direct relational references.[12]

1. We, indeed, see this as an illusion of alternatives. Science may clearly be put at the service of personal preferences, helping parents become "freer". But we wonder about the extent to which actual parents in the current modern West experience their predicament *as* binary, and science (or the Estate) as oppressive (as biologist H. Maturana (1997) once suggested: objectivity is an argument for domination).
2. Habermas influential theory of speech/language clearly follows Mead in suggesting that selves are constituted through human, language-mediated interaction. However, the kind of moral order disclosed by languages that resonate with the subject may fall "in between" Habermas' influential spheres of modern rationality (Taylor 1989).

[11] To enter into a dialogue of this approach within a second-order morality cfr. Gergen (2009). Gergen's proposal is to distinguish a second-order moral, not a meta-moral, but a second-order moral in which to assume the need to generate an agreement or coordination to do the good together. A second-order morale gives access to first-order morale. Without a fundamentalism, universalism or ethnocentrism. It is not the relativistic position. It is a path of pluralism, rooted in coordination, sensitivity and joint action.

[12] Cf. Flores et al. (2000).

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Chapter 10
Mindfulness for the Development of Relational Therapeutic Skills for Health Professionals

Marcelo Demarzo and Bruno Cardoso

10.1 Introduction

One of the most negative criticisms that health professionals may receive is the complaint that they have ceased to be humanists to become mere technicians, misleading the original art of medicine into something else. Independently in which degree this is true or not, developing the humanistic attitudes of health professionals is a core element in any under- or post-graduate curriculum related to health providers worldwide (Frenk et al. 2010).

Although there is not any specific training system that may ensure the achievement of such a complex attitude, interpersonal and relational skills are necessarily fundamental for this. The aim of this chapter is to present how the training of mindfulness-based skills may be an effective tool to develop such relational therapeutic attitude in health professionals.

10.2 Burnout Prevention

The prevention of the "burnout syndrome" is widely recognized as a necessary condition for the quality of healthcare in several perspectives, including clinical communication and the relational and interpersonal aspects of it (Panagioti et al. 2018). Mindfulness training is a well-known tool for burnout prevention (West et al. 2014; Irving et al. 2009; Montero-Marin et al. 2018) and may indirectly enhance the relational skills through this.

The "burnout syndrome" is a response to the chronic work-related stress that appears mainly in professionals working in direct contact with patients or clients

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such as health providers and teachers, especially when there is a high level of involvement between them (Maslach et al. 2001).

The prevalence of burnout in medicine and other health professions varies between 20 and 35% depending on the studies (Panagioti et al. 2018). Many of the symptoms of burnout are incompatible with minimal relational and communication quality, for instance, creating hostile interactions with patients. Specifically, the symptoms of depersonalization are the most pernicious because they are associated with disinterest toward patients or even cynicism, generating in the most extreme cases intentional harm to patients as a sign of disaffection with the healthcare system and the profession (Panagioti et al. 2018; Ruiz Moral 2015).

The period in which the doctor would be especially vulnerable would be the first years of professional career, and the paradox of burnout is that it usually happens in workers who, previously, had been professionals with great doses of enthusiasm. Normally, they are people who have been characterized by their great dedication and personal involvement, which leads them to invest a lot of energy in their work (Panagioti et al. 2018). The explanation is the unrealistic expectation shifts enthusiasm into frustration and hopelessness, which is common among the individuals most affected by this syndrome (Panagioti et al. 2018; Ruiz Moral 2015).

Mindfulness training has been shown to be one effective tool to prevent the development of burnout syndrome, indirectly preventing inadequate relational communication skills (West et al. 2014; Beckman et al. 2012; Goodman and Schorling 2012; Luken and Sammons 2016). Ideally, based on previous discussed, this training should be provided in the early years of professional graduation or even during the undergraduate period, and so it may both prevent burnout and inadequate relational approach with patients and with other colleagues as well, as healthcare is commonly provided by care teams (Weiss and Li 2020).

10.3 Clinical Communication Practice

Mindfulness training may improve mindful communication skills, and mindful communication may enhance relational skills through several aspects (Beckman et al. 2012; Benzo 2013), such as (1) being more aware of one's own mental and emotional processes, (2) listening more carefully, (3) being more flexible and able to recognize own mental biases and errors in practice, (4) acting based on ethical values, and (5) showing more empathy and compassion toward oneself and others.

There are multiple studies in healthcare professionals that confirm that mindfulness techniques serve to improve mindful communication (Ruiz Moral 2015; Beckman et al. 2012; Benzo 2013). Also, the practice of "being mindful" during clinical communication has been shown to decrease the tendency to carry negative emotions from others and to improve the professional's quality of life and indirectly the clinical prognosis of the patients as well.

A better emotion regulation is surely the most important skill which mindfulness training may help to improve regarding clinical communication and relational

capability. The ability to be simultaneously aware of both external events (clinical information, for instance) and own thoughts and emotions allows the professional to identify the negative labels or other misbeliefs we commonly use with patients (somatizer, hysterical, etc.) and our associated negative emotions (hostility, contempt) and behaviors (e.g., do not listen properly, etc.) (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein and Krasner 2013; Beckman et al. 2012).

It would also allow identifying other types of inappropriate emotions with patients (e.g., sexual attraction), to avoid related behaviors that may be problematic. Furthermore, identifying the emotions that our patients produce (countertransference) is especially useful in the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric patients: we tend to feel sad with depressed patients, euphoric with manic patients, or confused with agitated patients (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein and Krasner 2013; Beckman et al. 2012; Abba et al. 2008).

Finally, it allows us to become aware of how we emotionally face difficult situations: if sometimes we tend to blame others for our mistakes (the patient, the partners, or the system) or, on other occasions, if we tend to minimize the error and try to avoid everything related to the case that may worsen it. In these situations, mindfulness practice allows us to be aware of these reactions and to choose the behavior that benefits our patients and workplace colleagues the most, generating less suffering and more effective responses (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein and Krasner 2013; Beckman et al. 2012; Abba et al. 2008).

10.4 Therapeutic Relationship Process

Therapeutic relationship is the relationship one establishes with the patient or client that can facilitate or hinder the development of the whole therapeutic process, including clinical communication but in a broader sense than it. It is essentially a relational skill and may be considered an intervention instrument (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019). But what types of relational skills are important to build an effective therapeutic relationship and, mainly, how to train them?

In order to develop a better therapeutic relationship, the health professional is expected to be courteous, understanding, and empathetic; offer help and support; listen and observe open and objectively; be "in tune with her/his responses during the session, as well as those of the patient"; and act as a non-punitive audience, which can be understood as listening without judging and not punishing what the patient/client brings to clinical setting (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019).

Among therapeutic skills that is perhaps one of the most basic and fundamental in the clinical context is "attention," especially the "mindful attention" as we will see more deeply. The attention of the health professional during the consultation should be directed both to external events (what the patient does and speaks), as to the "psychological events" and the feelings and thoughts that one (professional) experiences to be with each that unique patient (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019).

Despite the common sense that being attentive or mindful is fundamental in the therapeutic relationship, it is not unfounded to say that the training and developing of this skill is frequently not addressed during health professional graduation. It is exactly in this context that the practice of mindfulness can be useful, as it contributes to the development of the ability to be attentive and mindful ("present") (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Demarzo and Garcia-Campayo 2015).

As it is widely known and well-documented, the practice of mindfulness has been associated to a better attention control, self-awareness, emotional and behavioral regulation, self-compassion, and, for others, socio-emotional skills, resilience, and improved physical and mental health, for both clinical and non-clinical populations (Sanada et al. 2020; Schutte et al. 2020). Furthermore, many studies have indicated that the practice of mindfulness positively influences the quality of care provided by health professionals at all levels of the healthcare system (Demarzo et al. 2015a, b, 2020).

These data contribute to the understanding why the practice of mindfulness results in gains for the therapeutic relationship and its positive consequences for healthcare. Thus, it is assumed that the greater the mindful attention and attitudes are integrated to health professional's relational skills and to the therapeutic process, the greater the health results both for the patients and for the health systems (Demarzo et al. 2015a, b, 2020).

Based on this assumption, it is important to explore more deeply how the practice of mindfulness may contribute to the development of therapeutic skills in health professionals. For this, the model of the five elements or facets of mindfulness proposed by Baer and colleagues (Baer 2009; Baer et al. 2008) is very useful. These authors have proposed that there are five interrelated central processes that may be developed by the regular practice of mindfulness, both formal and informal: Observe; Describe; Acting with awareness; Nonjudgment of inner experience; and Nonreactivity to inner experience.

In the next paragraphs, we will explore how each of them may improve relational and therapeutic skills based on the previous work of Zarbock and colleagues (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.4.1 Observe

The mindful skill of "observe" corresponds to a mind state of conscious and self-aware in which one can discriminate her/his own physical sensations, feelings, reactions, and responses to internal and external clues at time to time, whether pleasant or not, with curiosity and equanimity and without bringing the filter of one's beliefs. This mindful attitude, also called as "beginner's mind," may prevent cognitive biases and experiential avoidance (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

For this, it is essential that the health professional develops an ability to "learn to see"' what is happening during the clinical encounter, observing thoughts, feelings, emotions, and physical sensations that are emerging time by time, and how they

may influence relational aspects and therapeutic outcomes. It includes to control attention when the mind is wandering, avoiding distractions that are common and natural in those relational encounters, especially when what is emerging is unpleasant (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

In a state of mindful "observing," thoughts and feelings are observed as "events of/in the mind," without over-identification with them and without reacting to them in an autopilot mode or in a habitual pattern of reactivity. This more impartial state of self-observation is designed to introduce a "space" between perception and response, avoiding over-reaction or impulsivity. Thus, regular mindfulness practice may allow health professionals to respond to clinical situations more reflexively (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

Consequently, it favors the understanding of clinical cases and the appropriate formulation of therapeutic rationale and interventions, based on a clearer observation of what is happening in the therapeutic process, potentially enhancing the patient compliance as well. Thus, when a better and effective attentive control is present in the therapeutic relationship, it contributes to an in-depth clinical understanding of what is emerging presented in the clinical session (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.4.2 Describe

Together with "observing" the external events/clues and internal subjective experiences, the mindfulness practice allows health professionals to develop another interrelated mindful skill named "to describe." It refers "to nominate" with simple language-based description internal and external events during the clinical encounter, without establishing pre-interpretations or value-based prejudgment (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

The health professional may describe psychological or physical events as they occur during the clinical process, rather than assigning meanings and categorizations as "good" or "bad." The "mindful description" of the stimuli involves seeing them as they are, remaining open to the experience, without attributing judgments as to what is being experienced, preventing cognitive biases during the clinical encounter (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.4.3 Acting with Awareness

Acting with awareness corresponds to perceive and integrate what is happening in the psychotherapeutic process (observing and describing) together with an intentional attitude to leave "autopilot" and remain aware when making relational and clinical choices (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

This mental mode facilitates the translation of the therapeutic skills into clinical acts and decisions as being fully present in the clinical setting. As a result, it tends to favor the expansion of the therapeutic alliance and the development of clinically relevant behaviors during the consultation (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.4.4 Nonjudgment of Inner Experience

Another common human mind state that often emerges during clinical encounters is the "judgment mind" or "evaluative" mind. It is a natural mind state and particularly important during clinical evaluation, but, sometimes, it may strengthen an experiential avoidance pattern to unpleasant stimulus during the therapeutic process, which may facilitate wrong formulation about the patient or clinical situation (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

The alternative to experiential avoidance (the aversion to an unpleasant internal or external stimuli) is to mindfully handle clinical clues with no judgment of the initial experience, through the description of how it is emerging in the present moment, purposively paying mindful attention to the discomfort ("observing and describing" nonjudgmentally) (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

Thus, that clinical situation, however unpleasant, becomes part of the experience. This does not mean that there will be no judgments or evaluations by the health professional regarding what the patient brings but that these judgments will occur with more awareness and mental flexibility and less reactivity and value judgment (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.4.5 Nonreactivity to Inner Experience

We generally tend to react to what we experience in an autopilot mode which may induce impulsivity and dysfunctional behavior. With regular mindfulness practice we can cultivate the mindful attitude of nonreacting immediate and automatically to internal and external events, creating a brief space of consciousness between stimulus and response (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

This is particularly useful in the therapeutic setting where the health professional must be aware of the various unpleasant cognitive and emotional events during the therapeutic process, ideally without impulsively reacting or fighting with them. Thus, the regular practice of mindfulness may help health professionals to be open and in control of what is emerging in the present moment, easing the relational aspects of that clinical encounter (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

Thus, to integrate those five mindful attitudes during the clinical process may contribute to improve the relational skills involved in the therapeutic alliance,

helping to strengthen it as generating better clinical outcomes while contributing to the health professional's well-being (Cardoso and Demarzo 2019; Zarbock et al. 2015).

10.5 Incorporating Mindfulness Practice

Apart from participating in a standard mindfulness program (MBSR, MBCT, etc.), there are practical mindful exercises that may ease the incorporation of mindful attitudes and skills into the therapeutic process and clinical communication, bringing positive outcomes for both patients and professionals (for instance, preventing the burnout syndrome).

First of all, it is important to remember that mindfulness is, initially, an intentional ability, which must be sought and cultivated on purpose, since it is not part of our habitual way of functioning during the therapeutic process. Thus, it is useful to start our daily clinical activity by reminding ourselves of the usefulness of a mindful perspective, which allows us to stablish the right intention during clinical practice. It is helpful to repeat this process few times during the workday so that motivation does not decline.

Also, in addition to maintaining a primary focus in the clinical activity and encounter, the health professionals can keep a secondary focus of attention in themselves, such as broader lens. Usually, we only focus on clinical-technical variables or toward the patient's feelings and narratives, but at time to time, we should also be able to modify the focus toward our own feelings and thoughts, easing to bringing aware to whole therapeutic process, addressing at the same time internal and external cues.

10.5.1 Reflexive Mindful Questioning and Journaling

Epstein (1999) recommends that health professionals periodically use reflective mindful questions to improve their clinical communication and practice, such as the following: "What can I be assuming about this patient that may not be true?"; "Can my previous experience with this patient influence my reasoning process or my decision making?"; "What surprised me about this patient in this clinical encounter?"; and "What would a colleague I admire say about how I am relating with this patient?".

In the same direction, but from another perspective, it is helpful to describe to ourselves (internally "speaking to ourselves" in the third person) our feelings and impressions about the patient. It is also helpful to write it down and when it is possible discuss it with a mentor or colleague (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein 1999).

Another way to reflexive and mindfully question our clinical and relational approach is to use "Mantras" for daily practice. They serve to reinforce the idea of

the "beginner's mind," so that we can see things (us and our patients) from a different perspective.

Some of these phrases to be repeated internally would be: "It could be otherwise" (when we think that the diagnosis is already finished) or "unexpected" (when we find a piece of information that contradicts our expectations regarding patient management). The objective would not be so much to rethink the diagnostic process completely, but to become aware of the prejudices that can bias clinical reasoning and allow us to have simultaneous perspectives (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein 1999).

Moreover, a quintessential mindful reflexive exercise is to take, time to time, few moments to remind or become more aware of our core personal life values and how they can be aligned with our clinical practice and relational skills (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein 1999).

Examples of value-based self-questioning phrases related to our relational skills during clinical practice are the following: "What is really important for me in life?"; "Is my clinical practice aligned with my core personal values?"; and "Will my patients (or work colleagues) remember me by the values that are really important for me?".

All these mindful reflexive self-questioning exercises can be used to keeping a journaling practice, ideally done daily. Journaling can be a way to "objectify" in terms of language what is essentially a subjective experience, and it can helpful to better observe the evolution of our mental habits and relational skills during clinical practice over time (Ruiz Moral 2015; Epstein 1999).

What can be written? Journaling may be simply to mindfully describe the experiences observed during the therapeutic process: we can describe, for example, physical sensations (sensations of heat, cold, and contact with the chair or with the floor under the feet or legs) and also the pleasant and unpleasant sensations that one can experience during clinical practice and relationship and how one responds to these sensations, as well as try to describe the emotional state of the workday and how our mindfulness practice has influenced or not that state.

In the same way, we can describe thoughts or concerns that appeared during the clinical practice and how they were handled and influenced the therapeutic process. In essence, we must be natural and honest with ourselves when trying to describe what is really going on. The texts do not have to be long, being recommended, for example, to write one or two paragraphs, or half a page per day.

10.5.2 Mindful Pauses

In each day of clinical work, there will be several opportunities for informal mindfulness practices, which means to include the mindful state of mind in our daily routine. It becomes the incorporation of mindful relational skills in daily clinical practice more feasibly, enhancing its benefits (Demarzo et al. 2015b). Among them, mindful pauses are particularly useful.

The most known and used mindful pause is the three-step mindfulness practice, a type of structured informal practice widely disseminated in mindfulness protocols as the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Ruths et al. 2013). Basically, this practice allows health professionals to become more aware of body sensations, feelings, and the mental state in that moment, plus to take conscious of the breath for few seconds.

It can be used in several ways during clinical practice, for instance, before assisting each patient or after difficult or complex consultations.

10.6 Conclusion

Incorporating relational mindfulness skills in the therapeutic process during clinical practice is essentially a continuous, dynamic, and lifelong process, not a static state of mind nor another task or goal. Even the most experienced mindfulness practitioners cannot claim to "be conscious" at all times. It is quite more an everyday exercise and an ongoing attitudinal intention to get to be more aware and be more curious during clinical practice, cultivating the "beginner's mind" time to time while listening and relating with oneself, patients, and work colleagues.

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Chapter 11
Mindfulness as an Embodied Relational Resource in Psychotherapy

Edgardo Morales-Arandes

11.1 The Mindfulness Revolution

In February of 2014, the mindfulness movement made its official appearance in popular mass culture, when the picture of a youthful blonde woman appeared on the cover of Time magazine above the words: "The Mindful Revolution." This breakthrough had been almost 25 years in the making. The mindfulness movement had its origins when Kabat-Zinns' (Kabat-Zinn 1990) *Catastrophe Living* appeared in bookstands. Its publication signaled the transition of mindfulness from the confines of a subculture of committed practitioners and silent retreats, to psychotherapeutic offices, organizational boardroom, and virtually all aspects of modern social life:

> Currently, mindfulness has been attached to all sorts of social activities such as mindful: pregnancy, birthing, parenting, relationships, teaching, management skills, coaching, overcoming shyness, traveling, social activism, knitting, crafting, politics, sex, money management, leadership, investing, weight loss, consulting, tennis, writing, efficiency at work, hiking, selling, horsemanship, cooking, gardening, playing musical instruments, and overcoming addiction, stress, and grief. (McMahan 2017. p.35)

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs are promoted as an alternative in the management of stress and stress-related illness improve life satisfaction, increase relaxation and self-compassion, and manage stress and stress-related symptoms, such as burnout (Lomas et al. 2018). In the context of psychotherapy, mindfulness as a technique or a body of understanding is used to support therapist wellbeing, inform psychotherapeutic practice, or serve as a method taught to clients to help them deal with their difficulties and sources of distress (Pollak et al. 2014).

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Its popularity has turned it into a cultural phenomenon and a billion-dollar business with over nine million practitioners. Its profitability was such that it was even included in INC magazines' 2017s list of the Eight Best Industries for Starting a Business (Boyce 2011; Scott 2017).

The popularity of mindfulness has been accompanied by criticisms regarding its use by corporations, opposition to the way it has become a marketable commodity, as well as questions as to the viability of detaching an ancient practice from the cultural traditions and ethical milieu from which it emerged. This had led some of its critics to describe the current "selling" of mindfulness, as McMindfulness, which according to them "has reduced mindfulness to a commodified and instrumental self-help technique that unwittingly reinforces neoliberal imperatives" (Purser 2019a, b, para. 4). Purser (2019a, b) argues that the contemporary mindfulness discourse has privatized "stress as a personal problem and using science to affirm this agenda" has turned individuals on themselves. Concluding that, this not only blames "the victims of cultural dysfunction, it drives a spiral of narcissistic self-absorption" (Purser 2019a, b, p. 252).

Researchers have also warned that "public enthusiasm has outpaced scientific evidence" (Heuman 2014). They have questioned such factors as sample size, experimenter allegiance, and overrepresentation of positive results and criticized the lack of research of potential negative effects (Purser et al. 2016; Britton 2019). What all this may mean is that beyond the hype and controversy, it's important not to lose sight of the spirit of free inquiry in which the teachings of mindfulness were given and that ultimately whatever claim is made needs to be put to the test of lived experience (Rosenberg 2013). As the Buddha was reported to say in the Kalama Sutta:

> Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them. (Thera 1994, para. 17)

11.2 Personal Background

I was influenced and attracted by that tradition of free inquiry when I began my own involvement with mindfulness more than 40 years ago when I undertook its intensive practice. During several years, I attended Buddhist centers and monasteries where I participated in silent mindfulness retreats for weeks and months at a time. In them I sat, walked, ate, and spent all the waking hours of the day, attempting to apply mindful awareness to whatever I experienced. In these centers, I engaged with teachers who provided instructions and guidance and introduced me to Buddhist traditions (albeit mostly in their Westernized secularized form). Through them and my own readings, I learned particular ways of understanding, interpreting, and

languaging my experience, as well as theoretical models that described the stages of development of insight, which at times, served as roadmaps to evaluate my "progress" (Morales 1986).

Intensive mindfulness practice refined my levels of awareness and concentration. I noticed details in my experience that were not available outside of retreat, and this included periods of constant focused attention, noticing gaps of silence within the activity of thinking, the capacity to maintain stillness of movement for extended periods of time, and the noticing of the impermanent nature of ongoing experience. This was also accompanied by the coming and going of intense emotional states which, at times, I could face with balance and equanimity (Morales 1986).

Like everything else in life, retreats and their silence came to an end. What occurred after leaving the protective walls of seclusion came to be as important as what occurred during retreat. "Coming out" was marked by an experience of rawness and high sensitivity to my own emotions and the emotions of others, which at times felt overwhelming and required time for readjustment. I also faced demands and complexities of relationship and work and the recognition that "outside retreat life" did not facilitate the microscopic moment by moment awareness that had been fostered and advocated for in retreat settings. Through conversations with fellow practitioners, I discovered that these challenges were not mine alone and that transitioning from intensive mindfulness practice also generated challenges and difficulties that could affect psychological wellbeing and throw into question the value of the practice itself. Realizing, that I did not desire to be a monastic, led me to examine the value of mindfulness practice outside of retreat. This led to realize that the form of life that I had nurtured, as well as the way that I had understood and engaged the practice of mindfulness needed to be questioned and reimagined so that it could be of service to a life in relationship.

That question and need became the foundation of my doctoral dissertation and a central topic of inquiry in my life and in my professional practice as a therapist. It is also a theme that has relevance for this chapter. The secularized view of mindfulness that lies at the heart of much of its current use in psychotherapy emerged from the monastic traditions in which I participated and which, according to some Buddhist scholars, were in themselves influenced by Western colonialism and modernism (McMahan 2012).

11.3 The Basics of Mindfulness

As a historical construction, the term mindfulness is the modern translation of sati that signifies "calling to mind" or "bearing something in mind" (Succito 2017). It's a quality of mind that is founded on what Thera (2001) refers to as "bare attention," that is, on the capacity to have a "clear and simpleminded awareness of what happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception" (p. 30). It involves the act of noticing what's emerging in the field of consciousness "that neither linguistically nor conceptually elaborates on the bare facts of observed experience" (Kang

and Whittingham 2010, p. 165). In the mindfulness literature, to not "conceptually elaborate" refers to relating to whatever is being noticed, with non-reactiveness, non-condemnation, acceptance, or non-interference (Goldstein 2016). It also includes the capacity to stand back from the process of thinking and relate to whatever thought emerges "as just a thought," that is, as a "creation of mind," that has no substance or solidity by itself (Armstrong 2017).

Mindfulness has also been associated with the quality of "not knowing," which Gak (1999) has described as "the mind before thinking" or "don't know mind." It has also been seen as a quality of mind that is curious and open to possibilities and harbors the capacity to become aware and relate to whatever one sees, feels, or senses without attachment to preconceived or fixed ideas or the need to jump to conclusions or resort to associative or discursive thinking (Halifax 2018).

