

# 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<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup>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 mention 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 dis-identifies from it (e.g., Husgafvel 2016), pays tribute to Hatha yoga, and seems to not be interested in the Dharma’s stake. Is this appropriation, pilfering, a chutzpah (Kabat-Zinn 2015 in [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ7adrOj9s](http://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](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/Ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tud1yJ-1zNI](http://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 be 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](http://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](http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/american-buddhists)).

Hsu (2016 in [www.lionsroar.com/weve-been-here-all-along](http://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-implicating 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-dotting 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 kindness 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 kindly 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 (Dukkhatā

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](http://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 heartfelt, 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 be 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 Malunkya 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 (*vinana*) 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 heartfelt 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 unstuck 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://relation-albuddhism.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 afflicted 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 proprioception (awareness of body movements) and interoception (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 (paticca-samuppada, 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” “perceptibles” and “conceivables” the ALL referred to before (Kwee 2014):

- Perceptibles of external form – visual awareness
- Perceptibles of external sound – auditory awareness
- Perceptibles of external smell – olfactory awareness
- Perceptibles of external taste – gustatory awareness
- Perceptibles 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 perceptibles 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 ( <i>appamada</i> /awake-watchful guard)	1 <i>Samatha</i> targets calm & tranquillizing (serenity)	2 <i>Samadhi</i> targets flame extinction: <i>Nirvana</i> (flow)
Stage II (gradual) Wise reflection: aims at wholesome karmic action ( <i>yoniso manasi-kara</i> /wise focussing)	3 <i>Vipassana</i> : insight in dependent origination (The Buddha)	4 <i>Sunyata</i> as wisdom of non-self/ emptiness-MTN (Nagarjuna)
Stage III (sudden) Wisdom through due to a clear comprehension of the world ( <i>sampajanna</i> /understanding)	5 <i>Mahamudra</i> /Non-duality of subject-object/MTN-form (Vasubandhu)	6 <i>Kill-the-Buddha</i> : the last <i>nivarana</i> /hindrance as paradox (Chan/Zen)
Stage IV (sudden) Accomplishing the benevolence of inter-being ( <i>antaratman</i> /‘inter-minding’)	7 <i>Brahmaviharas</i> : social meditations/ B-nature in action (Mahayana)	8 <i>dharmas</i> : 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 kindness 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 heartfelt 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](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. conceivable, thinkable, imaginable, memorable and dreamable, 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](http://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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