Another important quality found in current definitions of mindfulness in that of "Right Mindfulness" which Thera (2001) subdivides into the factors of Bare Attention and Clear Comprehension. According to Goldstein (2016), Clear Comprehension comprises the "investigation and wisdom aspects associated with mindfulness. It highlights the understanding that mindfulness is more than simply being present. With clear comprehension, we know the purpose and appropriateness of what we're doing" (p. 11). The notion of Clear Comprehension, which, according to Thera (2001), is beneficial in the "greater part of our life, the most active one," includes the quality of discernment. A quality that allows us to recognize what actions and ways of relating to ourselves and others are harmful or are conducive to personal and collective wellbeing.

11.4 Mindfulness in Practice

Within the context of Buddhist discourse, mindfulness is a fundamental component of the Noble Eightfold Path and is part of a project that according to Siegel et al. (2008) is "designed to uproot entrenched habits of mind that cause unhappiness, such as the afflictive emotions of anger, envy, or greed, or behaviors that harm ourselves and others" (p. 18). Through its practice it is said that we can come to a direct nonconceptual realization of what in Buddhism is referred to as the "three marks of existence," that is, "that all phenomena, including thoughts, emotions, and experiences, are marked by three characteristics, …: impermanence (anicca), suffering or dissatisfaction (dukkha) and not self-annata)" (Tricycle 2019). It is argued that through mindful noticing we may come to see how life flows through a seamless field of experiences, which are interconnected and constantly changing and that there is no fixed, unchanging self. That is, we may come to realize that whatever we may call the self, along with our meanings, beliefs or stories about it are fluid, interdependent, and changing constructions. Finally, we may also become aware that grasping or attempting to hold on to, or push away what we're experiencing increases our suffering and our distress. The promise of mindfulness practice is that through its use we can come to have a different and more balanced relationship to what

emerges in our life, increasing our ability to be with difficulties and reducing needless suffering (Rosenberg 2013).

According to Pollak et al. (2014), developing mindfulness typically involves three types of qualities: the capacity to focus or stabilize attention, the ability to remain aware of the changing aspects of experience, and the capacity to relate to whatever one's experiencing in an accepting and caring manner. Different practices may emphasize one of these qualities over the other. For example, those that seek to stabilize attention usually require choosing a "primary" object such as the breath, a sensation, a movement, a sound, or an image on which to focus awareness. If attention wanders, the idea is to gently return attention to the chosen point of focus. That continuous movement of focusing, losing focus, and regaining focus is the hallmark of practicing with a primary object (Gehart 2012). This way of employing attention is usually an initial entry into the practice of mindfulness because, according to its proponents, it helps the mind to be sufficiently stabilized so that it can more easily notice when attention has wondered or when it has become lost in a stream of thought (Pollak et al. 2014). Other practices call for the employment of a form of awareness that has been referred to as "open monitoring," "choiceless awareness," or "just sitting." The intention in this form of practice is not to seek a particular experience or way of being but rather to remain receptively aware, allowing and accepting whatever predominates in consciousness at any given moment, without any preference for any particular object of attention (Kelly 2019; Rosenberg 2013). Chogyam and Dechen (2002) describe it as "a method of not-doing. One does not involve oneself in doing anything. One does not instigate anything or impose anything. One does not add anything or elaborate anything. One simply remains. One simply maintains presence in motiveless observation" (Kindle Locations 950–952).

According to its proponents, mindful noticing will lead a person to discover the degree to which distracted awareness permeates his or her life and how often one may live disconnected from the present moment, time-traveling through a virtual reality of imagined futures and accounts about our past, accompanied by judgments and opinions (Gehart 2012). In attempting to apply mindfulness, a person may experience a broad range of wanted and unwanted emotions, sensations, and thoughts, leading him or her to realize that to be mindful is not always relaxing. That is, as a person becomes more open to the complexity of life, he or she may come to experience emotions, thoughts, and sensations more intensively and vividly. Although at times, this can be conducive to a greater sense of wholeness and peace, there maybe be other times where experiences of tension, as well as feelings of loss, worry, and anxiety, among other difficult emotions, may predominate (Siegel et al. 2008; SchlosserI et al. 2019).

Learning to practice mindfulness is less the application of a technique and more of an art. It involves learning to be with and become accustomed to a type of sensitivity, receptiveness, and openness to experience that may seem unfamiliar. It may also disappoint those that seek or have been promised a quick fix to the problems of distress as it may tend the bring a person into closer contact and a direct understanding of what it means to live an embodied existence as a human being.

Mindfulness practice includes what may seem to be a counterintuitive move in the way that we relate to experience. Accustomed as we are to flee from or avoid whatever is deemed as unwanted, unpleasant, or painful, mindfulness asks us to relate to what emerges with an attitude of "radical inclusion." That is, instead of avoiding or fleeing, one is asked to allow, be present, inquire, feel, and notice from the "inside," whatever is emerging regardless of whether it's experienced as distressing or not. It embodies a attitudinal stance that is focused on learning to be with experience and with ourselves not from the perspective of how we ought to be, (and as the case may be, on how we should be practicing mindfulness) but, rather, from the experiential recognition of how we actually are. It is sensitive to the manifestations of the "tyranny of the ideal" or the constant effort to fix and judge our experience from unexamined perspectives and points of view that foster the activity of self-judgment and condemnation.

While bringing a mindful presence to challenging emotions and experiences may be a thought of as a challenging task, it is consistent with the proposition that much of our distress has to do with the way we relate to experience and that it is precisely a constant activity of pushing away what is undesired and grasping or attempting to hold on to what is wanted, producing much of our psychological suffering. In addition, it can help a person learn that he or she can face something daunting without falling apart. That experience can then become a reaffirmation of one's fundamental competence "because we begin to see, looking directly at experience, that there's no emotion we can't (eventually) handle" (Nichtern 2015, p. 245).

11.5 The Practice of Relational Mindfulness

When shifting our view of mindfulness into the relational domain, we are connecting with contemplative traditions that affirm that we live in a multifaceted interdependent and interwoven world, where everything is in flux and nothing happens in isolation. A world that expresses what Thich than Nan (1991) refers to as interbeing, where "a thing cannot live in isolation;" and where "the condition of beingness… implies a vital and transformative interconnectedness, interdependence" (Halifax 1990, p. 23).

Relational mindfulness has been described as "a participatory form of meditation aimed at the cultivation of discernment (wisdom) through practices illuminating how we are inter-beings-in-moment-to-moment-engagement" (Gale 2020). It expands the focus of presence to include the self, the other, and the relationship. Soffer (2019), indicates that its practice "brings us into the web of life more fully, by illuminating the intricate nature of our relationships and nourishing a tender appreciation for the interdependence and vulnerability of all life." According to Surrey and Kramer (2013), it involves a moment-to-moment engagement with and careful and sensitive noticing of "the texture of the relationship, the intensity of connection, the sudden or subtle shifts into disconnection, the sense of collaboration or division" (p. 103). This awareness of being-in-relationship can potentiate our

capacity to participate collaboratively and dialogically in relationships, helping us to enrich our relational bonds and enhance the quality of our attention and care of the processes of relating.

A relational presence infused by mindfulness extends the notion of mindful "not knowing" into the relational domain. It acknowledges the uncertainty inherent in life and, particularly, in the processes of relating which are fluid and dynamic, making what may emerge in the immediacy of the interactive moment unknown and unpredictable. To live relationally in the space of "not knowing" can weaken the relational striving for certainty and control, which in turn can help a practitioner to pause and rest in uncertainty, with curiosity for the possibilities that might emerge as he or she relates to others. Relating from a posture of "not knowing" may cultivate a relational presence that can enter the relational moment "fresh and awake," with a genuine responsiveness that is open, engaged, and relationally attuned, without being compulsively attached to beliefs and opinions, pre-understandings of right or wrong, or images of the past or expectations of the future (Rosenberg 2013; Surrey and Kramer 2013).

11.6 Relational Mindfulness and the Generative Model in Psychotherapy

As a practitioner of psychotherapy, I've used relational mindfulness in the context of the generative model of therapeutic practice. This clinical approach is future-oriented and dialogical in nature and stands out for the emphasis it places on the ability of the therapist to respond creatively and innovatively to what emerges in therapeutic dialogue. Through dialogue and joint action, therapists and clients work together to question dominant stories, assess and co-create emergent resources, and craft and implement new possibilities, alternative futures, and new ways of living to address a clients' life challenges and problematic situations (Fried Schnitman 2020).

This approach is theoretically founded in postmodern thinking, particularly Gergen's (2009) relational constructionism, second-order cybernetic systems theory, and Bakhtin's dialogism. It also integrates resources and capabilities from other disciplines and cultural traditions such as storytelling, literature, and the plastic and performing arts and, in what is particularly relevant to this chapter, mindfulness (Morales et al. 2015).

Relational constructionism highlights the role that relational processes play in the construction of reality and the shared co-creation of meaning and sustains that we construct our moralities, ethics, ways of understanding, and action from our participation in a complex network of relationships, social processes, traditions, and communities. It privileges flow, multiplicity, and confluence as basic constituents of relational life and proposes that our relationships with others play a vital role in our capacity to perform as active agents in the co-construction of our social and personal realities. These constructions and understandings, which are central to our

being-in- the-world and our being-in relationship, are open and are subject to a continuous process of reconfiguration (Gergen 2009).

From the perspective of relational constructionism, psychotherapy is thought of as a cultural practice that is an emergent and responsive relational process that is founded on the shared construction of meaning. When viewed within the perspective of generativity, psychotherapy fosters relational interactions, dialogic processes, and co-participative and nonlinear approaches to involve multiple voices and question limitations and taken for granted assumptions so that clients can enrich their relational life and re-authorize and re-signify their lives (Fried Schnitman 2013). As a generative and relational activity, it acknowledges that in each dialogue at times, multiple contradictory voices and perspectives may exist. Its focus is on how this complexity and the rich and diverse texture of a persons' life can be used in the service of viable and meaningful transformations. In addition, it sees clients not as broken and pathologized entities but as multifaceted beings who have talents, capacities, and abilities that can enable them to new life-affirming possibilities and transformations (Fundación Interfas 2018). As a responsive practice, it acknowledges the importance of relational connections and recognizes the uniqueness of each person and each encounter, assuming that participants in therapeutic dialogue are constantly creating something new and singular from their interactions together.

Of particular importance in this approach is its view on the way that therapeutic realities are created and the role that the therapist occupies in its co-construction. A salient feature of psychotherapy is the stories that clients tell and perform. These (at least in an initial phase) are often problem saturated and may be full of frustration and distress. From the view of the generative model, stories are not taken as objective autobiographical or social data. Instead, it is assumed that client stories and performances are influenced by social imaginaries and discourses, as well as the context and relational processes that occur during psychotherapy.

A basic tenet of second-order cybernetics is its emphasis on the circular relationship between the observed and the observed. This means that "neither therapist nor client can ever take a 'step removed' position from their circle of interaction" (Keeney and Keeney 2012, p. 27). In this sense, the therapist and client are relationally connected in a circular loop of mutual interaction that includes the realization "that the observation of pathology, problems, solutions, resources, patterns of interaction, narratives, and meanings are inseparable from the actions of the therapist" (p. 28).

This view of therapist participation in co-constructed therapeutic realities is the basis for affirming that in the interconnected web of therapy, the capacity of a therapist to be relationally responsive to his or her clients is vital if one is to foster change in others. To be relationally responsive involves the capacity of the therapist to acknowledge, relationally engage, connect with, and respond creatively and sensitively to whatever emerges in therapeutic dialogue, including the ongoing client response to the therapists' own actions. Within this approach, the therapist is seen as a being "in responsive action" (Gale 2020), who is constantly sensing and improvising as "an interactive performer inside the circularities of interaction," engaged in what Keeney and Keeney (2012) have called "circular therapeutics."

Within the context of "circular therapeutics" there are no particular standardized practices that a therapist needs to undertake or a specific identity that he or she is required to assume. In this sense, what a therapist does and who he or she is in therapy can take different forms according to the demands of the interactive moment. To relate and operate, outside the realm of orthodoxy and pre-programmed and prescribed responses, requires the full enactment of the therapists' multi-being. That is, in order to meet the challenges the emerge from the flux of therapeutic interaction, a therapist needs to participate with a full array of relational and conversational resources that can range from gentle and compassionate listening, reflection, and curious question asking, to provocation, irreverence, and the use of humor, hyperbole, metaphor, dramatic enactment, and storytelling (Morales et al. 2015).

11.7 Relational Mindfulness as an Embodied Resource in Generative Practice

Relational mindfulness is a key resource in the enactment of this vision of generative therapeutic practice. It supports the need to maintain relational connections with clients, an awareness of the ongoing results of therapist-client interactions, and the use of sensitive and innovative improvisational skills to enhance connections with clients and support their efforts to meet life challenges. Relational responsiveness, a key requirement of generative practice, needs a relational presence that can bring a refined present-centered awareness, whole-body listening, and heightened sensitivity and attunement to the changing manifestations of the relational field. Mindfulness in dialogue expands a therapists' capacity to re-center, recollect, slow down, and pay caring attention to subtle shifts in the dialogic space. It allows the therapist to be more conscious of his or her embodied participation in dialogue and engage in an awareness practice that can move from self to the other and then to the "in-between" while noticing what is being created together (Morales 2020).

Relational mindfulness can bring a fresh, open, and empathic presence to the way a therapist relates to the full complexity of the patient's felt experience so that its deeper meanings can be sensed and relationally acknowledged. This includes the capacity to notice subtle movements in the relationship such as transformations in the tone, volume and speed of dialogue, and shifts in gestures and the movement of the body. It also facilitates a nonconceptual awareness of conversational flow, of its quality and rhythm, as well as the felt experience of its depth and resonance. According to Schuman (2016), relational mindfulness "heightens empathic sensitivity to how the patient is feeling at a particular moment. It helps capture the emotional gestalt of the interaction that is occurring, creating space for feelings to be felt more deeply" (p. 76). This expanded sensitivity to relational experience helps inform a therapist on how to proceed.

In the context of psychotherapy, a relational presence informed by mindfulness extends the quality of "not knowing" to the ways in which a therapist participates in

the interactive moment. This includes not just the capacity to attend and listen receptively but also the ability to respond in ways that are not restrained by attachment to images of the past, expectations of the future, or to beliefs and opinions. To "not know" in this context includes the capacity to be aware of how quickly viewpoints arise and are assumed and notice how social and cultural discourses influence the ways in which we to act and respond and the manner through which these experiences emerge and disappear in the relational field (Gale 2020). This awareness can help a therapist be less subject to preconceptions, dominant stories, and moralities while holding less tightly to the truth value of his or her own assertions, as well as assertions of the clients.

The focus on the present moment, and not on his or her pre-knowledge or affirmations, helps a therapist to listen more deeply, recognize uniqueness and felt experience, and meet each person and their circumstances with what in the Buddhist tradition has been referred to as "Beginner's Mind" (Suzuki 1973). This way of listening and relating that is not dominated by preconceptions allows for clearer seeing of what is emerging in the relational field. It also values a form of relational "ignorance" that acknowledges the ambiguity and lack of permanence, solidity, and certainty that accompanies the way that words, stories, and expressions are used and signified in the evolving process of psychotherapy. Through not knowing, a therapist can grow more comfortable with being in "confusion," a quality in relationship that generates curiosity about what particular words and phrases mean. It can also lead to greater awareness of inconsistencies and noticing of alternate descriptions and stories. In this way, the "not seen" and "not acknowledged" can become more visible. The taken for granted can now be questioned, explored, and, if need be, challenged. In this way, client use of diagnostic categories, demeaning self- descriptions, as well as problem saturated stories, performances, and interpretations are then open to collaborative exploration, questioning, and interruption.

Mindful not knowing can generate an expanded sense of the possibilities of relational action. Since there are no correct ways to proceed, a therapist is now free to improvise while maintaining his or her relational connection to clients. Improvisation is informed by the agreed purpose for the relationship (what will be later referred to as the Therapeutic Platform), his or her ongoing awareness of what emerges in the relational field, as well as the traditions and experiences that have formed him or her as a clinician and as a human being.

Relational presence brings us closer and in a more intimate connection with our relational experience. Increased sensitivity and receptiveness opens opportunities for a therapist to be connected with the intuitive possibilities and resources that flow from our lives in relationship. It allows us to listen without censorship and without attachment, to the different voices that serve as "internal companions" (friends, mentors, therapeutic models, family, colleagues, alternate identities), and make use of available conversational resources to deepen dialogue and create new and unforeseen paths in the therapeutic relationship (Morales-Arandes 2010).

Relational responsiveness occurs in a clinical context where often one encounters the complexity and rawness of human experience. It is a dialogic space where a therapist might be a participant and witness to tales and dramatizations of loss,

sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, and despair. To be relationally present to the many faces of human suffering implies moving the practice of radical inclusion from the internal world of the practitioner to the relational field where the therapist and client interact together. There, it manifests as a dialogical space that can sponsor, care for, and contain the full range of human experience and generate in the client sense of being heard, acknowledged, and responded to in a humane way. In this space, conflict, life challenges, intense unwanted emotions, and pain are invited to attend, experienced, and allowed to have their say. It's also a space, where appreciation, joy, laughter, lightheartedness, compassionate care, and valuing together can become important relational activities that enhance shared bonds and create new possibilities for connection and transformative action.

In the context of relational mindfulness, the quality of radical inclusion is informed by the understanding that the therapist and client are bonded by the shared experience of the human condition, which includes the experience of suffering. There is a sense of horizontality and of being together that subverts the solidity of traditional hierarchical roles that are engendered by traditional medical and expert roles in healing. This brings a sense of equality to the therapeutic relationship and enables the therapist to be located in the relational field as a fellow "human being" whose life experience is something to value and be used in the service of relational connection and therapeutic change.

These qualities serve as the foundations of compassionate care. Compassion is an aspect of relational presence that is founded on an openness to one's own experience of suffering and the capacity to clearly see, empathize with, and respond to the suffering of another with the intention to serve (Baugher 2019; Halifax 2018). It highlights a relational sensibility that can maintain a tender connection to the client while refraining from turning away from what may be personally or relationally painful. It can operate in the service of openness and intimacy, for it communicates that in this space of shared human experience whatever is expressed and manifested can be heard without condemnation and whatever needs to be acknowledged and celebrated can be done with a full measure of joy and appreciation.

11.8 Relational Mindfulness: The Working Platform and Generative Moments

There are two additional aspects of generative work in which relational mindfulness plays a fundamental role: the working platform and the co-creation of generative moments. The working platform represents an enactment of the quality of "Clear Comprehension" in generative therapeutic work. Through this relational process, therapists and clients establish a mutually inclusive and trust-based relationship that acknowledges client concerns, hopes, and aspirations. Through its construction, participants in therapeutic dialogue articulate and craft a shared purpose for collaborating and creating something valuable together. This provides an agreed-upon

direction that is founded on the principles of inclusion, reciprocal responsiveness, and mutual recognition. It establishes the basis for mutual goodwill while framing and giving permission for therapeutic action within recognizable boundaries. Although it sets a reference point for coordinating actions and guiding actions, because it's a product of dialogue, a working platform is never finished. It can be expanded and modified according to the ebbs and flows of the therapeutic process and the changing interests and concerns of the therapist and client (Fried Schnitman 2013).

As stated previously, Clear Comprehension enhances the quality of discernment. For Thera (1975), the quality of Clear Comprehension of Purpose implies evaluating one's intended action according to the purpose established for a given activity. In the broader framework of Buddhist practice, that purpose is aligned with the reduction of suffering and the enhancement of individual and relational wellbeing. In generative therapeutic work, that framework is provided by the working platform. Through its use, we can examine and reflect on the connection between the shared purpose of the therapeutic relationship and our relational moves as therapists or the relational creations we jointly produce with our clients. Relational awareness allows us to notice and discern whether what we're doing and creating together amplifies distress and stabilizes nonproductive circular patterns of interactions that can lead to a sense of stuckness and disengagement or if, instead, we're enhancing relational bonds and moving creatively in directions that open up new life-affirming possibilities for our clients. In this sense, the working platform becomes an important reference point for relational responsiveness because it provides a frame of reference that enables us to evaluate and affirm our interactions, modify them, or renegotiate with our clients, our purpose for working together.

Not all moments in therapeutic dialogue are equal. There are moments that are particularly significant because once noticed and co-created, they can serve as relational fulcrums for deepening relationships, creating innovations, and enhancing therapeutic dialogues transformative potential. In generative practice, for example, a therapist is particularly relationally aware of, attentive, and committed to co-creating moments when relational connections are made and enriched, when hopes and valued futures are spoken of and imagined, when an embodied connection with relational resources and capabilities is made, when dominant oppressive stories and performances are questioned and disrupted, and when emergent possibilities are recognized and performed (Morales 2020).

Through relational mindfulness, he or she can pay a caring, careful, and engaged attention to the emergence and co-construction of these moments in the therapeutic relationship. Each of these can operate, as the chosen "primary object" in individual mindfulness practice, as anchors and valued reference points for noticing and placing our awareness. For example, when we are sensitive and give primary attention to the quality and intensity of our relational connections, we're able to recognize in real time those moments when we are in dialogic flow, as well as those times when we are relationally disconnected. We can notice whether our interaction is alive and vibrant when clients are engaged and relating from felt experience or whether there's disengagement, unresponsiveness, or disinterest. Real-time noticing of this

allows us to re-center our conversations before they go seriously off track and initiate relational moves to regain reconnection and engagement.

Dialogue is in incessant movement, and as in individual mindfulness practice, what at one in time is predominant and, at other times, disappears or recedes to the background. Having these five primary objects enables a therapist to collaborate in conversational flows that maximize the possibilities for change. It assures, for example, that conversations around hope and valued futures are not missed or are absent or that stories and qualities that are exceptions to dominant stories or are expressions of client potential, capabilities, and resources are missed because we're absorbed in our own theoretical mind wanderings or are captured by the complexity or the details of a person's dominant problem saturated stories.

I recall, when I was a graduate student, how case presentations tended to dwell on the patients' "pathology" and assumed disabilities. The presenter framed his description as that of an objective observer who brought to bear his expertise in his accounts of his or her patients. From the point of view of interbeing, as well as the co-constructed world of generative practice, that description was infused by the relational context, the presenters' way of relating to his clients and his own point and focus of observation (Watzlawick 1990). Even though it was very early in my career, I wondered if another story was possible, if alternate descriptions were available, and if the disfunction perceived by the clinician needed to be taken as an unquestioned truth and was all that could be said about the client.

To discover something "new" about our clients that challenge the problematic frames in which they tell their stories and through which clinicians hear and interpret them requires a relational sensitivity that can "suspend" entrenched models of clinical discourse. Shifting attentional focus from disfunction to alternative accounts and descriptions of capacity and ability is helped by a relational awareness that notices, expands, and uses those emergent moments in dialogue that point to and have the potential to become examples of embodied resources that could well serve clients to deal with problematic situations.

11.9 When the Earth Shakes: An Applied Case of Relational Mindfulness

Several days ago a colleague shared her experience of working with earthquake survivors in the southwestern part of Puerto Rico. Most had been living in tents for several weeks fearful or unable to return to their homes because of the constant tremors and the questioned solidity of building structures. As can be expected, they were fearful and anxious, feeling impotent, and with few options, worried about their future, as well as their ability to live through what was and continued to be an unsettling experience that seemed to have no end.

Psychological services were provided under a large tarp that lacked privacy and clear boundaries. As the presence of psychologists was announced, individuals,

couples, and families took their place in plastic chairs in front of available therapists. There was constant pressure from government organizers to limit to 15 min each encounter. My colleague recalled that she was told to "give them a technique to calm down but don't spend too much time with anybody in particular." She figured she had around 30–40 min for conversation with a client or a family she probably would never see again.

As she initiated her conversations, she told me that she realized that she was entering uncharted territory. The physical space, the time limitations, the gravity of the situation, plus the occasional shaking of the ground underneath her feet were all new to her. This was therapy (if we were to call it as such) in a form she had never experienced. She knew, she said, "that there was no choice but to wing it."

Once the conversations began, in most cases the connection was instantaneous. People were open and willing to share about their experiences of loss, about their worries and concerns, and about their as lives as "nomads." Their voices were often agitated and there was a lot of crying. As she described her experience, I noticed the detailed way in which she described the rhythms and flow of dialogue, the participants' facial expression, their voice tones, the looks in their eyes, and their gestures and physical movement. She spoke of the way she felt and responded to what she heard and saw and how her participants responded to her. She mentioned moments in which she would "spin away" and how she reconnected with the person in front of her. She recounted their initial stories and descriptions of the tremors, of being displaced and feeling fear and concern for themselves and their children. Her accounts were sensitive and deeply felt. At that point, it became evident to me that she had been able to establish a felt connection with the persons that came to talk to her, a connection that evidenced a relational presence that was present-centered, aware, and relationally responsive.

In the case of my colleague, the conversation flowed into relational processes that went beyond the activity of just listening. Mindful noticing of subtle changes in the depth and rhythm of breathing of the person she was in dialogue with, or transformations in their tone of voice, or the moment a gaze lightened up, or an expression of relief or subtle joy appeared were intuited as signals of a generative resource and an opportunity for further exploration. Questions were then asked to ascertain if what was being experienced at that point in dialogue was meaningful and beneficial. If so, relational skills were used to expand the lived experience of what was being felt, recalled, or imagined. Through this constant process of noticing, inquiring, and responding, people were able to recognize, explore, and value within themselves, their families, and their communities, resources that could provide emotional and physical support during these difficult times. Additionally, activities and possibilities for action were identified as potential avenues for addressing immediate life needs and for dealing with the experience of the "earth shaking beneath your feet."

As she summarized what occurred, she concluded that "no great changes had occurred." Most of the persons she talked to would still be living in tents, and the earth would continue to shake for the next few months. Some, however, discovered options that previously had been unseen. They were able to consider, for example, if fear was set aside, was returning to their homes a viable option. They were able to

share deeply with another human being and discover that they could still laugh, be heard, reaffirm that they connect to others, and appreciate and value the sense of community.

11.10 Final Reflections

Reflecting on her experience, one might consider, that from the perspective of linear time, 30 or 40 min might seem too limited for addressing the emotional intensity and degree of despair present in the situation that she described. Yet, therapeutic dialogue often occurs within other frameworks of time that is partly connected to the context in which interaction occurs. Awareness of this context is also a task of relational mindfulness when applied to therapy. In this particular account, the time alloted produced "just enough" so that the persons who sought assistance were able to experience a sense of relief, support, and increased hope when considering future possibilities.

My colleagues' account illustrates how although listening and presence may be important features of relational mindfulness practice, at times, they may not be enough. While feeling heard might be in itself healing, there may be deeper relational questions that may need to be answered. For example, a therapist might ask him or herself or her client: Is this a space for just listening or are we to create something different together? Do I have permission to slow down dialogue, to question what you have taken for granted as irrevocable truth about yourself and your situation? Can we laugh and perhaps cry together? Can I as a therapist to assist you in giving birth to something new and unexpected? To experience relief and surprise even in the face of what experience as difficult and daunting?

Her story was fascinating to me in two ways. Initially, I was enthused about the way that relational mindfulness was used as the basis for an engaged stance that included both presence and action so that it became a presence-in-action. I then was pleasantly surprised that in her initial account she did not mention relational mindfulness. It was only after we started reflecting together, and discussed the quality of presence evidenced by the way she listened, finely noticed and sensed the movements and flows of client emotions and dialogue, and was aware of subtle changes and potential generative moments in the client's embodied communications and responses to her actions, that she confirmed that relational awareness had been present.

This was significant to me because, in the world of commercialized and merchandized mindfulness, it has been represented as both a technique and a generalized cure. It has been reified and converted into a clearly identifiable commodity that is deployed through a set of standardized instructions. It then becomes an "object" that is to be "developed," enhanced, and measured. In that sense, my accounts of relational mindfulness might be accused of missing descriptions of technique and mindfulness protocols. Yet, beyond the world of McMindfulness, awareness and relational presence is not a particular concrete "thing." It does not

participate in the world of "thingness." Rather, it's an intangible quality of relationship and presence, which might seem mysterious and different because we live estranged from it and have lost the ability to recognize it when it appears, particularly, in relationship with others.

In this sense, as in the case of my colleague, one can be mindful without knowing it. On the one hand, because as a word, it is just an artifact of language, and in the realm of language, a concept is explained by the use of more concepts. This in turn, tends to generate a dizzying spiral of levels of discursive complexity that can distance us from the simple experience of "noticing things as they are." Then, on the other hand, there is nothing truly special about being mindful. It's quite ordinary. It's just an aspect of presence, of being here together. We notice it only when we contrast it to the experience of spinning away and losing touch with life as its actually manifesting within and in relation to us. My colleague was relationally mindful, or you could say, she was just a human being who was aware of our shared fragility; who was present, compassionate, and responsive to the pains and concerns of others; and who acted with the intention to serve.

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Chapter 12
Relational Mindfulness, Attachment and Deconstruction of the Self

Javier García Campayo and Mayte Navarro-Gil

12.1 Relational Mindfulness and Associated Factors

The experience of mindfulness has always been described as the result of isolated practice. Contemplative traditions from which mindfulness developed, such as Buddhism, emphasize retreats as the main form of practising meditation. In fact, present research confirms that the highest increases in levels of mindfulness occur on meditation retreats and not in everyday wordly life. Although Eastern and Western monastic traditions have lived on in monasteries, the reason they developed was to facilitate survival; they were secure from outer world, and it was easier to obtain food and assistance from lay practitioners and rulers. But monastic rules typically involved silence most of the time; monks were to obtain from idle conversation and worldy affairs. Consequently, the experience of mindfulness that is usually achieved during formal meditation is considered difficult to experience or maintain in coexistence with interpersonal relationships unless the practitioner has great experience in meditation (Garcia Campayo 2019).

However, according to the Buddha, it is possible to maintain a state of equanimity and mindfulness regardless of where we are and who we are with. Siddhartha Gautama said to his disciple Ananda, *I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness (Majjhima Nikaya 121; 3).* This idea is frequently repeated in the Pali Canon, where the Buddha describes how he can talk and share with kings, princes and other people without losing his state of consciousness. The experience of long-term meditator is that firstly you attain this state in isolation through formal meditation. It can then be experienced during informal meditation (i.e. everyday life) when you are alone

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doing repetitive activities such as walking, washing dishes or cooking. Afterwards, it can be experienced in interpersonal relationships when you are listening, but not speaking. The greatest difficulty is to be mindful when speaking to others, because the experience of self greatly increases when we speak.

As social animals, we humans spend most of our lifetimes communicating with others. Therefore, an important challenge is how to maintain mindful states during interpersonal relationships. This chapter reflects on two fundamentals for facilitating interpersonal mindfulness: a secure attachment style and the reduction in the strength of the self.

12.2 Attachment Styles and Interpersonal Relationships

12.2.1 Attachment Theory

The term "attachment" is a classic psychoanalytic concept developed by Bowlby (1969) in reference to the emotional bonds that humans form with other people throughout their lifetime. The attachment system is essentially developed in the first years of life based on the relationships children form with their parents or primary caregivers. This connection is the strongest emotional tie that humans feel for others, and it reflects the most basic and essential needs that exist: those of feeling loved, safe and secure.

Bowlby (1969) asserted that when a child senses danger, they instinctively activate their attachment system in order to seek their parents' care and protection. Adults, in turn, have evolved to respond to the demands of their offspring. When children systematically find safety, security and the opportunity for social interaction in their parents, they develop a "secure attachment". Where a child's relationship with a parent figure lacks these conditions, it is highly likely to warrant the adjective "insecure". A child may feel secure with both parents, secure with one and insecure with the other or insecure with both. A child might also have felt insecure with both parents, but secure with a secondary attachment figure who was part of their immediate social setting (Marrone et al. 2001). It is important, however, that children are able to securely connect with at least one of their figures of reference, given that the attachment style they develop in those first years of life will have significant repercussions on their psychological and emotional development.

12.2.2 Stages of Attachment

Bowlby (1969) describes four essential phases in the development of attachment:

1. *Pre-attachment* (from birth to 6 weeks of age). During this period, a child's behaviour consists of genetically programmed responses that help to guarantee survival. Babies summon the attention of other humans by smiling, crying, etc.,

and they are able to manifest their sense of well-being when other people interact with them (e.g. when picked up, spoken to, etc.). They do not yet show any specific attachment as such, but demonstrate a clear preference for the voice of their mother over that of any other adult.

2. *Indiscriminate attachment* (between 6 weeks and 6 months of age). In this phase, children more consistently direct their behaviour towards their mother than towards other people (following her with their eyes, laughing when with her, babbling when she is near, etc.). However, they still show no anxiety when separated from their mother despite clearly recognizing her. What causes them distress is lack of human contact, e.g. when left alone in a room.
3. *Discriminate attachment* (between 6–8 months and 18–24 months of age). At this age, the emotional bond with the mother is so evident that the child tends to protest when separated from her. After 8 months of age, the only thing that will typically calm babies is to be held by their mothers. Most of a child's actions (crawling, for instance) are focused on attracting their mother's attention.
4. *Formation of reciprocal relationships* (18–24 months +). This phase is characterized by the appearance of language and the ability to mentally represent the mother. Children at this stage understand that their mother's absence is not definite when she is not present. After the age of 3 years, children deploy a series of strategies for controlling interaction with her by forcing her at certain times to negotiate leaving and returning to the home.

Completion of these four phases results in a solid emotional bond. Children no longer demand the constant attention of their mother and feel secure that she will respond when needed.

12.2.3 Attachment Styles

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a system for classifying styles of attachment by dividing them into four main categories. These styles are believed to define the way we relate to other people. There are one secure attachment style and three insecure attachment styles with different characteristics.

- *Secure attachment style*. People with this style had a mother or father who demonstrated that they were available, affectionate, tolerant and empathetic during their first years of life and as a result developed great self-confidence and the ability to trust others. During their childhood, they learned that they were worthy of being loved and that other people were reliable and able to provide security. As adults, these people have no difficulty in being able to receive and give affection and to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.
- *Preoccupied attachment style*. This style tends to occur in individuals whose parents responded to their needs in an unstable and variable manner during their childhood. In other words, they were attended to at certain times, but not at others, which may be habitual of parents with certain medical conditions or psy-

chological disorders, preventing them from providing steady care for their children. The children are unable to understand that this intermittent care is not their fault and develop low self-esteem and a poor self-image. However, the concept they have of others is positive because they have experienced what it is to feel loved. As adults, they become people who are very dependent on others, coming to renounce their desires and initiatives when these come into conflict with those of others, merely for the need to please and be liked, in order to feel loved.

- *Dismissive attachment style*. This style is developed by individuals whose parents were neglectful in their way of relating to them, without the existence of abuse. Unlike the preoccupied model, adequate care was never provided. Children learn that they can never count on support from their parents and that they have to manage on their own. Consequently, these people develop complete mistrust of others and excessive self-confidence, which causes them to have little understanding of others' needs for affection in their relationships with others, given that they learned to survive in emotional terms autonomously and without assistance from others.
- *Fearful attachment style*. This style is developed by people who have experienced cold or violent care, as a result of rejection or punishment. These individuals develop a very negative view both of others and of themselves. This style may be typical when parents are alcoholics or substance-dependent or when they present with personality disorders. Abused children cannot understand that their parents have a disorder; they only think that they are doing something wrong which merits punishment. The consequence of this is that they spend their childhood endeavouring to understand what they are doing wrong and they try to change in order to avoid punishment, despite never succeeding. They develop a poor self-image because they have never felt loved and a poor image of others because they feel they are not reliable enough to be able to give them love and care. They have low self-esteem, negative affect and a great inability to develop close relationships with other people.

12.2.4 Importance of Attachment Styles

It is believed that 65% of children present with a secure attachment style and the other 35% present with one of the described insecure attachment styles (Prior and Glaser 2006). The attachment style of parents predicts 75% of their children's attachment style (Steele et al. 1996). Although there are other influences apart from attachment, children with a secure attachment style are more likely to become socially competent than their insecure counterparts. They also have greater ease in acquiring social skills, developing intellectually and forming a social identity. On the whole, they tend to be more successful on all levels than children with insecure attachment styles. In short, attachment styles modulate the image we have of ourselves and of others and are therefore key to the relationship we have with ourselves and with others. Attachment style predicts feelings of guilt and shame towards ourselves and feelings of anger and mistrust towards others. Mindfulness and compas-

sion therapy is key for clarifying and modifying the relationships we have with ourselves and others and is therefore closely related to attachment styles.

12.2.5 How to Know Our Attachment Style

Attachment style is a key psychological variable that predicts the kind of interpersonal relationships, vulnerability to psychological distress or success in social or labour areas of an individual. This test, based on research by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), can help us to identify it (Box 12.1).

Box 12.1: Attachment Styles

We summarize several phrases that describe the way people relate to others. First, select which of the four best describes your relationship with others (qualitative assessment). Following that, as most of us present characteristics of several styles, write down at the side of each paragraph a number from 1 (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree), describing up to which level you identify with each statement (quantitative statement).

1. SECURE: It is easy and pleasant for me to establish close relationships and intimacy with others, so I can share worries and deep feelings with them. I feel comfortable both trusting in others and when others trust in me. However, I understand it is normal that I should dislike some people and that sometimes I can be alone.
2. PREOCCUPIED: I feel uncomfortable when I am not in an affective relationship, so I am used to giving up my wishes and objectives to maintain relationships at any cost. This is the way I act as part of a couple and with friendships and family relationships. I am always fearful of disappointing others. I think my partners and friends could leave me at any moment, so I try to pay attention in order to find any indication that they are going to leave me. I tend to be jealous.
3. DISMISSIVE: I feel better when I am not in any affective relationships, either with a partner or with friends. I feel afraid to give up something that is important for me for the sake of a relationship. The most valuable thing for me is my sense of independence and self-sufficiency. I prefer not to depend on anyone or to feel that others depend on me. I feel that people are weak and will do anything to stay in a relationship.
4. FEARFUL: I feel bad and worried when I become intimate with others because I am afraid they will hurt me. I would like to maintain affective relationships but I feel it is difficult to trust in or depend on others. I worry about how much I can suffer if I do not keep my distance from others. I have been through extremes in my relationships, idealizing certain people despite not knowing them well enough and feeling very disappointed when they do something I dislike.

The test is assessed in two ways:

– *QUALITATIVE*: Describing the main attachment style.
– *QUANTITATIVE*: Describing the ratio between secure attachment and insecure attachments. A "coefficient of attachment style" is then calculated in this way:

Secure attachment value (numerator)/the sum of the values for preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment styles (denominator). Values above 1 imply secure attachment, and values less than 1 suggest unsecure attachment.

12.2.6 The Concept of Compassion

One of the most commonly used definitions of compassion in psychology is the one formulated by Goetz et al. (2010), which describes compassion as "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help". Another very similar description is that devised by Paul Gilbert (2009), "a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it". Compassion is not only an emotion but also a motivation that guides human behaviour. One of the most widely used models in compassion is the one created by Neff. She defines compassion based on the three pillars described in Box 12.2.

Box 12.2: Components of Compassion Model According to Neff (Neff 2012)

1. *Mindfulness*: To be aware of our and others' suffering, without judgement or criticism. Suffering is not denied nor do we escape from it. We must not get trapped by it, as most humans do (Neff refers to this as overidentification). This step is key, because we cannot feel compassion unless it is for a person who suffers. Also, if we overidentify with suffering, we will only create empathy, not compassion, and we will be at risk of burnout.
2. *Common humanity*: To be aware that the suffering we are experiencing just now has previously been experienced by millions of human beings, is being experienced at this moment by millions of people and will be experienced in the future by millions. Any suffering we feel is inherent to human nature. It is not our fault, but the result of our humanity. The opposite of this feeling is isolation, which is necessarily associated with guilt or shame; useless feelings lead to the chronification of depression.
3. *Self-kindness*: Affection and understanding towards ourselves when we experience suffering, instead of self-criticism, guilt, shame or denial of our pain. It involves treating ourselves like helpless children or as beloved friends. The opposite would be destructive and blaming self-criticism.

There are several protocols for the development of compassion for use with psychiatric patients and healthy individuals. We have developed one specific protocol whose aim is to allow people to acknowledge their attachment style and enable them modify it towards a more secure model. This treatment improves interpersonal relationships.

12.2.7 Attachment-Based Compassion Therapy (ABCT)

This compassion protocol is structured into eight weekly sessions, each with a duration of approximately 2 h. It is described in greater detail in the book, only available in Spanish, *Nuevo Manual de Mindfulness* (García-Campayo 2018). It describes the theoretical foundations for the model, its structuring into sessions and the exercises to be used in each session.

The model is structured around the following theoretical foundations.

1. Bowlby's attachment theory and the classification system for attachment styles by Bartholomew and Horowitz.
2. Contributions from other compassion models: the structure of the three brain circuits by Paul Gilbert and a series of exercises that most protocols take from tradition.
3. Contributions from other cognitive and third-generation therapies: aspects of mindfulness taken from mindfulness-based interventions (García-Campayo 2015a), awareness of values through specific techniques from acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and radical acceptance from dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT).
4. Contributions from tradition: theoretical foundations from tradition, such as Tibetan Buddhism, but also from other religions, such as native American beliefs in which compassion plays a part, given that it is the common denominator in all of them. Logically, as is habitual in mindfulness and compassion therapy, any religious or cultural connotation has been removed from these techniques, and their efficacy has been evaluated from a scientific perspective.

The programme is structured into eight sessions. The first session works with the theoretical aspects related to the evolution of our brain, happiness and suffering, and the concept of compassion is defined by eliminating erroneous beliefs that tend to be associated with it. A very important part of all sessions is devoted to both formal and informal exercises. Participants are instructed in a series of formal exercises that stress aspects of compassion towards ourselves and our body that are core to the programme, and participants are asked to practise them regularly. A series of informal exercises devoted to personal care are recommended, and this awareness should be applied to daily life. Recordings of the exercises in each of the sessions are made available to all participants to stress the importance of doing the exercises at home.

12.2.8 Effect of ABCT on Attachment Styles in Healthy People

The aim of this study (Navarro-Gil et al. 2018) was to assess the efficacy of ABCT for improving self-compassion in a healthy population and determine whether improvements in self-compassion mediate changes towards a more secure attachment style. The study consisted of a non-randomized controlled trial with an intervention group (ABCT) and a waiting list control group. In addition to pre- and post-intervention assessments, a 6-month follow-up assessment was included. Participants were healthy adults attending ABCT courses who self-rated as not having any psychological disorders and self-reported as not receiving any form of psychiatric treatment. Compared to the control condition, ABCT was significantly more effective for improving self-compassion as evidenced by changes on all subscales on the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), except isolation. Effect sizes were in the moderate to large range and correlated with the number of sessions received. ABCT also led to improvements across all subscales of the Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), except describing. ABCT decreased psychological disturbance assessed using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) and decreased experiential avoidance assessed using the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II). Furthermore, ABCT led to significant reductions in levels of anxiety and avoidance. Secure attachment style significantly increased in the ABCT group and was mediated by changes in self-compassion. In summary, ABCT may be an effective intervention for improving self-compassion and attachment style in healthy adults in the general populations.

The bond of attachment is the most special of emotional relationships formed between babies and their caregiver. But not all forms of attachment are equal. Depending on the type of relationship, attachment will be more or less secure and adequate, leaving a deep imprint on individuals and marking the way they form relationships with others. A secure attachment formed in the first years of life is the basis for balanced emotional development and is key for forming positive relationships with others.

ABCT is a compassion protocol based on this psychological construct, attachment style, which can be used on both the general public and patients with medical and psychological disorders. It has been adapted to the cultural setting and healthcare systems of Latin countries (Latin America, Spain and Portugal). The preliminary results from this intervention are promising, and users have shown high levels of acceptance and adherence. There have been very few and minor unexpected effects. The versatility of the model enables its facilitation for general use in the healthcare systems of Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

12.3 The Importance of the Reduction in the Strength of the Self in Relational Mindfulness

12.3.1 The Self-Concept

The self-concept is the set of ideas that a person has about him-/herself and about his/her characteristics. It is defined by a sense of continuity over the time and by identification with the body. It is the idea of a being that thinks, feels, wants and acts.

There is a *social* self-concept associated with identification and belonging to several specific social groups and not belonging to other groups. For instance: "I am Spanish (not British or of any other nationality), Catholic (not following any other religion), supporter of Real Madrid (not of any other football team)". In addition, there is an *individual* self-concept that is specific to biographical history. For instance: "My name is Javier García. I have a brother and a sister. I studied at the La Salle school and at the University of Zaragoza". Both concepts have a social origin (Sammut et al. 2013). Our knowledge and beliefs about ourselves are structured in our memory as a) memories of personal events and their context (self-biographical memory) and b) memories of our abstract characteristics (semantic memory). We never have all our information activated in our memory at the same time. Different information arises depending on context. After organization, information retrieved from long-term memory, both biographical and semantic memories, modifies perception, understanding, feelings and behaviour.

There are several theories on self-concept. It is generally accepted that they include the following aspects (Sammut et al. 2013):

1. *MATERIAL*. An aspect including both physical appearance (e.g. "I am handsome/ugly, fat/thin, short/tall" or any other description of our body) and material properties ("I have a house, a car, a computer", etc.).
2. *SOCIAL*. This aspect refers to the kind of relationships we have with other people (e.g. "I have good friends"; "I trust my parents"; "people like that are my enemies") and the labels other people have placed on me (e.g. "I am quite popular"; "they say I am shy").
3. *PSYCHOLOGICAL*. This aspect consists of attributes such as:
   (a) Personality traits or habitual behaviours and feelings – they constitute our main self-definitions (e.g. "I am honest" or "I am jealous").
   (b) Likes or hobbies – what attracts us in all fields (e.g. "I like running" or "I like Spanish omelette").
   (c) Ethics and values – what is important in life for us; many people consider them the core of their self (e.g. "I most value helping people, saving the planet and practising my religion").

(d) The sense of coherence and personal identity (e.g. “I know what I want in life”; “I am not coherent”; “I am always changing my mind”) and the locus of control (e.g. “I decide my life and an in control it”; “I am at the mercy of other people or of fate”).

Self-concept distorts our interpersonal relationships in this way because it interprets the world, other people and situations. Our feelings and behaviours are highly predictable depending on the characteristics of our self. Therefore, awareness of our self is key to understanding how our communication is biased.

12.3.2 Self-Concept Is Built over the Time

The sense of our self seems to develop at the age of 2 years, when we start to use language. The inner dialogue, the conversation we maintain with ourselves at every moment, begins at the same time as our use of language. When we speak to others, we speak to ourselves. By the age of 7–8 years, our use of language is perfectly consolidated, and so is our inner dialogue.

Initially, we describe ourselves with passive physical attributes such as “I am tall and blond”. Afterwards, conductual description is used, through which we compare ourselves with others (e.g. “I am talkative”; “I am or shy”; “I am clever”; “I am stupid”). Later on, social characteristics are used (e.g. “I have many friends”; “I am good at reading”). In the beginning, children use extremes to describe their psychological characteristics in a dichotomous pattern of “all or nothing” and applied globally (e.g. “I am shy” or “I am brave”). Negative attributes appear by the age of 9 years. From 10 to 12 years on, psychological traits are the main differentiator of the self. During adolescence, owing to the importance given to peers, the most important traits are social/interpersonal skills. Finally, in late adolescence, social and psychological characteristics are integrated into a wider and global view of personality.

Two key concepts for the maintenance of the self are continuity of identity and singularity. Continuity is based on our name, body, social status, possessions and preferences, which are considered immutable. And, above all, it is due to our memory, which stores everything we have experienced during our lives, and to our inner dialogue, which continuously updates our memories. Based on this, we need to develop:

– *Continuity of identity*. This means that descriptive traits are not modified. Obviously, change is allowed, but it should be explained based on an internal narrative that preserves coherence. We can be ourselves despite changes if such changes can be explained for external or internal reasons. This is the base of biography, the internal story of what we have lived.

– *Singularity*. Based on the comparison with others. Since the end of the twentieth century, the pressure experienced by the inhabitants of modern societies to be different from the others has been extreme. We only can be ourselves if we are different from the rest.

12.3.3 Self-Reference Bias

The self distorts the world and interprets it in a biased way (Moghaddam 1998). This assumption, defended by traditional contemplative Eastern traditions, has recently been confirmed by psychology. The self, or at least parts of it, is continuously sustained by our inner dialogue and interacts with and distorts our present experience. For instance, we remember much better any experience affecting us than any other event that is unrelated to ourselves. The reason for this is that self-referential information is more elaborate and we classify it better within our categories and frames of reference.

Some aspects of self-reference bias are:

– *SELF-GENERATION BIAS*. People remember better information actively generated by themselves than information that is passively received.
– *SELF-IMPLICATION BIAS*. Tasks in process are better remembered than finished tasks.
– *SELF-CENTRED BIAS*. People overestimate their importance or responsibility in past events. For instance, when both members of a couple are asked about how they share household tasks, the total average always exceeds 100% because each member overvalues their own effort. Another example is that individuals tend to think that other people are more similar to everybody else than they are to themselves. The desire and need to be different are quite powerful.
– *COMPARISON BIAS*. In situations where cooperation is required, individuals prefer to compare themselves to people who are more highly skilled. However, in situations of competition, individuals prefer to compare themselves to others with similar talents. Individuals who suffer from disabling and/or chronic diseases prefer to "compare down" as a way to cope with anxiety and preserve their self-esteem (e.g. "the cancer I'm suffering from is a terrible disease, but AIDS is even worse"). Studies confirm that humans are more motivated to preserve a good self-image than to obtain accurate and reliable information about themselves.
– *ETHNOCENTRIC BIAS*. The tendency to perceive our own group (regardless of whichever it is) as heterogeneous and full of differences, whereas other groups are described as homogeneous and without differences among individuals. Throughout our evolutionary history, differentiating between individuals inside and outside of the group was quite important because we had to compete with them to obtain food and for survival. Stereotyping and prejudice against other groups are universal phenomena (Du et al. 2003).

12.3.4 The Development of the Self over Human Evolution

When human beings were hunter-gatherers, there was less self-consciousness than there is now (Loy 2018). In an environment where we had to hunt continuously and where we could become prey at any moment, we learned to feel and think like a predator in order to survive. The development of agriculture during Neolithic Age required fences and walls to defend crops and cities. Surplus production was the basis for wealth and money, and humans gradually became separated from nature. In older cultures, such as in Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, or in native American culture, the connection with environment was not completely lost. The entire organization of society, hierarchies and daily habits, among others, was connected by a deep religious belief. They considered it to be the way of the world and that human actions followed a universal order. This gave people a sense of belonging and meaning.

Ancient Greek culture, the origin of Western civilization, broke with that way of thinking. They asserted that humans were not obligated to follow the natural order but they could be free to live as they wanted and to alter the environment without the need to follow any rules. This seems quite obvious to us nowadays, but it was an absolute revolution at the time. It brought about the emergence of democracy, together with a deep sense of empowerment and freedom. It was a time in which sense of self greatly increased and continued to do so until it reached a peak in twentieth-century Western civilization.

12.3.5 The Self-Concept in Individualistic vs Collectivist Cultures

Hofstede (1980) was the first to introduce this concept, which was further developed by Triandis (1989), mainly in relation with the influence of culture on the self. Individualistic societies have been defined as those that place more importance to the individual than on the group. They are mainly represented by Western cultures, such as those of Europe and countries like the United States, Australia and Canada. On the contrary, collectivist cultures place greater emphasis on the group in relation to the individual. These include much of Asia, Africa and the less developed Latin American countries. This is obviously a very general classification. The range of collectivism-individualism within these groups varies greatly as it does for individuals in every culture, depending on their family and educational background.

As a general pattern, Asians show less clarity regarding the self-concept, having less intense feelings of self and lower self-esteem. They also describe themselves as less extroverted (Heine et al. 2001). Low self-esteem is not necessarily associated with collectivist societies, despite the fact that these cultures emphasize obligation and generate higher anxiety because of the intense shame associated with deviation from cultural norms. On the other hand, individualistic societies appreciate self-

ideals such as self-realization. This leads to higher levels of depression as there is a risk of frustration if these ideals cannot be achieved. In collectivist societies shame predominates over guilt, while the opposite occurs in individualistic societies. However, in general terms, intercultural differences are more important than individual differences within a specific culture.

12.3.6 Distorted Assumptions About the Self

We believe that the self exists because, unconsciously, we are not aware of the following distorted assumptions about the self:

1. *CONTINUITY*. We have the idea that our self starts when we arrive in this world and that it disappears when we die. We feel that it is the doer of our actions, the thinker of our thoughts and the feeler of our emotions and perceptions and that it inhabits our body. Despite the many changes we experience over time, we have an overall feeling of continuity. We think that something like a "basic essence" is maintained during our lifetime.
   The sensation of continuity occurs because of memory. It remembers all the events taking place in our life from the ages of 2 to 3 years, when language appears. Our memory and inner dialogue build a narrative that gives an impression of continuity to our entire life. This is called biography. It is not what has actually happened but what we have told ourselves about what has happened.
2. *COHERENCE OR SENSATION OF AN ONLY SELF*. This is our sense of biographical coherence. If we felt we were continuously changing our feelings, thoughts and actions, we would think we were being possessed by a spirit. We have the sense of being only one person, not several. However, there are contradictions:

   – At a given time. There can be differences between our body and our thoughts ("I am tired but I want to go to the cinema"). And "I" do not know what to do.
   – Over the course of our lifetime. We may have frequently changed our actions (moving from one job to another without a clear reason), our feelings (loving many partners) or our thoughts (changing our political preferences many times). We usually blame other people for the decisions that change the trajectory of our self, one important reason being interpersonal conflicts.

3. *ORIGINALITY*. We need to feel we are different from other people. If we were to be exactly the same as all other humans, with the same labels and biography, why would we hold on to such an uninteresting self? Difference is the essence of individualism and, ultimately, of narcissism. Homogenization, the absence of personal identity, is the basis of communism. Our name is the certificate that shows we are different from others, and our sense of self greatly increases when we hear our name.

4. *CONTROL*. We think we can exert a strong control on our body and mind. During the period between 2 and 3 years of age, children throw tantrums when they discover they cannot control the world. We suffer from similar emotions as adults. We are greatly disappointed when we find we cannot control our body when it suffers from diseases or the ageing process, or we find we are unable to control our mind when emotions take over us. We have an unrealistic perception of mind and body when we say they are our self or they are ours. These phenomena are transient, changing, impersonal and beyond our control.
5. *INDEPENDENCE OR NON-DUALITY*. This last aspect is more difficult not only to experience but even to imagine. We do not usually observe our internal phenomena (emotions, thoughts, perceptions) because we merge with them. On the other hand, external phenomena such as a noise or a house are clearly identified as "external". However, mindfulness considers that object and subject interinfluence each other continuously. The outer object is always interpreted and distorted by our mind; it does not exist as a reality. But we consider what we perceive to be real. For instance, when somebody takes a dislike to us, we tend to think that there is something about them that we dislike. What is really happening is that there is something in our relationship with them that causes produces dislike. Although we do not like that person, other people do; not everybody dislikes them.

All these distorted perceptions of our self influence our interpersonal relationships. It is necessary to be aware of them if we are to avoid being biased by them. In the next section, we attempt to summarize some aspects of the self that we should keep in check to minimize their influence on our relationships.

12.3.7 Being Aware of the Main Biases in Interpersonal Relationships Caused by the Self

Because of their large number, we focus only on those we consider to be the most important and the easiest to control:

(a) *Avoid labelling; describe only (or at least be aware that we are labelling)*

The most important labelling of our self does is to classify events or objects are pleasant or unpleasant. Every time we describe people, objects and events, particularly if we feel a strong liking or dislike for them, we are unable to describe them objectively using labels which everybody would agree with. On the contrary, we describe them with emotionally charged labels that are not necessarily shared by others. But as we consider ourselves to be reliable, it amazes us that other people do not see the world as we do. This causes conflicts with others. We can compare a subjective description against a more objective version.

DESCRIPTION 1: TOTAL SUBJECTIVITY. John is a middle-aged, short, overweight and not very likeable man. He has a dull job, but he acts as if he were an executive. He talks a lot and is quite annoying. He says uninteresting things and feels the need to seek attention with his histrionic behaviour. Everyone at the party yesterday thought he was awful.

DESCRIPTION 2: TENDING TOWARDS OBJECTIVITY. John is a 50-year-old man, standing 160 centimetres tall and weighing over 90 kilogrammes. He works as an administrative assistant and, according to the way he describes it, he seems to have a very interesting job. He has a round face and a bald head. He tends to monopolize conversations and he seems to seek attention with his behaviour. His speaks slowly and repetitively. He is not likely to go unnoticed.

We can see that in the first description there is hardly any objective information. It is clear that the speaker does not like John and uses many negative adjectives. As a result, the impression we have of him is not a positive one. The consequence will be likely conflicts between the speaker and John but also an unfavourable image of the speaker. On the contrary, the second description is nearly objective. We cannot deduce the speaker's feelings about John. Conflict between John and the speaker is not foreseeable because no value judgements had been made.

The consequence of all these biases is our habitual dialogue. In Table 12.1 we see more examples of subjective description and a more objective version.

(b) *Avoid generalizing*

Another frequent cognitive bias is generalization, in other words, the tendency to evaluate the whole person based on an isolated behaviour. For instance, if you shout at your child once, it does not mean you are a bad parent, or if you forget your house key once, it does not mean you are forgetful. Isolated actions are not maintained personality traits, but human beings are used to simplifying and generalizing. The consequence of a negative judgement is mistrust in that person.

Table 12.1 Subjective and more objective descriptions

Subjective description	More objective description
He isn't very affectionate	He tends not to express his feelings
He makes a bad parent	He has shouted at his child during moments of stress
He can't stand me	He barely speaks to me, and when he does, he tends to keep a poker face
He always has to be right	I don't think he listens to my opinions
He's selfish	I have the impression he doesn't take my feelings into consideration
He's never loved me	He has never expressed any affection for me in any way or with any conviction that I might have expected in recent years

(c) *Avoid reading other people's minds*

This is one of the most disturbing mistakes in interpersonal relationships and probably the one that causes the most conflicts. It is particularly common in relationships between couples, but it is equally problematic in other relationships. It is the mistaken idea that we can guess the intentions of others, the reason why they behave as they do. Even if we know the other person well, we should never doubt their words, and we should trust them. This adverse bias is expressed through sentences such "You always want to control me"; "You never like what I do"; and "You laugh at my feelings". The speaker imagines that they know the deeper reasons for the other's actions but that is impossible. We should use sentences as "I feel as though you want to control me"; "I have the impression that you never like what I do"; or "Sometimes I think that you laugh at my feelings". We should put the emphasis on what we feel, and then we can talk about others' behaviours without interpreting their reasons and suggest that a change in their actions would change our feelings.

(d) *Avoid taking things personally: people cannot choose*

This may be one of the most important lessons of third-generation techniques. It is implicit in all of them. Buddhism also accepts it as such. For instance, in his theory of psychoanalysis, Freud says "Biography is destiny". Skinner also limits individual freedom, which he defends in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, emphasizing that we human beings are the consequence of our biological circumstances (genetics among them), psychological circumstances (learning and attachment style) and environmental circumstances.

We should be aware that when people act, they have a limited freedom range due to their biological, psychological and environmental circumstances we have described, which makes their behaviour highly predictable. This can help us not to take other people's behaviours and the impact they have on us personally. People do not want to harm us when they act; they are unable to act in any other way. We are only collateral damage, unwanted victims of their own desires and conflicts.

12.4 Conclusions

In summary, we have studied two psychological constructs that have great significance for interpersonal mindfulness. The first, attachment style, gives structure to the kind of relationship we establish with adults and is based on our own attachment model developed with our parents. We provide tools with which to identify this model and suggest ABCT to modify problems in this area.

The other psychological construct is ego. We reflect on deconstruction of the ego and on the distorted assumptions of ego and describe the main psychological distortions in interpersonal relationships caused by the self. We try to make people aware of these so that they can avoid being trapped by them when relating to other people.

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Chapter 13
Relational Awareness: A Stepping-Stone Toward Flourishing Organizations

Miriam Subirana Vilanova

13.1 Introduction

> All true life is encounter. (Buber 2017: 21)

13.1.1 Adapt or Die

In recent decades organizational life has been immersed in massive, rapid change. We live in a global movement of information, largely owing to the emergence of technologies such as satellite television, the Internet, and smartphones. Organizations that have adapted to be present in the virtual world and sell their services through the Internet also adapt to different cultures, languages, and markets, enabling them to survive better and to expand territories. But that is not enough to survive in a worldwide market with continual development of new products that can threaten to supersede whatever the organization produces. It is not only a question of surviving. In this chapter I explore the need of relational awareness as a basis for relational leading, appreciative teamwork, and relational mindfulness to maintain the pace of change and the wellbeing of all involved. There are other challenges, such as:

- The need to make decisions quickly, to innovate and to cope with the market's rapid changes, is a challenge in communication and in keeping harmony in relationships.
- The impact of social media and the possibility of the individuals sharing in global ways have resulted in a rapid development of grassroots movements that protest

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against certain organizational activities, such as corruption, and call for transparency.
- Diversity of race, gender, religion, and ethnicity in the workforce has increased the gaps between people as their values and motives differ. Even within a group, such as a congregation, diversity calls for a need for intercultural dialogue, openness to different ways to live the same principles, and understanding.
- Intergenerational relationships at the core of organizations have presented challenges: the older is not necessarily the wiser and has to let go of traditional perspectives that are not practical for the current needs of the organization.

Relational processes are at the core of all challenges I found in the organizations I worked with. Relationships are essential in organizing, sustaining, creating, and developing the activities of people working together. Actions need to be coordinated. Communication is at the core of any coordinated action. To flourish as individuals and as a whole, the leader of the organization and managers of teams need to be aware of the whole system and of how the processes unfold in the multiple dimensions of relationships.

In this chapter, I will interweave some of the most important challenges I have found in the organizations I have worked with. I will use practical cases as examples to illustrate them and the relational practices we developed to move forward toward becoming a flourishing organization. Some of those challenges are:

- A team of executive managers who were disconnected from each other
- The departments of a public administration institution which worked in silos, resulting in a lack of internal and external communication as well as a working climate full of apathy and low efficiency
- Pending conversations among the principal managers of a national senior leadership team of a health multinational
- Conflict between holding on to traditions and the renewal needs in an international religious congregation
- Violent, disrespectful communication among faculty staff
- A manager being unaware of his impact in the way he related to his team managers
- Intercultural challenges within religious congregations

In all these situations, relational awareness, relational mindfulness, and appreciative relational leading helped those involved to move forward.

13.1.2 My Experience of Relational Awareness

I was a leader of a religious organization for 22 years (1986–2008) and a consultant and coach for leaders and managers for more than 45 organizations, 30% of them religious congregations, over the past 14 years (2008–2021). I have found it crucial to develop a relational awareness in the way leaders, managers, and elders in

congregations run their organizations. In this chapter, I explore the meanings of relational awareness. In my understanding, one meaning is to be conscious that relationships are the basis of any given process, communication, development, creation, and innovation; another meaning is that affiliation, safety, trust, engagement, and results are directly influenced by the quality of relationships. Relations that share positive emotions create wellbeing in the work environment. By relational awareness I also refer to the five relational acts and to the awareness of how we use language to perform them: to ask for, to offer, to come to agreements, to listen, and to acknowledge and value each other.

13.2 Relational Awareness

13.2.1 To Be Aware: Step One to Any Change

> When relational process is given priority, we open new vistas for understanding and practicing decision-making, dialogue, innovation, conflict reduction, personnel evaluation, collaboration and relating the organization to its environments. (Gergen 2016: 28)

As long as we are not aware of what is happening in relational processes, we cannot take steps toward the necessary change. Sometimes senior leaders and managers see the need to change, focus on changing systems and structures, but fail to see that middle managers and workers need to be involved in the creation and articulation of the vision of change. Otherwise they will become disengaged, either not collaborating in the process due to lack of seeing the whole picture or collaboration inefficiently. They will be told what to do, but they have not participated in the decision-making process, nor have their voices been heard. This will not help in their commitment toward enacting the change required by management.

Only by being aware of the need for participative and coordinated action can one take the steps necessary to be inclusive, to foster dialogue, and to be open to the participation that will co-create and coordinate movement toward the desired achievement.

Case: Fostering Relational Awareness Within a Catholic Congregation In an international Catholic congregation spread across four continents, the Superior General team wanted to be more inclusive. They had the guidelines of their general chapter to apply to the whole congregation. Some of their questions were: "How can we be sure that all guidelines of the chapter are widely spread and followed in all provinces scattered over in four continents? How can we involve young sisters in leading teams in the provinces? How can we involve lay people in decision-making and in taking more responsibility in their communities? How can we create more participation in all communities and work on projects together across provinces on four continents?"

As I had been a national coordination sister, although in a different congregation, I knew the challenges and meaning of those questions. In my experience, relational awareness was and is the main aspect to develop good communication networks, to understand each other and respect other people's point of view, allowing them to learn to work together across cultures, ages, and seniority within the core of the organization. In my experience, awareness is developed by listening deeply, by being fully present, and by having time to see and evaluate what is going on. Because of the overload of information, tasks, and to do lists, leaders do "not have the time" to listen carefully, nor are they completely present. While they are physically present in front of someone, their mind is engaged in other thoughts, and they may be even looking at their smartphone at the same time or thinking of the next task. Multi-focusing reduces the power of presence and can reduce the awareness and capacity to take clear decisions.

Tools and Practices to Develop Awareness I used different tools to awaken the awareness of the leaders, teams, and workers in or members of the organization. We used a Lifestyles Inventory, Connective Leadership Profiles, Appreciative Inquiry interviews, a Wall of Wonder, and Relational Mindfulness. It is not the aim of this chapter to explore these tools deeply but to see how to use them to develop relational awareness.

During 2018 and 2019, we carried out Appreciative Inquiry training for the Superior General team; an Appreciative Relational Leadership training for all the general leadership teams in all the provinces and regions; training for young sisters from all provinces to awaken relational awareness and help them learn how to work together in spite of being in different regions; as well as a second training session to facilitate the leading province and regional teams in becoming thinking partners for each other. In all of this training and these meetings, the main thread was to develop relational awareness, including awareness of the system as a whole.

Developing relational awareness means becoming aware of strengths, aspirations, the questions that can be asked, the language used, and the power of presence through relational mindfulness.

13.2.2 System Awareness and Inclusiveness

I understand relational awareness as being aware of the whole system. In an organization, it means being aware of the multiple truths that co-create the organization, versus one single truth (which is normally the truth as understood by the senior leaders and middle management working in a command-and-control environment). It is an invitation to share knowledge, to be aware of the stakeholders, users or clients, the providers, the workers or members, and the family or community members. It is also an invitation to be aware of where the organization has an effect or impact, on the owners, the partners, and all the staff working in or with the organization.

The shareholders traditionally value performance, endeavor, data, and objectives. This chapter proposes to balance that with experience, wisdom, integrity, and spirituality (de Jong 2016). Together, our wisdom can multiply as we share from our diversity of sources of knowledge and of our differences in culture.

Awareness of the whole means caring for each other, that "if we have a common space with limited resources, and everyone thinks only of his own desires, the resources will soon be eradicated. When no one cares for the whole, it means the ultimate deterioration of individual welfare" (Gergen 2011: 25). Mahatma Gandhi suggested that when taking a decision, we should ask ourselves if it would also benefit the poorest. He said: "Bring to mind the face of the poorest or weakest person you have ever seen, and ask yourself if the step you are thinking of taking will be of any use to them" (Axelrod 2010: 22). For Gandhi, the touchstone of any proposed action was to see how it would affect the most vulnerable person. Therefore, it was not an ideological or general question, but rather a human and particular one.

Relational awareness also applies to individual problems. When suffering from depression, we tend to focus on the individual mind as the site of repair. If one's job is boring, or the worker's boss is aggressive, why should the person be treated for her depressive feelings or his anxiety? Why not change the working conditions? We focus only on the psychological condition of the single individual and often fail to explore the broader circumstances in which actions are enmeshed. The relational atmosphere at work influences her conditions, so relationships should be taken into consideration (Gergen 2015).

To have relational awareness, one needs to ask questions, to listen, and to be open to what others are up to. When the people who work or live with a person who has decided to implement changes are not up to date with their intentions and do not live their process of change nor understand their plans for the present and future, they will question and resist. They may well oppose the change. They haven't been given the opportunity to prepare, to understand, or to support the changes that they themselves might have wanted as well; they weren't included in the process, and they are lacking information and feel disconnected. They feel excluded and don't understand how the changes have come about nor what they are for.

Case: My First Steps in Spain Create a Wave of Change in an Indian Religious Congregation In 2006, when I was at the top of my career as a national coordinator for an international congregation in Spain with its headquarters in India, I was also asking myself questions and decided to implement some changes. The culture of the organization was to suppress questioning, there was a silence of repression, of not sharing personal challenges. Having to be strong in front of others as a leader, they were not accepting when I opened my self to share my doubts with those who reported to me. My questioning of the way we were doing things in the organization was not welcomed. The culture of pretending that we knew the truth and not allowing deeper fears and doubts to emerge created suppression and closed down dialogue in meetings. Communication did not flow. I (and others) kept our traumas to ourselves.

I challenged my regional head and my Superior General by questioning some procedures, some ways of being and doing, and I was punished by being told I should not communicate nor openly share with my teams my doubts. I was told to stay at the headquarters in India and not return to Spain for some months. The thinking was that if I shared my doubts with my immediate team members, they would see my uncertainties and might lose their faith (as I was losing mine). That was not to be allowed in an organization where we had to show a strong, secure face as leaders.

The management style was very much into command-and-control; silence was a method of repression. If I asked certain questions, I was told that my mind was being influenced by ego or by the old world. And so my questioning was silenced.

There was definitely a need to change the ways of working, of being together, and of caring for each other. As communication was so difficult, I started to do some inner planning to change and did not communicate with others. When I finally took the steps to a change of leadership style, this created a crisis in the core of the national organization. They were used to a pyramidal hierarchy in which the one at the top was the one who said what should be done.

I created a team, did a lot of listening, allowed my teams to decide, and tried to install a horizontal way of working together. This was perceived in some parts of the organization as weakness. I am sharing here the learning I acquired to be more relationally aware. The steps I took created a wave of change within the organizational middle management; after a few years, many other national coordinators started working with teams in the same way, removing the command-and-control structure and installing a more participative culture.

Case: Interculturality and Inclusiveness in Religious Congregations Awareness of the system facilitates being inclusive. In working with religious congregations, being inclusive and developing a non-judgmental culture has proven to be important. In an Appreciative Inquiry summit in Rome in 2017, organized by SEDOS, the Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission, in which 55 members of the superior teams of 13 Catholic congregations participated, we worked on intercultural awareness within and outside of the congregations. What many congregations find is that their own members travel and live in a country, with a language and culture different from that of their origin. People who come to be cared for or to participate in community services are from different origins and cultures. So intercultural awareness was and is very much part of the relational awareness required within religious congregations.

Inclusiveness has also been an important part of Missional Church (Niemandt 2010), in which the indicators of a more inclusive approach vary from congregations becoming more multicultural to a congregation's acceptance of homosexual couples. In two congregations in Spain, we worked on the challenge of including lay people in some of the crucial meetings within the congregation processes of decision-making and in leading positions in some of their community centers. We organized an Appreciative Inquiry summit with participants from all over Spain

leading teams to create relational leadership capacities, awareness, and openness to the inclusion of lay people in leading roles.

Case: System Awareness in a Public Administration Institution For the city council of a town in the province of Barcelona, Spain, we worked with the themes of adapting to change, internal and external communication of values, as one of their main challenges was that their departments were like silos. The organization of 550 workers had more than 20 departments that worked in isolation, in which people were disengaged from each other. In 2015 we organized an Appreciative Inquiry summit with 200 participants representing the whole organization, from the concierge to the mayor, from heads of departments to technicians. We had five sessions of 6 h each. In every session, I included the practice of relational mindfulness, with meditation, journaling, drawing, and dialogue on their aspirations and their strengths to achieve them. The awareness of being part of a whole system was created through the relational mindfulness practices. That meant being aware of their influence on each other and the impact of their presence and their influence on citizens.

As a result, seven projects were created and taken forward. One of them included retired civil servants. The team created a talent bank in which all civil servants who wanted to contribute in the improvement of the city, the citizens, and the city council institution could be part of the bank and offer their services.

In 2017 we facilitated a second summit in which we revised the results of the projects and created new ones. This inclusive approach resulted in people developing their awareness of the whole system and facilitated internal communication. One of the projects was to create a space for informal meetings of workers and managers from different departments. Another project was to work in a systemic way between departments with the inclusion of local associations; a third was to create a decalogue of values of internal communication both within the organization and externally, with the citizens of the town.

To develop relational awareness meant for them to be aware of all the talent they had within the organization and within the system, including those who had been serving the city for many years and were now retired. It meant supporting each other and creating bridges between the departments so that their communication would flow and they would work together on projects. It also meant that they developed a feeling of belonging, with a bigger vision of what the institution was about and of who was who within the organization.

13.2.3 Relational Being

Relational awareness starts by considering the self not as an individual subject, but rather as an interrelated being that is intrinsically relational, not like atoms that constitute society in which each one lives in their own world. We are relational beings; we need the clan, the family, the team, the herd, and the community. According to Gergen there is no isolated self. Rather, we exist in a world of

co-constitution. We cannot step out of relationship; even when we think we are alone, we emerge from relationship. The future wellbeing of the planet depends to a great extent on nourishing and protecting the processes of relating. We need to take care of ourselves in an integral way if we want to foster wellbeing at work and within communities and if we want a habitable planet in harmony for our children and future generations. By "integral" I am referring to thinking and acting in a systemic way, one that takes our relationships and our impact on the environment into consideration.

When accompanying a member of the community, a worker, or a client, one aspect to bear in mind is that their declarations and statements do not originate in their independent mind, but are rather the fruit of their relational process. This process invites caring attention. By the same token, the counselor or the team leader is not responsible solely to the community member, client, or worker, but to the entire web of relations carried by the person into the community, into the consultation chamber, or into the work environment (Gergen 2015). It is not enough to assist the person in moving into a new pattern of action; I experienced the importance of attending also the ramifications of this pattern within the relational matrix to which the person returns.

13.2.4 Relational Leading

> There is no single theory or definitive account of relational leading. Rather, it is more appropriate to view relational leading as a dialogue among many participants – both theorists and practitioners – who have shifted their focus from the individual leader to the processes of creating meaning within the organization. (See Drath 2001; Barrett 2012; Raelin 2016) This dialogue may also be viewed not as terminating when the answer is located, but as continuously stimulated by ongoing transformations in global context. (Gergen 2016: 31)

To invite a reflection on differences in practice of the traditional and the relational leadership, see Table 13.1 in which I divide the contrasting approaches in five areas: general orientation to leadership, the way leaders approach group work, relating face-to-face, the dynamics of solving problems, and what is given value.

Case: Relational Leading Deconstructing Traditional Power Structures and Involving Laity in Religious Congregations Relational leading may mean deconstructing power structures, which in some congregations I worked with had been a key move to empower laity. Niemandt (2010) shares the case of a congregation that empowered members to make decisions where their own lives were concerned. Power structures were deconstructed and there was a new impetus to involve the laity. In some cases, the power structure is deconstructed because there is no one else in the congregation to take the lead. This was the case of a training center in Barcelona devoted to taking care of and training prostitutes find employment. This was especially important as they were not registered as citizens in Spain, so they needed a job contract to remain in the country. The center was led by a congregation sister, but she had to resign due to age, leaving laity to take care of the project. We

Table 13.1 Comparing traditional and relational leadership

	Traditional leadership	Relational leadership
General orientation	Individual is primary	Relationship is primary
	Individual has partial awareness	Relational awareness
	Generate structures	Process
	Adapt	Innovate
	Impact in return	Impact on environment
	Consider the self or a small team	Consider the community
Working with groups	Set the task	Set the conditions
	Direct	Enlist and include
	Maintain surveillance	Maintain mutual rapport
	Utilitarian	Co-create wellbeing
	Listening from the assumption "I know"	Empathic, open and generative listening
Relating face-to-face	Define rank	Model good relating
	Dictate	Listen
	Correct	Appreciate
	Feedback	Feedforward
	Negative emotions	Positive emotions
	Instrumental motivation	Meaning and purpose as drivers
Solving problems dynamics	Restoration and reaction	Proactive
	Focus on solving problems	Focus on leveraging strengths
	Reducing damage	Creating wellbeing
	Inefficiency	Achievement
Value	Economic value	Sustainable value and flourishing
	Limited vision	Whole-system approach
	Transactional interaction	Generative interaction
	Nature as a resource	Nature as life living

worked with Appreciative Inquiry, relational awareness, and dialogue to make it happen, as there were resistance within the congregation and fear that the values they carried would be lost.

Case: Relational Leading from Power Within. My Personal Experience Relational leading requires understanding oneself and the other. In my case, as a national coordinator of a religious congregation in 2006, I realized that power was within me and that I did not want to cling onto the power given to me by virtue of my position in a leading role. I understood myself in relation to another person in the congregation. I realized that the relationship did not turn into a process of isolation, but rather into a movement that allowed me and the other to discover our own motives as a group, our own thoughts, and our own searches; and that discovery was the beginning of openness, liberation, and transformation. That was possible only when the other and I were no longer seeking power.

Relational Leading and the Metaphor of Jazz Barrett (2012) uses the metaphor of the jazz band as a way of relational leading. We can ally ourselves and form a team, sharing the power to lead as jazz bands do, where musicians alternate between being the soloist and following the soloist. That way we support each other in relational leading (Barrett 2012). Shared power generates co-responsibility, complicity, and co-creation. Shared leadership power is possible when we as leaders have a strong relational awareness helping us to understand the other in the team and learn to work together in co-creating our wellbeing. Good relationships are those in which we add up and, together, we are better. We stop comparing negatively, competing, criticizing, and being jealous. We move on to cooperate, join together, value, and support one another.

Case: Relational Leading Practices in a Religious Congregation's Leadership Teams In Spain in 2018, in a training session for the leadership teams of the six provinces from four continents of a religious congregation of sisters, we worked on the differences between leading as the conductor of a classical orchestra and leading as a jazz band. We had 35 people in the room from 10 countries. The participants created a series of relational practices to include in their way of leading. They had an in-depth dialogue and created an action plan to develop and apply each one of the relational practices in their leadership style. Some of these were to appreciate; transparency in being and communicating; courage; to reflect in groups; humility; integrity; and presence and discipline. All these practices are easier to apply when introducing relational mindfulness daily, which helps one to be fully present. See section on "Presence and Relational Mindfulness" for further development of this subject.

13.3 Enhancing Relational Awareness Through Communication

Relational awareness is created and expanded through clear communication. In this section I will explore four key aspects that enhance relational awareness through communication: the power of questions; the language of abundance; connection: creating bridges; and five relational acts.

13.3.1 The Power of Questions

Questions can generate creative ideas that foster the right change (Cooperrider, 2002). The art of asking ourselves questions has important implications, not only for changing our assumptions but also in the creation of new possibilities for

constructive action. Questions are key to creating relational awareness. By asking the right generative question, we can enlarge and expand awareness of our relational net.

Gervase Bushe (2007: 30–35) sets out four qualities of generative questions:

> 1. They are surprising. 2. They touch people's heart and spirit. 3. Talking about and listening to these stories and answers will build relationships. And 4. The questions force us to view reality a little differently, either because of how they ask us to think, or because of who we are listening to.

The appreciative question does not reiterate the problem, but rather transcends it (Subirana 2016). It is a question that fosters relational awareness as it generates curiosity; stimulates reflective conversation; brings underlying assumptions to the surface; invites creativity and new possibilities; opens the door to change; generates energy, vitality, and advancement; channels the attention and focus of the chosen subject; centers the intention; touches the depth, the why, and the "what for" of what you do and who you are; connects to meaning; leads us to the future; and evokes more questions.

We can ask ourselves, for example: what can we do that might help us change this situation? What possibilities do we have that we haven't yet explored? What small change can bring about the greatest impact? What solution would benefit us? What moves and harmonizes human relationships? What do we need to do to provide more opportunities for inspiring worship in our community service?

The way of perceiving and understanding a situation can change in an unexpected way, and it can be approached from a new angle, thanks to the questions we ask. It can improve our emotional bonds and our work relationships. These are questions that lead us to a constructive reflection. They arise from an appreciative perspective and stimulate appreciative dialogue. Appreciative inquiry is based on formulating questions that facilitate motivation, cooperation, and the co-creation of a better reality for all parties involved. With the practice of relational mindfulness, our questions are inclusive of the work the questions will do on me, on the other, and on the conversation that those questions will create.

There are other kinds of questions that anchor us in negativity and reiterate the problems: what is the biggest problem here? Why do you never listen to me? Why are you wrong so often? Why do we still have these problems? How could the vestry be more helpful in accomplishing this goal? What are we still doing wrong? Why are you communicating in this way to me (or to us)? These are questions that take us to what is going wrong. Although they aim to find a solution, they create the effect of thinking and sharing more about the problem. Where we focus our attention, that grows.

The questions lead us either to stay stuck in the past, creating blame and defensive attitudes, or to live and learn in the present and to generate transformation. There are questions that are incentives to transform, for example: What is the point of being trapped by stress, bitter feelings, in a void, and without achievements? How can we move on? Why am I going to carry on with these recurring experiences, which repeat themselves time and again? Why isn't my life going as I want it to?

These questions invite us to review our internal programming and the perceptions, beliefs, and memories that block our progress. They enlarge our awareness of how we live relationships.

There are questions that invite us to listen to ourselves deeply and to be aware of the relational field in which we are immersed. For example: what nourishes you? Which are your sources of energy? In which part of your life do you feel that a possibility can open up? What is in you that wants to be born and flourish? What is your inner call? Sitting in mindfulness, silently and fully present, invites these questions to dwell inside and the answers to come from a deeper space within. Silencing the chatter of the mind, we allow a clarity to emerge, a clarity that will not manifest as an idea from the intellect but from the depth of our being.

Case: Executive Team Changes the Questions They Ask in Their Meetings In an international organization that provides health services, the executive team were disconnected from each other, although the CEO was convening a meeting once a week to try to solve the situation. It was an organization with 21 medical radiotherapy and oncology centers in Spain (belonging to a company with 130 centers in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Spain). Out of the eight people forming the senior leadership team, six came from the merging of two companies, and two were new members. They came from different organizational cultures, which led to competing instead of collaborating. Each one thought their approach was best. We had a team building and leadership workshop in 2018, in which we worked on the importance of the questions they asked each other in general as well as starting meetings with inspiring, generative questions that would lead to productive connective conversations. I included in the workshop relational mindfulness sessions that helped them be aware of how their stress and pressure was affecting the way they communicated, influencing the tension in the team.

Mindfulness helped them realize how the questions that they asked led to confrontational conversations instead of collaborative ones. Each one did a Lifestyles Inventory test that showed that they were mostly established in the power, command-and-control style. Through relational mindfulness and Appreciative Inquiry coaching, we worked on improving self-realization, being more human-oriented by encouraging others instead of being self-centered, working on reaching achievements from setting inner goals (instead of externally imposed goals), and working to create an environment of affiliation and empathy between the members of their teams.

Awareness of Assumptions Relational awareness means being aware of assumptions and to either change them or use them correctly. Vogt et al. (2003: 5) gave this example of contrasting the question "What did we do wrong and who is responsible?" with "What can we learn from what's happened, and what possibilities do we see?" The first question assumes error and blame, and the person who has to answer it will without doubt go on the defensive. The second question encourages reflection and stimulates learning and collaboration among those involved.

In silence, meditating and relaxing the mind, the circuits of our brain calm down and we rest on our capacity to invent and to reinvent ourselves. In that space, we increase our creative capacity and the right question appears, allowing us to find the answer we need (Subirana, 2018).

When we participate in a conversation in which there are upset, wounded, or angry feelings, let us choose the questions we ask in that moment with care. We might lean on the possibility of talking about aspirations and of creating an image of what those involved in the conversation want. For example, instead of asking what it is they don't like, we can ask what they think is needed, what it is that they most want, what image they have of how their environment should be, and what they would visualize as their ideal future. These kinds of questions have a greater generative potential, as they lead people to look for what attracts them and to detach from what frustrates and angers them.

Case: Executive Team and Their "Conversations Worth Having" Jackie Stavros and I worked, in Barcelona in 2019, with the executive team in Spain and Portugal of a multinational cosmetic company present in 27 countries. The team is formed of eight managers in different offices and cities in the two countries. We noted that their day-to-day communication was mostly online and there were pending conversations, unresolved conversations to have, leading to misunderstandings. We led a workshop in which we included the importance of being aware of the questions we ask and the relational impact of them because they take us to different and better-quality conversations. In the process of developing their relational awareness, we explored their choices. Our aim was to inspire them to choose curiosity over knowing and assuming through the use of generative questions to shift the dynamics of their communication at work. When we know and assume, we generally don't ask questions; we just say what we think. By being curious, we ask questions to find out from the other, to show we care and value them, and to promote a generative conversation. It is not about ignoring the problem, but about inquiring into and talking about what we want more of. The right questions can flip a conversation. Asking questions in an ongoing conversation can shift the focus, tone, and direction of a conversation (Stavros and Torres 2018).

13.3.2 The Language of Abundance

The language of abundance is one that, in its narratives, uses words focused on what one has and what one wants. It implies the use of inspiring and affirmative words instead of narrating from what is lacking and what does not work. A change in discourse is needed, given that often we spend so much time resolving problems that we lose track along the way of what is really important for us. We use a language of problem-solving, focusing on what doesn't work and on what needs to be fixed. Our awareness, our conversations, and our efforts are centered on solving what isn't going well, instead of creating what we wish for and building the best future.

The majority of interventions by consultants whose objective is to make changes in an organization (or to help an individual to change their present situation) have approaches that begin by talking about the problem that needs to be solved; they analyze what did not work, and, often, they look for the person who is to blame or responsible for the situation. They focus on the worst of what is, examining what is going wrong in the organization. The assumed belief is that if problems are solved, the desired future will arrive automatically. They do not create a compelling image that will shed light on the actions that need to be designed to achieve it. Rather, they work on the basis of what is already known, of keeping the status quo and being conservative (Cooperrider et al. 2008).

Appreciative Inquiry takes us to different dimensions, going from diagnostic into dialogic inquiry. Instead of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) approach, it uses SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results; Stavros 2019); it asks when people and the organization have been in their best moment and what it was that gave life to the system, leading us to a search for sources of imagination, creativity, and energy. With this approach we bring to our awareness the strengths, the aspirations, the opportunities, and the results that our relational system wants and focus on them:

> We have reached 'the end of problem solving' as a mode of inquiry capable of inspiring, mobilizing and sustaining human system change, and the future of organization development belongs to methods that affirm, compel and accelerate anticipatory learning involving larger and larger levels of collectivity. (Cooperrider et al. 2008)

The new language is the expression of an organic change taking place in 12 congregations studied by Niemandt (2010). Hirsch (2006: 53) mentions the importance of new narratives in congregational transformation. Branson (2004: xiii) also refers to the fact that transformation happens through language and conversations. "A congregation needs a particular kind of conversation, a generative discourse, to create the perceptions and imaginations adequate to comprehensive renewal" (Branson 2004:37). "The new language eventually led to transformation in the congregation and the establishment of a new congregational identity" (Niemandt 2010: 16).

Case: Change of Language in Faculty Staff of a Music School The awareness of the power of using language of abundance in improving relationships was very useful in a situation of great conflict and violent communication between the faculty staff of an educational institution, the Municipal Music Conservatory, in the Basque country in Spain. The faculty staff (31 people) were in conflict with each other; at each meeting they could not reach agreement. The language used was violent, blaming, and defensive. This created a bad working atmosphere in which professors were disengaged and not open to give nor receive feedback. I worked with them on connecting with their strengths and their aspirations using a language of abundance and nonviolent communication in a summit of 1 week (2017). During the week we worked on developing an appreciative gaze for each other and a relational awareness through dialogue, relational mindfulness, and powerful questions carefully drafted to generate kindness and respect in their conversations. As a result, they

designed an agreement, a Decalogue, with ten guidelines that they all committed to follow.

Change of Discourse When we talk about what we want and about our dreams, we go from a discourse based on deficit to a discourse based on strengths. Achieving this is not easy because we have baggage and habits that have led us for a long time to focus on what is lacking. We get stuck in what we don't like and it becomes difficult for us to change the conversation. I often find that on asking "What do you want?", the person starts answering but within a minute goes back to the difficulties and what doesn't work. Our language is more about deficit than abundance. A change of discourse requires a change of language. We need to be alert and attentive to the baggage that we carry. And we need to reformulate the question to become: "I am aware that there are difficulties. Now, let's leave them to one side for a moment. Allow yourself to imagine how your life would be if you achieved your ideal. What would be happening? How would you feel? What would you achieve?" Through our conversations we create our present and our future. What do we talk about? How inspiring are our conversations? What words do we use that allow us to create and imagine better presents and futures? To what point is our perception tainted by the conversations that we hold?

Case: Preparing for a Difficult Meeting Through Relational Mindfulness Relational Mindfulness practice is useful before difficult meetings or challenging conversations. I accompanied a manager before he went into a conversation with a former working partner. He knew it would awaken the worst in him, as he was angry and resentful of what his partner had done. He wanted to come to an agreement. He knew the only way was through dialogue, not through confrontational language. In our meetings he visualized his best self and the use of a language of abundance to achieve an agreement that would be good for both.

13.3.3 Connection: Creating Bridges

In an environment in which we focus on what is not working, what is lacking, and what has been done wrong, we foster attitudes of blame and defensiveness that separate us, creating silos and misunderstandings. In this environment little energy will be found to create inspiring actions in the future. Whatever change comes from that will be initiated from a motivation of defensiveness and fear to avoid further judgment, rather than a loving desire to provide inspiring action. Even if the performance has been poor and the goal largely unmet, if we focus on the desired goal and in discovering even the rare occasions when the actions with positive impact have occurred, these conversations will be providing valuable information on what needs to be done in order to move toward our goal. Some questions that could help us achieve this move are:

What are the qualities of your team that stimulate the most motivation and engagement?

What could help people be engaged in the big picture of our organization?

> When would it be helpful to recognize that honoring many individual voices has helped develop a strong image of the future? When the pace of organizational change speeds up it can seem counterproductive to take time out to review progress. What would make such a timeout worthwhile for the many people and levels involved? Do we track the small steps enough? Are there examples of organizations that are good at tracking the small steps people take which contribute to large-scale change? (Radford 2009: 3–4)

These questions are aimed to create connection and build bridges between the workers, teams, and leaders in an organization or community.

Case: Holding on to Traditions and the Renewal Needs of a Catholic Congregation Building bridges and strengthening the connection was necessary to work with the dilemma between holding on to traditions and the renewal needs of a Catholic congregation created and established two centuries ago in Spain and now present in 20 countries. The whole congregation was and is in need of renewal of the relational processes in terms of leading, decision-making, participating, and being inclusive. In 2019 we used Appreciative Inquiry principles and the ten principles of a relationship of help to empower them as thinking partners (Schein 1999). They shared the different situations in which they found themselves in terms of having different voices that confronted holding on to traditions and wanting renewal. Some of these voices, were when the sister in the regional leading team held to tradition, while a young sister held with renewal proposals; the communities had renewal proposals but their regional team was more conservative; two members of the same team one looking forward, the other holding on to tradition, and other relational situations that they find themselves in which the two confronting perspectives are strong. As a result of the intervention, they became more aware of the dynamics in the relationships and how to engage in a dialogue including all voices to move forward. The Superior General team of the congregation designed a prototype to clarify their vision of change from a hierarchical-pyramidical way of leading to a relational leading network, building bridges among the different provinces, groups, communities, and laity. See Fig. 13.1.

13.3.4 Five Relational Acts

Instead of seeing the organization as a rationally controlled structure, Gergen proposes the vision of organizing as conversation. “Effective organizing is brought into being through a relational process of constructing meaning and value together” (Gergen 2016: 33). Leaders and managers then change from a position of governing the conversation to participating within it, inviting others to co-create. For this shift to happen, relational awareness is required, that is, to be aware, first, of how we ask for help or for a task to be done; second, of how we offer to do something, to

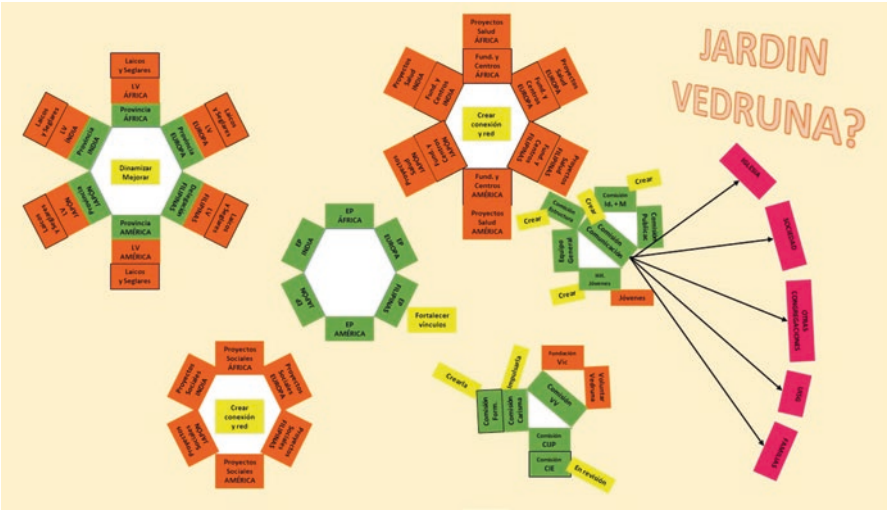

Fig. 13.1 Prototype of relational leading

co-create, to collaborate, or to help; and third, of how we come to agreements in a co-creative way for a coordinated action. For these three relational acts to be successful and well-coordinated, it is important to add two others: fourth, to listen and fifth, to recognize. (See Quintana and Cisternas 2014.)

Case: Changing the Way the CEO Undertakes Relational Acts The national manager of a worldwide sports brand company in Mexico was unaware of his negative and repressive impact on his teams. His presence and communication style was creating defensive attitudes among his team managers. The feedback from team leaders, managers, and workers in the company from his country and also from the headquarters of the region was that the manager was very harsh and did not value his people. They would say that he was very bossy and rigid; that he was unaware of this, in spite of being told; and that he had a blind spot in which he did not recognize his own limitations.

He needed to change from a command-and-control style to relational leading. In several coaching sessions, we worked on (1) how he asked for things, (2) how he offered his wisdom as a mentor, and (3) how he reached agreements with his colleagues. We saw that the way he phrased questions and requests assumed that he was always right, that he took for granted that if people needed his mentoring they would ask for it – which did not happen – and that when coming to agreements, he would assume the other had understood and accepted his arguments. We worked on increasing his relational awareness by being more appreciative and listening more.

One of the tools I used with him was the Connective Leadership Mirror, based on the value systems developed by Clare W. Graves (1970). The Connective Leadership Mirror was developed in 2009 by C. J. Hoogendijk and was translated from Dutch into other languages in 2019. Working with the manager's value system, we saw

that he held on to traditions and was using force and power as a way to manage people and situations; that structure, rules, and control were his strong assets; and that he was very focused on objectives and success. On the other hand, the picture of his managing style showed that he placed a low value on creativity, innovation, development, or working together, that he did not focus on humanizing the organization and dialogue, and that holistic methods and sustainability were the lowest in his ranking of values. I am using him as an example, but I have found many managers that I have coached in Spanish-speaking countries have similar profiles.

The Relational Triangle to Enhance Relational Awareness of Leaders Working on the relational triangle of asking, offering, and agreeing is a way to start shifting the value system of a manager to a more human, dialogical, and relational awareness-based communication and relationship. On a daily basis, the manager asks, suggests, imposes, and directs, wanting others to do things. It could also be as an offering or an invitation to another to do something that the manager considers necessary. Others can reject, discuss, or negotiate these requests and offers, and dialogue is necessary to reach an agreement on what needs to be done, how, when, where, and who will do it. Agreements allow the movement toward articulated action, making it possible to promise and expect that others will act upon what has been agreed. We can then evaluate the results on the basis of our agreements. At times, the results are not what was expected because the agreements were not clearly articulated.

When a manager asks for something to be done in a dictatorial way, he does not make it easy for the other to express his or her point of view; the other just becomes someone that has to obey and do, and he or she is not recognized nor listened to. Agreements then are not agreed upon; they are commands to obey. This creates blockages in relationships at the core of the organization. People do not feel that wellbeing is important to the organization. They are neither seen nor appreciated. If the manager is in a hurry, due to daily pressure, he asks in an imprecise way, without giving details of what is really needed and without listening properly to make sure the other has understood. At other times the manner of asking assumes that the expectation has been understood, and then one makes a claim that it has not been met. A manager's expectations can create pressure on the other to offer to do something that they are not capable of or cannot do due to their existing workload. When someone offers to do something out of a desire to please, to demonstrate, or to anticipate a solution and cannot do it in the end, the tension escalates. Offering is an important part of the triangle of relational action that leads to agreements. It may be necessary and very positive to offer to repair an unfulfilled commitment or a mistake.

To develop relational awareness, one needs to ask, offer, and come to agreements clearly. To reach agreements implies a process of formulating statements that are co-created and allows commitments from people to coordinate effectively future actions.

Two Key Practices to Regulate the Relational Triangle To listen is key to regulating the triangle of asking, offering, and agreeing. How a manager listens to another

will help, or not, the flow of understanding, co-creating meaning of what is being asked, offered, agreed, and done. "In relational leading, listening takes precedence. Plans and policies should ideally reflect the opinions and values of the participants. The more one listens, the more sophisticated and effective the resulting decisions" (Gergen 2016: 33).

Another key element in regulating the triangle of action is to recognize and appreciate. "In relational leading, appreciation is one of the best ways to vitalize morale and good working relations" (Gergen 2016: 33). Using processes based on appreciation and positive inquiry, we seek to discover and build on the things that give value to the relationship between members in a community or workers in an organization. Valuing process provides the inspiration to make continual improvement in the direction of increasing value. It is a question of seeking to find and study valuable accomplishments rather than failures, for the failures generally will only tell us what not to do, not necessarily informing us about what to do.

To listen and to appreciate the other strengthens communication and facilitates focus on the value of the person, their accomplishments, and the way an individual can respond to certain questions, such as: What do I do when my manager feels the need to impose the action to be done? What do I do when my manager has a hard time accepting "no" as my response? How do I accept my manager's "no" to my proposal? The practice of relational mindfulness empowers us to listen, to appreciate, and to be able to answer these questions with nonviolent communication and with building bridges. Then the flow in communication does not stop.

The diversity in the workforce, the increasing amount of information, and the speed of change put our relationships at risk, especially as plans must be changed or abandoned at short notice as world and work conditions change. Openness in communication, acceptance, humility, and trust are key to regulating the five relational acts. I will explore these in the next section.

13.4 Presence and Relational Mindfulness

Being present with relational awareness involves having and feeling an appreciative attitude, one from which you don't make judgments, but accept and embrace multiple perspectives. Out of acceptance, you embrace the moment and the people as they are. Even when you don't agree, acceptance helps you not to resist what is. Your presence recognizes and is recognized. That way your presence is transformative. It becomes a mirror for the other; it is a generative presence that helps the other to flourish. It is transformative out of acceptance and acknowledging the value of the other. On the other hand, when you are present with resistance, impatience, or irritation, you confront, but you do not transform.

Your appreciative attitude manifests itself even in silence. It is an attitude that is active, positive, aware, and trusting. It is actively present, listening and promoting the best in others. It focuses on the strengths of others and on strengthening them. It

is a presence completely awake and alert, with mastery over "being." And it is trusting, allowing the uncovering and flourishing of one's own and the other persons' resources, in which both are daring to be creative.

13.4.1 The Self and the Other

Relational awareness in your presence is connected to which self you are living in. You can live your self, the I, me, and mine, in different dimensions. Buber (2017) shares three main dimensions. The first one he identifies with Napoleon, which is not relational at all. The person whose presence is centered in him-/herself sees the other only as a means to achieve his/her own goals. It is an empty "I" that is possessed by the need for power and greed. Buber identifies the second dimension of the self with Socrates. It is the dialogic self, the self of the endless dialogue that manifests itself in Socratic maieutics. It is about bringing to light what is in our inner being through dialogue. The self allows the you to give its best, to make the best of itself. It is an honest self that recognizes the other. The just gives rise to the other and gives the place to the other.

Buber mentions another relationship between the I and the You with the example of Jesus for whom the You is someone superior. It is a You that makes you give much more of the self; it has more strength to accompany you in transcending your limited self. The You is the Father, whom Jesus called Abba. An unconditional relationship is established between the I and the You, in which the human being calls You as Father and/or Mother. It can also be You as the whole, as the transcendent. The self trusts and loves the You unconditionally. The relationship leads them to a unity in which the me is in the You and the You is in the me. It is a self that has transcended the ego. It is a me that is You. It is being awake and in full awareness of our relational self which is not an isolated being.

13.4.2 From Self-Centered to Relational Awareness

The fundamental change, not only in mindfulness but in life, is to move from living centered on the self to living conscious of the "you." It is to realize that you are relational and place the relational being, the me-you, in the center. To make the transition from the reference of the self to the reference of the other, that is to say of the you-other, of the eternal You, we must live a profound transformation. This transformation consists of ceasing to be everything we are not and with which we have identified. When the leader is conscious of the dialogical self and the transcendent You, he or she does not hold on to power, position, or privileges and is aware that there is a deeper inner power, what in AI is called the positive core and Franz Jálics calls the healthy core (Jálics, 1994). When leaders work from this positive core, they flourish together with others. It requires a deep practice of relational

mindfulness to be able to let go of what one is not (e.g., one is not the role nor the position) and invite true co-creation with others. This is very important, as, for example, in Greece and Spain when the economic crisis of 2008 arrived, many top managers committed suicide when they lost their position, privileges, and power within their organization.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) introduced the term "interbeing." I am because you are. I am thanks to you. Who I am and how I am influences you and affects the world. I am a relational being. The non-divided relationship invites non-duality between the self and the other, the you. In the majority of western languages, it is difficult to express, because the individualistic notions are immersed in the vocabulary and grammar. We can create meaning from words, such as participant, group, community, friendship, partnership, and complicity, and see them as possibilities for relational being without individualistic separation, focusing on what binds us and unites us.

Thanks to being aware that I am relational, I consider the other, and this makes it easier for me to change my self-centered tendencies. For example, seeing, feeling, and recognizing the other as a legitimate you and not as a useful object, my ambition for power is dismantled. By taking the other into account, I can transform ambition of power into power to serve.

13.4.3 Servant Leadership

All religious and spiritual traditions affirm the importance of serving, of charity, and of dedicating ourselves to others. We can change an attitude of greed into an attitude of giving, sharing, and being generous. In leadership it means to be a servant-leader:

> It tends to be something of a challenge for leaders to adopt a position of humility, since they are often expected to show strength in order to manage through power. However, in present-day society, the strength of the leaders resides in their ability to serve rather than dominate by force. It is a question of being a leader who understands how to serve. In today's society that means that, from the point of view of humility, they can continue to be highly respected leaders, but at the same time they will recognize that sometimes they don't know, as they don't know everything. They will serve the people they have been entrusted with, and be aware that knowledge, and the wisdom of knowing, exists in the collective. (de Jong 2016: 145–146)

Servant-leaders are also discussed by Subirana and Cooperrider (2013: 134–136).

As servant leaders, if we connect with the I-you and live the consciousness of the whole, the source of life that is generous springs in us, and we become generous. The origin of mindfulness comes from Buddhist practices designed to dismantle our sense of individual self, to go from being self-centered to relationally centered, from me to us. In relational mindfulness practices, we work to change self-centered attitudes, such as the desire for popularity which can be transformed into appreciation and recognition of the uniqueness of the other. The moment you respect yourself,

you are able to recognize the other without needing to feel superior or ensure that he admires you. Anger can be transformed into forgiveness, empathy, and compassion. We can incorporate into our lives relational practices that allow us to transform the creations of the separated self into experiences and emotions that open us to the other. Anger rejects and separates you from the other; greed leads you to disregard the needs of the other and ignore them. On the other hand, compassion, joy, trust, and generosity open you to the other.

13.4.4 From Fear to Trust

To get away from the reference of the isolated self and move on to the reference of the you, of the relational being, it is important to transform fear into trust. Fear isolates you, separates you, and weakens you by provoking an insecurity that can paralyze, leading to not taking decisions, to not entering into action, and to not moving forward. Fear arises from the egocentric self-reference. The ego fears dying, losing its identity, and ceasing to exist. When fear takes hold of you, you shrink. Your potential diminishes. "You are afraid of what it is. Your destiny is wholeness. But you are afraid of losing your identity" (Nisargadatta 2017: 230).

With the practice of relational mindfulness, you develop trust in you, in the eternal You, in the other, in the way, and in the processes that you are living. Trusting your own vital sources helps you to not be so concerned of others' opinions about you. You develop confidence when you know yourself more and better:

> At present our trust in ourselves is insecure. We tend rather to believe that we have unleashed forces that we no longer control and have exploited the earth's natural resources so forcefully that we run the risk of depleting them when our grandchildren grow up. However, the main cause of our confusion and alienation is that we have lost the support of a common faith in fundamental goodness, in the reasonable character and personal integrity of humanity, in fact, we have lost the support of all faith. What we share are the reproaches, the protests, the complaints against something, rarely a testimony in favor of something. However, it is possible to enjoy a deeper and more valuable unity, rooted in the common perception of the potential of the human spirit, rather than in the limitations of life. (Main 2008: 53–54)

13.4.5 Openness to Feedback and Offering Feedforward

Relational awareness helps leaders to trust their people. Trust opens the way for giving and receiving feedback forthrightly and not behind the back. It requires courage from the leader's point of view to be open to the feedback received. The feedback from the community will oscillate between approval and disapproval. Above all, in the case of less than flattering feedback, one needs courage to fully accept that it also is valuable. It is much simpler to accept certain parts of the feedback, leaving aside others that are not deemed to be important. The practice of appreciation tells us that we should fully accept all parts of the feedback and try to understand them.

I introduce here the practice of feedforward, as it focuses on the future actions as well as a person's past and present strengths and their cares for the relationship that allow it to move forward:

> The practice of reflection is one of the key elements for assessing feedback in an open way. It means that the person can sit down and think about questions such as: What have I learned or what can I learn from this feedback, or, what is the true gift that I have been given through this feedforward? This practice will open up the way to accepting almost any kind of feedback, (making it into a feedforward), smoothing out the obstacles that can arise from the differences in power. (de Jong 2016: 143–144)

13.4.6 Relational Mindfulness: Co-creating Shared Meaning

To enhance relational awareness between everyone present in a room, in a meeting, for example, it is good to start with a practice of relational mindfulness to create a feeling of togetherness and belonging. From this relational space, ideas and communication flow into creating shared meaning, moment by moment, by the participants in the group or meeting and are accepted without judgment from an external privileged position. The expectations of a specific role of a manager, leader, or professor are eliminated, as there is trust in each participant as an expert of their own experience. Dialogue can then flow without the influence of someone taking on a role of superiority. This helps participants to be receptive and open to listening, sharing, and talking together. As well, the location, decoration, colors used, furniture: everything influences the creation of an atmosphere that makes co-creation possible.

In the practice of relational mindfulness, we explore our capacity to let go of assumptions and prejudices; we change narratives from the "I" perspective to the "we" and from "we lack" to "we have," that is, from deficit language to a language of abundance. We sit in a circle, so that no one is facing anyone else's back and everyone can see all those present in the room. The manager or the person in charge becomes a coordinator who does not impose, but rather facilitates, the emergence of the potential of all present by asking powerful, appreciative questions. We are aware that together we are in interbeing, we are a system, and we influence each other in our experiences.

Through the practice of relational mindfulness, we invite each participant to experience the present moment as unique; being together contributes to the enhancement of our personal experience. It does not disconnect us from it. We then enter into a contemplative dimension in which we are transported by the presence of the group beyond the reasoned dimension which contributes finally in going beyond the limited self. The sense of "I" is reduced and one opens up to the experience of being with the other.

13.4.7 Relational Awareness Connected to Our Relationship with the World

Our relationship with the world has a direct influence on our being, our presence, and how we approach meditation and mindfulness. If we consider the world as a place of struggle and despair and a place of restlessness and constant suffering, we may have a tendency to flee, to hide, to turn our back, or to feel indifferent, embracing the attitude of "I don't care." Entering a practice of mindfulness from an inner space of rejection of life in and of the world is not the best attitude to strengthen and live in harmony with and within the world. Not establishing a positive relationship with the world means that we cannot awaken all our vital potential to face, be proactive, and ultimately live in the world from the consciousness of abundance that allows us to find ways to move forward and communicate with those around us.

When we are exhausted, either by daily pressures or by our struggles and responsibilities, it is good to retreat for a few days to disconnect from the world and to reconnect with our vitality and our healthy core. It is a temporary disconnection to take a break and return with renewed energies. Going into a retreat is not a rejection of the world or a desire to get away from it, it is an affirmation and a love of life. When one affirms life, love and appreciation for it and for the world grow. Meditating from the affirmation of life and love takes us to spaces of otherness and transcendence very different than if we meditate from an interior space of rejection and indifference.

We create an environment of calmness and safety; the group responds with a social commitment: that is, they commit to actions that are centered in the other and not in the individualistic I. They resonate with others in the group. They co-create finding themselves in a fertile soil in which many possibilities for actions together can take root and flourish.

Due to the unhealthy relationships and climate in various organizations, we find more people exploring mindfulness practices to reduce stress. An increasing number of people leave work with anxiety, depression, and stress. Organizations need leaders and managers with relational awareness at all levels who are open to guide, mentor, be inclusive, and co-create with others instead of issuing orders and pushing them into action, which adds to anxiety and stress.

The practice of relational mindfulness helps the person tap into his or her own positive core. They can then cease to be defensive or on the offensive in response to something or someone and respond in a spirit of unconditional appreciation and support. There is no otherness but oneness. The person feels one with the other. The leader finds within themselves an empathic presence fully aware of the presence of others. Relationally aware leaders establish a relationship with the world in which they are respectful of the environment without generating a harmful dependence that causes fear in others.

13.5 Summary: Implications for Practice

Relational practices are essential to take organizations from a command-and-control culture to a future, hopefully a near future, in which organizations develop the promoting of dialogic processes of learning involving the whole system; that is, they involve greater numbers of people sharing their vision, their knowing, and their experience to bring more clarity to the decision-making process, as they take into account the diversity of voices involved in the organization. In return, this will foster wellbeing, commitment, and shared responsibility. Collective wisdom is needed to take congregations and organizations forward, and relational practices are key to bringing it out.

The practice of relational mindfulness creates the awareness of the relational field. In traditional mindfulness practices, one develops an awareness of the body, state of mind, and personal levels of stress or wellbeing. Being aware of the relational field, one grows into a caring leader, aware and taking care of how one asks, offers, and comes to agreements; caring is listening, recognizing, and appreciating. A caring servant-leader becomes a model of good relating, inspiring their teams and awakening positive emotions in them. A relational leader gives feedforward, empowering their people to tap into their potential, to move on, and to flourish.

Relational practices enhance the transformative presence of the leader. The leader develops the values of a transformative presence, including generosity, trust, self-confidence, courage, transparency, openness, adaptability, humility, tolerance, and gratitude. He or she develops the skills of being a thinking partner, a facilitator, and a leader who nourishes generative conversations that co-create meaning with others.

The strength of the leader comes from within, from his or her dreams, and from the strong bonds created with others. Even when the leader has power, position, and privileges, he or she does not cling to it and is not afraid to share with others. Relational awareness means that the leader is conscious of the increase of power and wellbeing when it is shared. He or she does not hold on to power structures, being aware of the need to constantly adapt in changing cultures. The servant-leader empowers people to work on processes and projects with a flow of communication that is open and trusting, using language of abundance to change deficit-centered cultures in which people complain, are negative, and are stuck, to spaces of appreciation, recognition, and wellbeing. They are creative leaders: in words of former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, “their creative presence transforms dreams in reality, breaking the limits of the impossible … it is the greatest transcendence as it establishes new paths, new directions, because it allows evolution and faces inertia, so pernicious” (Mayor-Zaragoza 2011: 12). This leader moves forward as dreams and questions take him or her out of the limited frame of problem-centered reality, meaning that he or she is able to tap into the energy that compelling images give them.

We can compare the practices of relational mindfulness and Appreciative Inquiry with jazz jam sessions where the musicians sit or stand so that they can see each

other. Each musician brings an instrument and his or her own potential and knowledge. They co-create in the present moment from a space of knowing and unknowing: they listen to each other, sharing the decision-making process. They prioritize connectivity; they are aware of and flow one into the other, from the I to the you, expressing themselves and co-creating meaning together. We can say the same of the relational mindfulness practice in which the participant is present in the here and now, expresses his or her potential, is open to the knowing and the unknowing, is listening and sharing, is co-creating, and is aware of what emerges from the group.

Organizations, congregations, and institutions need leaders with a transformative presence capable of fostering relational practices that awaken awareness of the five relational acts: the power of questions; the use of language of abundance; creating bridges between what should be conserved and what needs to be transformed; and adapting the introduction of innovation in an atmosphere of wellbeing in which each one flourishes, the team flourishes, the organization flourishes, and they are respectful of the environment.

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Chapter 14
Mindfulness and the Generative Perspective: A Dialogue/Virtuous Circle

Dora Fried Schnitman

This chapter addresses a previous unexplored relationship between mindfulness and generative dialogue. Following Kabat-Zinn (2007) and Thich Nhat Hanh (2020), I understand mindfulness to be a space of full attention and dialogic connection with one's self and with others. The generative perspective and practice invite participation in a process of creative work with and in dialogue with the persons or groups who come for a consultation to deal with problems, conflicts, or crises. The process is geared to expanding the resources and possibilities that enable transformations and the construction of viable and sustainable futures. Full attention and presence are inherent to this dialogic process, and discernment is what holds together the generative exercise. In that, dialogic process is akin to mindfulness.

Regarding the relationship between dialogue and generative processes, Kabat-Zinn points out that dialogue can be understood as an external correlate to full attention to all the voices that enter into our mental space at the present moment insofar as we are able to leave behind pre-judgments to listen, feel, and know everything that emerges in dialogue. Like in meditation, in generative dialogue we are completely open and receptive to the encounter with others. At stake is observing, listening, and discerning and recognizing ideas, thoughts, and feelings with a spirit of investigation and compassion. Like in mediation and mindfulness practices, we are open to everything that appears. We heed it without correcting it, without censoring or rejecting it. A greater intelligence emerges from this attitude, an intelligence that resides in *the group*, in relationships. No single person is at the center, and that openness makes way for greater collective understanding.

In his writings on mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn asserts that it is essential to heed how we relate to others. Generative dialogue and like practices are based on relationships of listening, participating, and respecting and being listened to, seen, respected, and recognized. Mindfulness is an inner gesture that enables our heart and mind,

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considered a seamless whole, to become aware of the full spectrum of a present moment just as it is, accepting everything that happens simply because it is happening. Similarly, in generative dialogue we refer to that attitude as full awareness and presence in the relational field (Fried Schnitman 2000, 2002a, b; McNamee 2015a, b; Morales 2020, 2020b, Chap. 11 in this volume).

The word dialogue is derived from the Greek *dia* (through); it refers to a conversation between persons (Kabat-Zinn 2007). The quality of the relational space is key to openness, to allowing for the new to emerge. Quality dialogue is what makes the shared undertaking that is dialogue more creative and productive.

Bohm (1996) also recalls the root of the word dialogue and relates it to the co-creation of meanings through – and between – a given number of interlocutors. He understands that communication is not just a tie for the conveyance of information but also a constructive process. While dialogue may rest on communication and language, it exceeds them.

The notion of dialogue is, today, central to a wide range of theories and practices in the human sciences. Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin developed the notion of "dialogism." His critique of the monologization of the human experience in the formulations of social sciences, linguistics, psychology, political theory, and the humanities was what launched those disciplines in new directions that take into account the relational, dialogic, incomplete, open, and heterogeneous nature of social relations (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Morson and Emerson 1990).

Bakhtin envisions communication as a relationship between people and dialogue as interpersonal-communication and reciprocal tie: one can relate to another person dialogically. In his early work, he refers to embodied verbal communication between people making a distinction between statements and utterances, pointing that utterances are relational; they are units of speech and are produced and have meaning in reciprocal relationships between people; they are shaped when one participant addresses other participants in a dialogue. People construct utterances in a specific relationship in the here and now of a conversation with others; the context and moment are part of the utterance, itself part of the dialogic process. Fellow participants, the moment, the specific situation, and the past and anticipated responses are constitutive elements of the utterance, understood, then, to be constructed in a relationship. At stake in a dialogue of utterances is active addressivity and active understanding. In a dialogue there are, by definition, uncertainties, creativity, and emergent processes. The other(s) could be another person or one's self. That focus on presence, on the here and now and what it opens up, is part and parcel of mindfulness as well.

From this generative relational perspective, dialogues and relationships are part of what constitutes us as human beings (Bruner 1986; Gergen 1994–2009; Shotter 1993; Stern 1977; Trevarthen 1979; Vygotzky 1962).

Looking to Bakhtin, the generative perspective includes the professional as an active participant in the relational field. The encounter can open up novel possibilities in the relationship to one's self, to others, and to one's circumstances. The professional must be aware of the process of relating, to what emerges in the

dialogue – and in that her practice is like mindfulness understood as an open and creative encounter with one's self and with others.

But the professional must also be aware of the multiple processes that ensue, of her relationship to herself, to the clients, and to the process, in a fluid and creative context. Again, what is required is *mindful* presence and attention.

Bakhtin's dialogism; the new paradigms (Fried Schnitman and Schnitman 2002) including Morin's work on complexity, second-order cybernetics, and complex systems dynamics; and relational social constructionism (Gergen 2009) inform how the generative perspective (Fried Schnitman 2002b) understands the dialogic relationship between professionals and clients.

The term "new paradigms" is a synthetic and convenient way to refer to the changes that scientific theory and practice have undergone in the last 50 years. The notion of new paradigms brings to mind Ilya Prigogine and his work on self-organization, chaos, and temporal irreversibility (Prigogine and Stengers 1984); Edgar Morin (2000) and the paradigm of complexity; as well as the emphasis on social construction and the inclusion of all participants proposed by Heinz von Foerster (1984), Jerome Bruner (1986), and Kenneth Gergen (2009), among others.

From this perspective, and with openness to the new, to the unexpected, the world itself is an emerging event. Creativity is always real, always going on, in response to circumstances, to particular events at particular times; emerging generative processes reorient us toward an ecology of creation.

Co-constructivism and constructionism bring forth new forms of consciousness and introduce new conceptions and practices. Both concur through the rejection of the subject-object dualism and the related presumption that knowledge is nothing more than an accurate representation of the world. World construction, like scientific and cultural knowledge, takes place within forms of relationships.

From the constructivist perspective (von Foerster 1984) comes the notion of self-organization and reflexivity. The process of observation, the observation itself, and the construction of the observer are a single entity that works for the emergence of selves and relationships as parts and products of the very processes that construct and reconstruct them.

Constructionism expands this perspective; it views communication and social coordination as formative processes in which our social worlds and selves are created in patterns of social interaction. Constructionism places emphasis on how we, collectively, as interlocutors with each other, participate in the creation of our social worlds, that is, of the events and objects in which we find ourselves.

Unlike the perspective that affirms that words have meanings because they represent things that exist either out there in an objective world or in the minds of their users, constructivist and constructionist perspectives heed words' formative function and relationships and their inseparability from generative human actions.

This creative and emergent dialogical and relational turn in many disciplines and practices fosters virtuous interactions between mindfulness and generative dialogues. It provides clients and professionals – and the processes they engage in – with important foundations and tools, which we will explore later in this chapter.

Kabat-Zinn (2007) asserts that full attention and discernment – that is, mindfulness – teach us to see, hear, feel, and sense the existence of endless nuances, of diversity. In judgment and pre-judgment, on the other hand, we cling to knowledge outside of or prior to a dialogue, in a stance not conducive to emerging processes or new knowledges, but rather bent on seeking confirmation of the already known. Work with dialogue eschews normative and expert models to work toward the construction of new knowledge that is localized and specific to each circumstance – to each time and space – knowledge that includes the joint production of participants (Fried Schnitman 2002b).

Kabat-Zinn also points out that "wise discernment" helps us to discover multiple intermediate possibilities and to navigate them adroitly. Contrary to what many may believe, the more attention we pay to the gradations of things, the clearer our mind becomes, and that is worth bearing in mind when we explore more closely generative dialogue, full attention to and presence in the relational process, and discernment as what, together, enable us to register emerging processes and generative possibilities in the specific context of each dialogue.

The generative perspective focuses on registering resources so subtle that they verge on the imperceptible. It heeds emerging events that enable participants to discern novel situations and to construct innovative moments and possibilities with generative potential for themselves, their relationships, and their circumstances and helps them find the resources to change those relationships and circumstances. The generative focus fosters keener register of the possibilities that might enable participants to distinguish those possibilities and to find options and make choices. At stake is the ability of persons in dialogue to discern and expand their register beyond the problem that initially sparked the consultation. In so doing, they are able to address as well other aspects of themselves and their relationships and other resources and possibilities.

As we shall see shortly, including other options ushers into generative processes conducive to transformations and to the construction of viable and sustainable futures.

Mindfulness and generative dialogues help us hone our ability to detect differences between events and circumstances that ensue very close to one another, almost at the same time, and that could go unnoticed if those who experience them are not duly trained. That enhanced perception increases our ability for sustained engagement with richer perspectives and dialogues, thus enabling us to create, to innovate and expand, existing resources. At stake is registering subtle differences and – as generative dialogue proposes – heightening our ability to recognize the different, the novel, the emerging, that which is taking place in the present. This is what enables people to find alternatives to transform themselves, their circumstances, and their relationships, to engage in better dialogues with themselves and with others, to increase awareness and wisdom, and to lead fuller and more mindful lives in the groups of which they form part.

14.1 The Tie Between Mindfulness and Generativity

Discernment that heightens attention and the creativity and productivity part and parcel of dialogue go hand in hand in generative processes. Implicit to generative moments and creativity is the active and inclusive participation of those engaged in the process.

Mindfulness and generative dialogues are not a technique, but rather processes based on a way of existing in relation to others and to oneself ourselves in specific contexts.

The greater our focus on relational mindfulness, the closer we get to the generative perspective. Mindfulness becomes explicitly dialogic insofar as the focus is on relationships to one's self and to others, to the environment. We are *interbeings*, a concept developed early by socially engaged Buddhism that refers to our being and becoming with others immersed in relationships to one another in a multifaceted, interdependent, and interwoven world. Dialogue forms part of every dimension of our existence (Thich Nhat Hanh 2020).

Relational mindfulness has been described as an embodied, participatory, and committed form of meditation aimed at discernment (wisdom) through practices that show us to be inter-beings-in-moment-to-moment engagement with others. At stake is being present in a multiplicity of relationship. Relational mindfulness expands the focus of presence to include the self, the other, the relationship, the community, and the social and natural ecology, including politics. Human and natural existence is engaged in its interdependency, its context and time. At every moment of our life and our being, from the very beginning to the very end, there are relationships and interchanges. Interbeing means fully engaged mindfulness.

The world inside is no less relational or dialogic than the world outside. We dialogue with others and with different aspects of ourselves. We relate mindfully with our heart and mind as a whole, attending to suffering and pain with compassion and an eye toward transformation. Any relationship deserves attention, as do the circumstances that make transformation possible. At stake is an active process of generating wisdom, embodied knowledge of a different way of being, of relating, and of proceeding through life.

Human connectedness implies a multiplicity of meaningful relationships, that is, relationships where meaning emerges in a crisscrossing of dialogic relationships. This is a world with others, a world in community. Relational responsibility is part of mindfulness.

Nobody is alone. We cannot escape the implications and consequences of our actions in our relationships with others.

Awareness of interbeing, of being-in-relationship, heightens our capacity to participate in dialogic relationships, helps us to enrich our relational bonds, and enhances the quality of our attention and care to the processes of relating.

14.2 Generative Perspectives and Practices: Dialogue and Relational Mindfulness

As practitioners, we use mindfulness relationally in the context of generative dialogue and its implementation in generative practices such as therapy; conflict and crisis mediation in families, communities, and other contexts; organizational consultation and development; peace work; coaching; and education, among others.[1] These future-oriented approaches are dialogical in nature. They place key emphasis on the ability of the participants in the dialogue to be active as they respond creatively and innovatively to what emerges in the process. Through dialogue and joint action, professionals and clients work together to address unresolved and difficult problems and challenges, to assess and co-create emergent resources, and to craft and implement new possibilities, alternative futures, and novel ways of living. The clients' life challenges and difficult situations are addressed for the sake of transformation.

From the perspective of generativity, professional practices foster dialogic processes, creativity, co-participation, and complex and nonlinear approaches. The aim is to involve multiple voices, to question limitations and assumptions so that clients are able to enrich their possibilities and re-authorize and re-signify their lives (Fried Schnitman 2013).

The focus on the present moment, and not on pre-knowledges, helps professionals and clients to mindfully discern and recognize unique moments as well as lived resources and empowering experiences in their circumstances and context.

Excerpts from a set of family consultations with one member in a state of great distress illustrate how mindfulness can work in generative dialogic therapy with a family.

14.2.1 Luiz Is Contemplating Suicide

A student in the Graduate Program in Generative Perspective and Professional Practice,[2] senior psychiatrist and family therapist Rosângela Russo, MD, brought this therapy situation to the class to explore generative dialogues in a difficult case.

This example presents the *case of a young man diagnosed with depression*. It demonstrates the use of a generative process in a family psychiatric consultation

[1] Several authors have included generative dialogues in their different contexts of research and professional practices. As an example we include some of them (Crescini 2015; Fried Schnitman 2000, 2008, 2009, 2010a, b, 2011a, b, 2017; Fried Schnitman and Rodríguez-Mena García 2012; Higuera-Pedraza et al. 2020; Morales and others 2015; Ospina-Alvarado 2015; Sánchez-Jiménez 2019; Santiago-Estrada 2017).

[2] Degree program offered by Fundación Interfas in collaboration with The Taos Institute and CINDE-Universidad de Manizales.

and, more specifically, the importance of the professional's attention and full presence with open mind and wise discernment. In the dialogue between the participants, we will see emerging moments that enable the creative construction and recovery of resources to begin and develop transformative processes in therapy.

We will see how the dialogue contributes to the construction of different generative moments by building a tie between participants and a space of interpersonal and reciprocal recognition and trust as they begin to create resources and possibilities; by building a purpose jointly, a project for shared work, and a platform implemented for the sake of transformation; and by questioning the dominant story, the story constructed prior to the consultation, to then build novel generative versions. We will also observe how the therapist's own registers expand in dialogue with herself and with the clients and the later transformations that come with increased awareness.

Dialogues that foster reflexive learning enable both professionals and clients to recognize the novel and to take away emerging resources. They become equipped to detect possibilities that heighten the ability to discern and develop new knowledges and to explore and innovate. They are able to take a look at themselves, at their relationships and circumstances, from a richer and wiser perspective.

First session: A knot of problems

Luiz (19 years old) comes with his mother to a psychiatric service for a consultation. The consultation recounted here is a second opinion; the family brings along a letter from another professional with a diagnosis of depression and a recommendation that L be admitted to a local psychiatric hospital. The family is not sure how to proceed. L, they report, has lost all interest in his life: he has dropped out of his first year at university and returned to the city where his family lives. He then enrolled in a short course in order to later apply to another university, but he was absent a lot and generally unenthusiastic. He describes himself as apathetic; he feels as if something had broken inside of him. He says he is frustrated by the university and life in general. He doesn't say much. [*He does not express hopes or wishes.*]

The mother voices her concern about the changes in L. She remembers that he was happier before going away to study, when he had goals. Now, 1 year later, he has dropped out and doesn't seem to care about anything. She says she wants to help him, but she doesn't know how.

The therapist explores with L if there are moments when he can experience, see, or understand his situation differently or contemplate other, perhaps only fleeting, possibilities.

L shakes his head.

Crying, the mother says she doesn't know what to do. (L looks sad and uncomfortable when his mother cries.) It upsets her terribly to see her son like this. She insists that he go out, that he attends class, but he just wants to stay shut up in his room. She says, "We are looking for a medication that might improve the situation." [*T notices the relationship between L and M, how L's current state upsets M, and how, upset by her crying, L pushes her away.*]

The therapist's reflections: The dialogue between the mother and son is very poor, and I feel powerless. I have the sense it would be very hard in the current situation to offer help other than a conventional psychiatric solution (medication or hospitalization). I had that feeling for the first two sessions. After the first session, I thought it would be possible to do out-patient follow-up. [*Though she establishes a psychiatric professional tie to evaluate a course of action as the family requested, her observations and reflections exceed that register; they encompass the persons, relationships, problems, and the search for possibilities. She engages in the dialogue that takes shape between the persons while also dialoguing with herself. She is aware of the process and reflects compassionately and "without divisions." Throughout the interviews, she positions herself with mindful awareness and wise discernment*.]

Second session: Walking in circles

L has made no significant progress. His pain does not abate, and his loss of interest and perspective persists.

T's reflections: I have the sense during this session that I am walking in circles – the complaints and the conversation repeat themselves. The questions that I ask L go unanswered; M cries over her son's situation again. I feel as deeply powerless as I did at the first session. I feel we are stuck. I register my feelings, and I share them at the end of the session inviting further exploration of the situation. [*T decides to search for a possibility.*]

T: I'm not sure these encounters are helping you. Who else could come along to help us? [*T is an active and respectful participant. She includes the family and invites them to explore possibilities*.]

L: (quick to respond) My brother is home for vacation, and he'd like to come. [L is responsive for the first time. He opens up a possibility and paves the way for the construction of a tie with T. Generative moment.]

M: They get along well. [*Her response is in keeping with L and T's.*]

Third session: Listening to other voice and expanding possibilities

L, M, and P, the older brother, are at the session. Both the mother and the older brother are clearly upset when they speak of the troubles L is facing and how isolated and taciturn he is.

Unlike M and L, P is very talkative. He talks about his experience at the university where he too had a lot of trouble at the beginning. Crying, he says he loves L very much. L doesn't participate in the conversation much, responding to questions with only a gesture. [*A tie is built between T and the family that includes concern, affection, and love for L. The tie between L and T is strengthened*.]

P: I am on vacation and I wanted to come here. I am really worried about L. He seems to be pushing me away, and we are not doing the things we like to do together – that makes me very sad.

T: What things do you like to do together?

P: Not much these days. I haven't been home for a while, and I think L really missed me. Usually when I come home for vacation, we talk a lot, but not this time. I really miss our conversations.

T looks at L.

L: I also miss talking to P. [*L responds to T and P*.]

T: What would you talk about?

L: …We would laugh a lot… But nothing's funny anymore… [*They recognize and restore their bond and include the therapist. They also register the loss and change*.]

T: (to P) How do you think you might be able to help L? [*T is including P, inviting him to construct possibilities*.]

P: I think I went through what he is going through now during my first year at university. I also wanted to give up on everything. L chose to study what I am studying. He had a lot of expectations when he arrived at the university, and now he is frustrated. I got over that, and I think L will too. [*P opens up possibilities and expresses faith in L*.]

P talks a little about his own life: how close the family has always been, his parents' divorce, and how much importance his family has always placed on his studies. L doesn't say anything, but he is listening carefully. At a certain point, P gets very emotional, expressing his love for L and how important his family is to him. L, M, and T are all touched by what P has said. L follows the conversation, indicating with facial gestures and expressions his agreement and engagement. [*They share a perspective of the family, their shared bond, values, and meanings*.]

T's reflections: I can see how close they are, how much they love each other. My tie to them also grows stronger when I am touched by their emotions. [*Mutual trust between the family and T grows. She participates reflexively and compassionately in a session with a family concerned because one of its members is having serious troubles*.] Though in the first two sessions the mother was very emotional, crying out in desperation, rage, powerlessness, Pablo's emotion incites another reaction in L. P speaks of his own troubles; he talks about the family and his love for L. When P speaks of his problems at the university, it opens up new perspectives for L.

Fourth session

L asks to come into the office by himself.

L: (looking at T) I've thought a lot about it, and I've decided to kill myself. If I get hospitalized, I'll do it in the hospital. I was relieved when I got the diagnosis of depression because it gave a name for all the pain I was feeling. But my perspective has not changed, and I think I've been feeling worse since I began taking the medication. (He falls silent, his eyes dim.) I want to kill myself. I am making my family suffer, and I don't want to see them suffer because of me. [*He expresses his pain and concern over the pain he is causing his family and the common mistaken belief that suicide will relieve his family's suffering and protect them*.]

T: How are you planning to do it? [*T is responsive and keeps the dialogue going, protecting the bond of trust and relationship in a very critical situation, thus enabling respectful exploration.*]
L: I'll hang myself. (Responsive)
T's reflections: I think we are at a critical juncture – while L is telling me he has made a decision about the suicide, he opens a dialogue with me (after all, he could have killed himself without telling me about it, but he didn't). [*T's full attention and presence. Wise discernment. T discerns between two distinct though simultaneous registers; she registers subtle differences and emerging moments.*]

I feel inundated by countless dialogues and reflections, different paths of inquiry, many of them contradictory and very different in terms of values. [*T dialogues with herself, recalling multiple dialogues in different contexts and moments. She is fully present and aware in her wise discernment, dialoguing with herself, her training and professional experiences. Thanks to her increased awareness toward wise participation, she is able to sustain a conversation geared to expanding resources to consider possibilities.*]

I connect to the option that conventional psychiatry has to offer, namely, to deal with the suicide threat: L is sick and he must be protected from himself. As a psychiatrist, I must follow the protocol because of the risk. I should increase his medication, ask his mother to come into the interview, and arrange hospitalization to protect him. My experience tells me that medication will not help and hospitalization at such a young age could well turn him into a chronic patient. I ask myself how to leave aside the expert knowledge and its immediate protocol. How much uncertainty will that imply?

Other options come to me: expand the register and contemplate ways to keep the dialogue that L started with me alive, explore possibilities that are not yet present. How to build a future perspective for someone who wants to die? I have to get a better understanding of what is going on with L. Can I consider his circumstances and pain without my perspective being colored solely by his diagnosis of depression? [*These inner dialogues involve her experiences with L, L's pain, and his trust in T; T's experience and responsibility as a professional; her education and background with its different traditions; her own values, which are starkly different; her commitment and compassion; and the risks and possibilities that each approach presents*.]

While all these options flood my mind, I remember a dialogue with another patient: a mother I had seen a few months earlier who had shared the desperation she experienced when she opened a door in her house and found her son had hung himself. She said that life had lost all meaning for her. Her question – the question she asked herself and me – was how her son, who in his suicide note said he loved her so much, was capable of doing something like this to her. She felt her own life had ended with his. She might live for a thousand years, but the image of her dead son would haunt her forever. The voice of that patient resonated powerfully in my mind. [*T remembers the voices from another dialogue and looks to them to inspire*

and guide her exploration. That memory helps her to transform the dialogue with L and to create new possibilities: a generativity that did not exist before.]

T: Who do you think will find your body? [*She invites L to discern*.]
L: (disconcerted by the question) It doesn't matter.
T: It doesn't matter to whom? [*She invites further discernment and exploration*.]
L: To me, because I'll be dead.
T: (not letting the conversation digress) But you're not dead yet. [*Further invitation to discern*.]
L: My mother. [*Responsive and mindful, he begins to expand his register*.]
T: Mmm… So, you must not love her very much… [*Returning in her mind but not mentioning the expressions of pain and questions of that earlier mother who lost her son, T brings in her voice as an active participant.*]
L: (indignant) How can you say that? I love my mother. She is the most important person in my life. [*Responsive. Generative moment. L looks to his bonds, his relationships, and his place as a son in the family*.]
T: I tell him about the conversation I had with the mother who lost her son the same way he plans to kill himself. I give that mother a voice. I speak of the intense pain that the act caused and the questions that she asked herself and me about her son's love for her.
L: (reflexive) She will suffer a lot. [*Generative moment. With increased awareness and mindfulness, he discerns the suffering that he will cause M, his own feelings, and the consequences and implications of his acts. His register expands, and his emerging knowledges undermine the paradoxical notion that his suicide would protect his family. He restores his relationships and becomes aware of his interbeing*.]
T: And how does that make you feel? [*She invites him to further discern, reflect, and generate new knowledges about himself and M that might help him to formulate other possibilities*.]
L: I wouldn't like to be the person to cause her that pain. [*L recognizes himself in a love-based relationship, a relationship of care and protection of himself and M. The importance of family ties as generative node is articulated with another node in which he has a transformed vision of himself. He takes relational responsibility for M and for himself.*]
T: You have probably made her feel a lot of things other than pain. [*T invites L to discern and distinguish more resources in himself in relation to M and to recognize other care spaces*.]
L: She really loves it when I play the guitar… *[L positions himself in a generative place.*]
T's reflections: Starting at that moment, we were able to build a platform for generative work that would then lead the process toward new paths, paths viable for L and his family. He was able to connect to love and care which, in turn, paved the way for a wider vision of himself and his relationships. He moved toward new resources and possibilities, toward generativity.

After that conversation, the family built a set of agreements that would enable L to find resources if he once again felt like he wanted to die. In psychiatry, such agreements are often called "life contracts." These are some of the items of the contract we put together:

1. L, M, and P agreed that L would ask for help when the pain got very intense rather than cut himself off from those around him.
2. We agreed that M would listen to L's pain without starting to cry herself. L says that when he speaks of his pain, he always gets the feeling that hers is greater than his, and that is why he doesn't seek her help.
3. We agreed that M would keep asking L to go out, to go to class, to play the guitar, etc., but that, if he didn't want to, she would not attribute it to his depression. He was sometimes just not in the mood.
4. L agreed to seek help and not cut himself off when he had these thoughts.
5. L said he wanted to take guitar classes again (he had stopped when his parents split up).
6. M agreed to be careful about what she says and not blame herself when L is sad.
7. M agreed to pursue other interests, because when L moved out to go to university, she also got very sad.

Toward generativity

After that session, the process became more generative; more creative possibilities opened up in L's life.

The sessions continue and L never again speaks of suicide. He passes the entrance exam and enrolls in a public university. He is pleased with this new choice. We slowly reduce the dosage of his medication.

In January 2020, L returned from vacation with his family with a smile on his face: he was feeling good. He is no longer taking any medication. He describes the problem he experienced as an existential crisis that is now over. He knows there might be others, but he feels better prepared to deal with them. He mentions that during the family trip, he and his brother talked a lot, and he realized that he too had faced some similar troubles at the university. Both of them are black, and they have to deal with racism and prejudices. This was the first time we spoke of his place in the world and what it means to be black. L becomes more and more generative; he opens doors to more creative facets of his life.

T's later reflections

I identified the turning point in the process that opened up a future perspective for L. [*On the basis of generative – wise – discernment, she builds new knowledges and ties together dialogues from different moments (present, past, and future*.] That generative moment was when I invited L to consider that, while he would no longer be around if he killed himself, he would still have a relational future responsibility for his actions' impact on those around him (McNamee and Gergen 1998). (There are convergences here in McNamee's work, Fried Schnitman's generative dialogue, and committed Buddhism.) The supposed protection of his family that led him to

consider suicide took on another meaning. By recognizing his responsibility, even in a future of which he would not form part, L is able to leave behind his initial position. The belief that nothing else would matter when he was dead is replaced by a vision in which we are all relationally responsible for what happens in the life of others, even in our absence. That vision shows that our actions contribute to constructing the place of the other – and, if L were to kill himself, that would be a place of pain, guilt, desperation, and unhappiness for those he loves. L was able to affirm that he would not like to construct that place of suffering for his family; he was able to construct a different version of the relationships and new knowledges, to restore the ability to discern, reflect, and choose. In the terms of relational committed Buddhism, he encountered the potential consequences of his actions.

I know that it is common these days for patients to be admitted to psychiatric hospital. I believe that is partly because of the risks that certain situations hold for patients and psychiatrists. Before critical situations there is no single answer. What is required is meticulous discernment and care where the uniqueness of each situation must be taken into account. We psychiatrists are also implicated in difficult relational responsibilities where we must walk the fine line between risk and possibility (engaged and responsible mindfulness).

After seeing L, I thought about how and how much we inhabit time: the experiential time of dialogues, in both psychiatry and constructionism. At stake in the process is a weave of dialogues from different moments – time lived and time to be lived in the future – that speak of our life stories. For example, I think of the dialogue I had had with the mother who lost her son – and that instantly led me to formulate my question. And as soon as I did, new meanings were constructed in which past, present, and future were joined.

14.3 Generative Process as Dialogic Mindfulness in Action

We understand the practice of generative dialogue to be dialogic mindfulness: an attentive and responsive embodied process of relating that creates meanings and practices, resources and possibilities, in the exchanges between participants. Dialogues are joint actions of interdependent relational participation that trace a direction for transformation and create new forms of life while opening up a viable future.

Generative dialogue refers to the gradual creation of something new in human relationships through dialogue, reflexivity, and conversational learning. In a generative dialogue, persons in a relationship come to see, experience, describe, and position themselves in a new and more productive way in the face of problematic or challenging situations (Fried Schnitman and Schnitman 2000).

Generative moments can expand, transfer, or create transformative nuclei that, if developed, can grow into privileged contexts for interpretation and practice. Inquiries focus on how these moments are or can be discerned and generated. How does something new emerge, and how is it consolidated as a context for novel

practice or meaning? What types of dialogic and social coordination foster that growth? What contexts or conditions facilitate the emergence of new ways of being in relationships (Fried Schnitman, 2002a, b)?

This construction of futures is only possible through acting on and exploring current circumstances. The possibilities created in generative dialogues become virtual realities which, once created, can be actualized step by step, provided they are sustained by transformative processes. Such processes contribute to actions that lead to existential alternatives and new and diverse realities for clients.

The generative process is a unique process that leads to a forward-looking search for the resources and possibilities operative in each client's circumstances. In other words, a future is constructed as the generative process advances in a joint exploration of the resources and possibilities that come up in the dialogue between professionals and clients. As participants actively seize on innovative possibilities that emerge during dialogue, professionals get involved in the relational field and develop a practice grounded in dialogic creativity, awareness, generative research, reciprocal inclusion, and relational responsibility. At stake is a pragmatic viewpoint centered on the novel actions clients utilize and how the possibilities these actions hold enable them to transform lives and go beyond its challenges.

We will now examine how a generative dialogue allows participants – professionals and clients – to jointly create resources and new possibilities in the here and now through mindful interconnectedness in dialogue in the face of problems, conflicts, and challenges. We will see how these resources are combined with the client's possibilities in a renewal of the self, relationships, and a sustainable future.

14.4 Dialogue or the Crafting of Interbeing

From a generative perspective, dialogue is the means and the instrument for the construction of realizable futures.

It centers on what participants can construct, on how to create unprecedented possibilities, and on active exploration. Dialogue can turn problematic situations into emerging resources and fertile new territories. The generative perspective focuses, then, on dialogue's capability to build intersections, to forge a path through the emergent resources, the options that become available, and the problems that led to the consultation. Discernment, enactment, and the progressive implementation of new possibilities to build a viable future in a spirit of curiosity and investigation are all essential to a generative dialogue.

The creative potential of dialogue envisions a series of reciprocal actions and an exploration and creative and productive crafting of new ways of interbeing. Generative dialogue expands the process from a problem-centered approach to the creation of new possibilities, increasing the capacities and skills of participants and providing them with additional resources to discern and work with what is emerging. The first implication of this perspective is a focus on the future and transformation, on the discernment of possibilities that can be amplified – or the creation of

nonexistent possibilities – thus contributing to clients' alternatives. The second implication is the emergence of new knowledges and dialogically expanded awareness and wisdom: professionals and clients are jointly involved in a generative process and work together to develop resources in the present while constructing a long-range vision for the future and enacting it as new ways of living. The clients learn to learn about themselves by clarifying, exploring, and reaching their emerging resources and possibilities through a process that leads to transformation and a viable future (Fried Schnitman 2008, 2015, 2016, 2020a, b).

14.5 Dialogue and Generativity/Creativity on a Nonlinear Horizon: Circular Networks of Interbeing

A *dialogue*, as we have established, is a co-constructive, interpersonal process involving diverse voices and resonances in which people jointly create meanings and practices. *Dialogical confluences* are transformative processes in dialogues that extend over time, allowing new ways of making sense and new understandings and perspectives as actions and ways of living emerge.

Dialogue and interbeing are expressions of relational interconnectedness.

Bakhtin postulates that when a dialogue occurs, a multi-vocal unit is configured involving multiple relationships. Each dialogue, he holds, is unique, singular, and meaning emerges from that uniqueness; a dialogue takes place in a specific context and time, and in this dialogue diverse voices and other dialogues coexist (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Morson and Emerson 1990). Generativity will discern whether those voices and dialogues are coherent or contradictory, and it will make use of that complexity.

A generative perspective is based on creativity in dialogue between people and their unique relationships. Responsiveness and attentiveness are essential features of being in dialogue: participants can express and acknowledge their participation not only through words but also through reciprocal indications of connection and inclusiveness. Everything in dialogue, not only words but embodied language, tone, intonation, and gestures, is formulated with engagement and addressivity to the other. At stake is active understanding on the part of the listener.

Bakhtin stresses the capacity of dialogue to create meaning. People address and respond actively to an *other*; they have a purpose (intention) in a context in which they also anticipate outcomes. Participants shape dialogues from the outset, and all parties to a dialogue are actively involved in the formulations. The *other* is not necessarily another person, but perhaps other aspects of oneself, another dialogue or other dialogues that may or may not be in progress, on a topic, a group, a relationship, a feeling, an experience, a production, a characteristic, nature.

Reciprocal recognition of the other or others in dialogue is at play in every act of expressing or understanding. A constitutive feature of an utterance is its addressivity. Expressing and understanding are embodied actions of relating.

Utterances are never repeated because they depend on the context, on the situation.

Every utterance is shaped by intention and responsive understanding. People actively address an "other," for the sake of "active understanding" – a key to generative dialogue. The one who listens doesn't simply decode an utterance but also captures multiple relationships; she relates the utterance to her own complex web of interests and suppositions, imagining how it responds to future utterances of possible interlocutors and what type of answers it invites. She evaluates the dialogue and senses how other parties might understand it.

The words are jointly constructed through the reciprocal responses to the utterances by participants in dialogue in an interindividual process, a process of active understanding where the listener's response is anticipated by the speaker. The process of constructing an utterance shapes everything about that utterance; the listener forms the utterance as it is being articulated by the speaker. In other words, the utterance is shaped by reciprocal addressivity and responsive understanding in the interrelational dialogic space.

Speakers and listeners can be actual or virtual. Just as utterances are multisided and addressed to different interlocutors, words are shaped by past and future dialogues and populated in an internal dialogism, a relationality of the words chosen.

Dialogues, then, involve multiple dialogues, voices, and projects, with centripetal and centrifugal forces. Each dialogue is connected to a network of dialogues by context and time. Dialogue, in its full complexity, is connected with relationships over time – a set of links to past and future dialogues that both facilitates and limits the dialogue underway in the present. Some of those relationship links are distant, others closer. In either case, their intersections and resonances in the present create novel possibilities.

Participants in the dialogue always produce something new and unique in the specific moment and context; at the same time, there are renovated echoes of the past and newer future contributions to the present.

A current dialogue anticipates the future and establishes links with what has not yet been said but could be said in either a near or a distant future. Other links – between dialogues related to our multiplicity and becoming as well as the multiplicity of contexts and ecologies in which we live – are also feasible. A generative perspective actively explores and creates novel networks and links that enable dialogic creativity in the moment and generative confluences over time in order to foster transformative processes. Creativity and meanings, then, take shape in the crisscrossing of dialogues, between and across multiple dimensions of relating to create opportunities for *horizontal, transversal, and circular networks of interbeing*.

14.6 Emerging Generative Processes and Practices: Recreating Relationships and Interbeing

Dialogues and confluences in dialogue are formative and transformative processes of selves and social worlds. In these generative conversations, people are integrally involved in exchanges, interweaving ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and feelings. In and through dialogue, self and relationships can emerge or change.

When a professional meets a client, she enters into a dialogue as a participant aware of the specificity and uniqueness of the process, the problems, the sufferings, and the expectations and hopes the client brings to each session. She must be aware of and careful about not only the implications of her participation in the relationship and the responses she receives but also the clients' initiatives. She intervenes actively in the dialogue with full presence. Her participation must be aesthetic, in keeping with the idiosyncrasy of the client, and ethical in its response to their requests and needs. As she participates, the professional is fully present and focused on the process of relating. But the professional must also be aware of the multiple processes that ensue, of her relationship to herself, to the client, and to the process, in a fluid and creative context. Again, what is required is *mindful* presence.

Through this mindful presence, the professional is attentive, responsive, and aware of the client responsiveness in order to work toward constructing a creative and productive dialogic relationship. Discernment and creativity enable one another, and the generative perspective prioritizes recognition of the emerging opportunities and innovations unique to each process. If generative moments are discerned, the participants' new resources and possibilities can then be useful to develop alternatives and learnings. We call this an emerging generative process.

In this process, the professional and client explore together the situation they endeavor to transform. Unprecedented possibilities can be produced and investigated through dialogue, and participants in a generative process become more curious and proactive, utilizing their own inquiries and reflections to improve comprehension and action as they occur. In this sense, the participants become creative authors of each process, focusing on the specific activities that generate new possibilities as working platforms for transformations. This generative capacity of dialogue enables unanticipated possibilities, transforms potentialities into new existential realities, and gives the generative-practice experience some of the openness and open-endedness key to learning and creativity.

Generative moments and creativity go hand in hand with processes where full presence and attention enable a multiple and discriminating register conducive to innovation and to the development of possible futures. The reciprocal responsiveness of participants constructs a team-like relationship; participants collaborate as a community inserted in a social ecology. A sense of belonging and common identity is created – a "we" is formed.

14.7 Working Within the Generative Process: Expanding Being and Interbeing

When people explain what has led them to consult a professional, they often provide a one-dimensional and problematic version of themselves and their circumstances (problem node). The professional must be aware of this; in the consultation she meets the clients – being the client a person, a group, a community – at the interactive moment and takes their difficulties and sufferings into account as well as their expectations, hopes, and contexts. Though not always expressed verbally, all of these elements are present and implicit in the request for a consultation.

As the process advances, the professional pays attention to how the client can expand on this initial moment, further exploring other dimensions and contexts of the client's life, while either being attentive to emerging instances, alternative resources, and novel elements in the dialogue that are not part of the problematic situation or actively creating them in dialogues with the client. The question is how to make the client's other facets, feelings, and voices audible and available in the dialogue to contribute to creating new alternatives and resources, ones that may enrich possibilities and relationships. What emerges from the complexity of dialogue, the links between dialogues, and the diversity that characterizes humans is what guides these explorations and generative investigations. By welcoming this diversity and paying attention to resources that appear, participants can advance toward emerging possibilities, new ways of relating, and life alternatives.

A dialogic fabric is woven from the different novel resources and possibilities that emerge in the process. Those resources and possibilities are mindfully linked in the here and now of the process, increasing its productivity and creativity. Clients and professionals engage in a dialogue with confluences and convergences over time, building a novel intelligibility that contributes resources (i.e., meanings and innovative ways of understanding and acting in specific contexts).

Generative moments are small variations or minor events in a dialogue that, when discerned and recognized, can make way for the creation of new perspectives and possibilities. They may be introduced by the client or the professional or simply occur in the dialogue. Attentive to reciprocal responsiveness, the professional will bring these emerging moments into the dialogue. If the client is responsive and validates and expands on the emerging moment, it can turn into a generative moment confirmed and expanded further through supplementation and responsiveness in dialogue. The client might be the one to bring possibilities that the professional needs to recognize and respond to, expanding awareness to usher in generative moments. When this occurs, generative moments articulate new perspectives and actions in the dialogue but also in the client's life, enabling paths to transformations. Opportunities and learning are brought to fruition. A new self and relational forms of being and interbeing emerge along with alternative narratives.

When a generative cycle further generates novel productive meanings and life possibilities, it can grow into a generative matrix of meanings. A generative matrix brings together the emerging perspective and its meanings, values, narratives, and

novel actions to enable the transformations of people and their relationships both now and in the future. It promotes more productive, viable futures in relation to what motivated the client to seek a professional consultation.

When novelties appear in the dialogue through these emerging moments and events, the client can recover or expand on resources from their broader life contexts. Creative processes to build resources or open up possibilities can be initiated by either the client or the professional. The resources and possibilities that appear in the process are then woven more deeply into dialogue; alternative paths are forged, paths that are generative insofar as they open up new opportunities. Recognition of these transformations, and reflections on them, ushers in new cycles, narratives, and generative learning for all participants, including the professional, whose awareness and wisdom grow.

An alternative life design is created contextually, step by step, in the here and now through responsiveness in dialogic actions. In the specifics of each process, transformative and enabling devices are created, opening up a field of study of transformations in which we can discern open networks. What was a part becomes a whole that is gradually woven over time out of heterogeneous circumstances, interactions, or contingent results within the process itself. At stake is a joint, participative, and mindful process of crafting transformation of self, relationships, and designs for interbeing.

14.8 Creation of a Generative Process: A Working Platform

The therapist's first generative actions focus on initiating a mutually inclusive, trust-based relationship that establishes reciprocal responsiveness and creates a dialogue. When the professional and client recognize each other as participants in a dialogue, the process is underway; it is consolidated when they acknowledge their reciprocal relationship and develop an *accepted relational reference*. Through dialogues and confluences in dialogue, a sense of being an active participant in the process, of being part of an intentioned community, develops. As the generative moments and cycles described above take place, clients feel increasingly engaged in a relationship that provides them with a different perspective on themselves, their relationships, and their circumstances. No longer limited to problems or critical situations, their perspective is expanded to encompass resources, possibilities, self-trust, and incipient trust in the process. Opportunities to discern resources and expand awareness and alternatives arise.

In their confluences in dialogue, the professional and client jointly build a working platform that connects problems to resources and possibilities and gives meaning to the direction the process is taking: a purpose and a project emerge. The *working platform* refers to a "consensus" in dialogue, in coordinated actions, in understanding the evolving process at hand. In short, it is a process that connects problems, resources, and possibilities over time in the direction of a viable future

within the framework of a relationship in which participants recognize the other(s) as parties in dialogue. Developing the working platform is also generative.

As problems, resources, and possibilities are named and connected, the links between them provide a sense of direction and an understanding of how each event relates to the working platform, to shared meanings, and to events and contexts. These emerging possibilities and resources are transformational; they help the client advance toward a possible future and new way of living. Mutual agreement on the direction clients are headed is not the result of the professional applying a certain model or strategy. It is, rather, part of the process of being attentive to dialogue, to problems, but also to resources; it is a part of being compassionate as an expanded awareness ushers in new forms of living through reciprocal responsiveness and recognition in dialogue. The working platform provides a domain for the dialogue between participants, a project for what the generative process is going to be about, a direction and purpose in context, and a step-by-step guide in the here and now. This is a process that creates a relationship, a framework, a direction, a community, and a sense of relevance in the direction of transformations, even though that direction can be modified as the process moves forward.

In generative dialogue, reciprocal responsiveness configures virtual *dialogic agreements* (e.g., convergences and confluences). It is through the process that participants (professional and client in a relationship) create those agreements "consensus" and clarify each resource or possibility as it is being constructed. Throughout the process, transformations occur in clients' perspectives on, among other things, how to enact those transformations; their way of living is gradually redesigned. This pragmatic dimension is an integral part of transformations in being and interbeing.

A generative process can be seen as a set of emerging dialogic knowledges that changes as the process advances. The process encourages both the emergence of these new knowledges and local possibilities and their joint exploration during the process itself; the direction of the change is built in the dialogue, and it guides the responses of the client as problems are linked to possibilities. Learning and new dialogic knowledges are brought into the process, expanding participants' wisdom.

The generative model heeds the whole spectrum, each step of creative processes that occur in dialogue on the path to transformation.

We will provide two examples to illustrate mindful crafting of dialogue and interbeing, one in a community mediation and another in therapy. We will articulate the macro approach to generative process to a micro analysis of the crafting of relational dialogic transformation. We deem the two cases complementary.

14.9 Generative Professional-Client Relationship

It is important for the professional to be mindful of the opportunities to initiate or recognize generative moments and cycles; to be observant of the clients' responses and the confluences and supplementation in dialogue; and finally to build novel working platforms that move from the deficit or problem toward an emerging

opportunity. By expanding on these opportunities, meaningful transformations can occur for clients. Similarly, the professional is attentive to sustaining the transformations once they are initiated, moving to consolidate the necessary tools and foster reflexivity and learning. The professional is also very attentive to the client's increased mindfulness, expanded awareness, and wisdom that emerge through the transformations and the new ways of living and relating (interbeing).

In the fragments of the cases presented below, the responsiveness, active engagement, and transformations of the clients are palpable in their comments and reflections over the course of the generative moments, cycles and processes as it is the emergent new ways of living (interbeing), their increased awareness and wisdom regarding their own life and their emerging knowledges.

14.9.1 Illustrating the Process: From Gender War to Cultural and Community Transformations in Being and Interbeing

This is an example of a process of generative community mediation around gender conflict in an indigenous community.

Reason for consultation: The mediator reports a *major conflict* between the men and women in an indigenous community. The conflict is the result of a request or need on the part of the women to redefine their participation in community spaces. The men believe that this request does not fit with the community's perspectives and values. In the words of the mediator, "They were on the brink of war."

Generative process: Mindful dialogue. The mediator works with two separate groups – men and women – according to the cultural tradition of this indigenous community. The example shows the steps of a generative process that develop in the meeting with the men group. The generative process starts with two *generative questions* about the *past and future from the perspective of the present conflict*. Both questions involve issues of interbeing. The first question invited them to visualize a future involving their daughters: "Imagining the future for your daughters, how would you like it to be?" [*the future in the present*]. The second question refers to a moment in recent history in which the members of the indigenous community were not recognized as citizens [*the past in the present*]. The consideration of both questions by the group of men yields *generative moments and cycles* in which they review and acknowledge the women's myriad resources and competencies in terms of running the household and explore all that they could contribute to the community if involved [*building a possibility*]. Negotiations between the men and women began anew.

Working platform: The generative process of transformation is initiated by the men responsiveness to the two generative questions about being and interbeing formulated by the mediator. Their recognition enabled a working platform geared

toward advancing new possibilities in the process toward transformation. In this process, the men gradually build new meaning matrices and social narratives that integrate gender relations, allowing them to recognize and accept the women's point of view. They design *community actions* that invite women to participate in running the community. The generative process includes the transformation of the people, relationships, and the community itself. This is achieved by building the present-day integration of the women along with a viable future that can be sustained in the long term.

The women progressively participate in running the community council and gradually becoming part of political life in their country. Transformations are sustained and expanded [*building a path and a possible, sustainable future*]. Transformed ways of interbeing emerge and consolidate.

Social ecologies (interbeing) involved: the indigenous community, the culture and its changes and interfaces, the diversity among social groups within the community and the openness to considering different historical moments (past-present-future), and the transformation of community relations with social groups outside the community guide us to complex ecological perspectives, crisscrossing, and interfaces within context and time.

14.9.2 Illustrating the Process in Therapy: From "Being Frozen" to Generativity

The following example illustrates a generative process in training and therapy. We can see the construction of dialogue, step by step, and the emergence of transformations of being and interbeing. The increased awareness and emerging knowledges, both in the therapist and the client, are also evident.

A student in the Graduate Degree Program on the Generative Perspective and Professional Practice, Diana Torres, MA in Family Therapy and Clinical Psychology, in searching for her own and her client resources, she presented this consultation to the group.

First session: "Being frozen"

Therapist: What brought you to therapy?

N: (looks down and then smiles shyly) I met this girl 2 years ago, and well, it's weird, because I only saw her once. I went out with some people from school and she came along. Afterwards, I walked her home and asked her for her number, and she gave it to me. But when I called to ask her out, she said she couldn't that day and told me she'd call me, but never did. Every day since, I think what would have happened if I had done something different. I know this sounds bad, like I'm sick or psycho. What woman would want to be with me if she knew about this? It's crazy but I can't stop it. I cry constantly, thinking, dreaming about her (sighing). I have to get her out of my head. [*Problem node and implicit hopes.*]

The therapist expands the dialogue into other aspects of N's life (school, work, family relations). N is not working right now. The youngest of three siblings, he quit school a semester before earning his degree in graphic design. He does not have many friends and spends most of his time in his room crying about everything he wants but hasn't achieved. During the session, he expressed his desire to change. [*Expectations*.]

N: Still at home at my age! I need a change. I need to work, make money, and get a girlfriend. I can't go on like this. (His eyes are brimming with tears. He cracks his knuckles.) [*Expectations*.]

In the therapist's conversation about this consultation with her colleagues, a generative dialogue which increased her discernment and awareness took place. She comments that the client seems stuck. She feels trapped because she wants to help him but doesn't know how at the pace he needs. The group asks whether N mentioned any resources, or if she could discern any. The therapist says N mentioned that he likes manga (Japanese comics), but she dismissed it because she could not see it as a resource (pre-judgment). The group wonder if possibilities can emerge by incorporating manga art in their conversation; if manga art could be a resource, she could invite N to use manga to draft a proposal for his future in search of openings. A focus on the present moment, and not on pre-knowledge or dominant stories, helps professionals to listen more deeply, to recognize uniqueness and felt experience, and to meet the others and their unique circumstances.

Second session: Changing. Establishing a relationship. The generative process begins with moments, cycles, and a working platform

T: Talk to me about your art. I want to learn more about manga. (Her tone is interested.) [*Exploring if art is a resource that might provide possibilities.*]

N: OK, well manga art (sitting up straighter in the chair) is sort of like comics. I love it and I know I'm good. I never quit doing manga. I've done a lot with it and I keep getting better.

T: How is it that your voice, posture, and, well, your whole attitude change when you talk about your art? [*The therapist notes the emotion, change in posture, positive tone, and N's continued dedication to his art over time as an emerging moment and expresses her recognition and interest*.]

N: Oh yeah? (blushing and smiling, looking pleased). I hadn't realized that. [*Generative moment.*] It's just something I really like, a place where things flow for me. [*He adds that he recognizes the differences in himself. This generative moment is expanded to newer moments and generative cycles, when he adds that with art, "things flow," new knowledge about himself and his art emerge.*]

T: You say that things flow for you through art and I can see that's true. In fact, I was thinking about how some famous actors say similar things. That's what it feels like with you, what do you think? [*She explores his art creatively, exploring new meanings to feelings. Personal and relational resources emerge beyond failure, loneliness, and isolation. She expands the generative cycles and begins building a working platform that links problems, resources, and possibilities.*]

N: (with enthusiasm) Totally. When I'm with people talking about my art, things flow better, and I can get to know people. [*Responsive, N begins an emerging, novel self-narration. The therapist advances on building the working platform further. They are developing a shared intelligibility through confluences in dialogue.*]
T: What would you say to making a manga that is about precisely how you would like your life to be? [*T proposes a timeline that extends beyond his current difficulties into the future.*]

He begins to draw with great care, making a self-portrait filled with light and expressing desires for his future. [*Several generative cycles emerge in the story and, later, in his everyday life.*]

Third session

T: How did manga become part of your life?
N: (smiling) Well, when I was seven, I saw my brother drawing manga, and I've been drawing ever since (his chest swells). [*He proudly responds to the proposal, validating and expanding on it. Manga art is an encompassing resource in his life.*]

This dialogue allowed the therapist to link past, present, and future, since manga art has always been part of his life and is something he plans to do in the future. It is a generative tool that elicits change in the moment and is also a resource for the future. These generative moments and cycles enrich and expand the working platform.

Later, N becomes proactive and productive, initiating an ongoing self-exploration. [*New generative cycles appear that expand the working platform and create possibilities, such as a job search, new art-related initiatives, new relationships, and an end to crying over times when he felt like a failure, including the incident with the girl two years earlier.*]

Fifth session: Revelation

T: (after almost an entire session in which N has not mentioned the girl) I have a question. What allowed you to go the whole session without mentioning the girl? And you know what I think? If I hadn't asked this question, you would not have.
N: (smiling proudly, his eyes shining) I didn't bring her into the session. Truth is, it didn't seem that important, since I'm working on trying to find a job and posting things on my YouTube channel (where he has a cartoon series). She comes to mind from time to time, but she's not as important anymore. [*Expanded awareness, explorations, and new knowledges about himself, his relationships, and his circumstances. A whole social ecology (interbeing) is emerging, transformed and/or recovered.*]

N talked about his art and about changes. He has been sending out his résumé, getting ready for a manga show, and promoting his art. He appears enthusiastic and in high spirits in regard to current and future possibilities, acknowledging them with

appreciation and pride. The active exploration and construction of becoming a participant in diverse communities, of a future with actual changes in his way of living, is visible, as are the emotional transformations associated with his new "realities."

Seventh session: Generating awareness, new knowledge, and learning

T: Let's talk about the fact that you couldn't get this girl out of your head but in the last session, she didn't come to your mind. If these were different sections or chapters in the book of your life, what title would you give them? [*This metaphor explores what emerged in therapy and has been consolidated as new ways of living*.]

N: The first chapter would be the moment when I came for the first session and I'd call it "Being frozen." And I'd call the second chapter in my story "Changing" because that's the way it feels; I don't get depressed so much, I don't cry, I'm making up for lost time and taking steps to make changes in my life, because I feel better but I want to achieve more. [*Novel resources and possibilities are included, increased awareness and reflexive learnings in the narrations; transformations are part of generatively pondering changes in his life.*]

Although the entire process incorporates a transformation at multiple levels of the self, the client's relationships, resources, and ways of living, the enactment of novel possibilities radically changes the motive for seeking therapy, materializing new ways of life. His increased knowledges and wisdom further expand his resources and possibilities of being and interbeing.

Therapist's reflections

Something different emerged within me and for my client in the second session, something I referred to as a "generative bridge and an outburst of resources."

N came with his own problem node, and I had my own problem node with respect to the consultation. I was unable to see that N had resources or that my resources would help him. For me, the outburst of resources came when I had a dialogue with my colleagues and began relating to the client from the perspective of his resources, giving N the possibility to tell his story and live through a tool that allows things to "flow" for him, manga art (mindful and responsive). That is to say, both of us experienced an outburst of resources that triggered change. On the other hand, when the problem node connected to new possibilities and a potential future, a generative bridge emerged. N could return to past situations that used to be problematic or negative and connected to them from another place, in the context of a working platform and enabling nodes. This allowed him to be in touch with his past experiences while also connecting to a potential future (mindful and responsive to his past and future).

Follow-up: Strengthening generativity

The therapist reports that she had five additional sessions with N. Besides showing his artwork at two major manga exhibitions, N is building a name for himself in

that world and is much more confident of his capabilities. The issue of the girl he said he was obsessed with is no longer part of the panorama.

N has made a powerful transformation that can be seen in his posture, his expression, and his life narrative, which emphasizes possibilities. He has found creative solutions to his problems and also creatively sought out opportunities. He is earning money. [*A transformed and active life matrix of enacted resources and possibilities has changed his way of life*.]

One year after, he has a formal job at a design company and is working toward establishing an arte manga project.

N has acquired and expanded new knowledges about himself, his relationships, and the resources necessary to become a participant in productive and creative communities, new social ecologies and contexts for himself expanding his resources and possibilities toward learnings and new forms of living.

14.10 Dialogic Mindfulness: Walking in Dialogue

Dialogic mindfulness is an engaged form of relating both to others and to the multiplicity within us. It is an active and embodied process of paying attention to circumstances in order to make transformation possible. Dialogic mindfulness focuses on experiences that can create resources and possibilities. That enables the perspectives and practices clients bring to the consultation to be expanded and their awareness and new learnings about themselves and their social worlds increased. A significant transformation in ways of being with others occurs (interbeing).

New knowledges and incipient registers guide our participation toward the search for and discovery of resources and possibilities. Recognition of clients and professionals' emerging dialogic knowledges helps to increase their resources and to facilitate generative processes where problems, resources, and possibilities are linked. Reflection on those problems, resources, and possibilities, and discernment of the transformations in them, underscores how each process is singular and unique.

According to anthropological psychologist Rosa Suárez (personal communication, 2016), "walking the words" is an expression used in a number of Latin American indigenous communities, mainly by their shamans or healers. It is a spiritual term that refers to a process of accompaniment and to life's teaching-learning. Walking is a metaphor but also a concrete action insofar as a road is cleared and explored. As one walks down the path of life, one leaves a mark; life experiences are sown by the side of the path. The word's spiritual harvest is co-constructed in dialogue through a relationship, through listening and engaging the "other" in dialogue and joint social actions.

Walking in meditation means to walk *knowing* we are walking, to walk mindfully, to walk aware of what is going on. We recognize what we are doing in the present moment and maintain a dialogue with others and with ourselves that enables the transformation of life forms and reflexively produces learnings and knowledges. As the examples illustrate, clients and professionals have a sense of the steps they

are taking. If we walk through dialogue with that awareness, then every step will be grounding, every step will be nourishing.

The generative perspective proposes joint and participative, active, and creative production of dialogue and generative processes as resources for this walking dialogue. In the examples of generative dialogues and processes we have presented, the creation and recovery of resources and possibilities lead to transformations and to new knowledges and learnings. Emphasis on emerging processes, on finding and building novel possibilities and paths that lead to alternative viable futures, implies moving in dialogue from problems, conflicts, and challenges toward transformations and sustainable futures.

Responsibility and knowledge are intrinsic to connectedness. Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of mindfulness as an act of awakening. To be awake is to be aware of something, to be able to take in what is going on. If we are awake, we can recognize what we are doing in the present moment and say to ourselves, "I am taking a step."

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues Rosângela Russo, Diana Torres, and Rosa Suárez[3] for their contributions to this paper.

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Index

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