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Sensory Templates of Virtue and Vice: Management Spirituality and Religion

In recent years, management educators have looked to spiritual doctrines and practices to find ways of dealing with some of the more pervasive challenges in organizations, such as dealing with health issues and stress, protecting managers against internal corruptive forces when they come into positions of power, and dealing with the lack of a sense of meaning, purpose, and love felt by many managers and their subordinates today (Delbecq 2013, 2014, 2006; Allen and Williams 2016; Kernochan et al. 2007; Neal 1997; Dane 2011; Brendel and Bennett 2016; Jaworski 2011; Calás and Smircich 2003).

In this chapter, I propose that we can use spiritual doctrines and practices more efficiently in management education by understanding such doctrines and practices as means to effectuate particular changes in sensory templates. By knowing which sensory templates we aim at changing we can better direct our efforts and evaluate the results. This chapter is not intended as a full analysis of any particular religious tradition or of any particular usage of religious doctrines and practices in management education. The intention is to illustrate how the concept of sensory templates can be used to deepen one's understanding of religious doctrines and practices in a way which supports their use in management education.

To argue this point, I look specifically at the use of doctrines of virtue and vice from the philosophy of Plato/Socrates, Aristotle, Christianity, and Tibetan Buddhism in management education. Delbecq (2006) argues that cultivation of virtue is important as a means of preventing the internal forces of human vices in the individual manager from leading to flawed strategic decisions detrimental to the organization, its environment, and the manager's own career. This leads to the question of how virtue can be cultivated. I argue that cultivation of virtue is not primarily a matter of adhering to a particular code of conduct, but rather a matter of adopting specific sensory templates from which virtuous acts follow spontaneously and without any effort. Drawing in particular on Tibetan Buddhism, I argue that fundamental to the cultivation of virtue is the change of sensory template from seeing phenomena as self-existing to seeing them as only existing in dependence on other phenomena. Furthermore, I argue that by teaching virtue without this change of sensory template one risks managers adopting the *appearance* of virtue while perpetuating vice in more hidden forms. I will describe the link between this change in sensory template and virtue in depth below.

I will write only about doctrines and practices with which I have some degree of personal experience. However, it is my hope that among the readers are those who will be inspired to engage in the analysis of other spiritual doctrines and practices as means of effectuating particular changes in sensory templates.

6.1 Spiritual Doctrines and Practices in Management Education

The growing interest in spirituality and religion in management and management education is evident in the foundation of the Management Spirituality and Religion (MSR) interest group within the yearly Academy of Management conference and the many academic journals that have published papers and special issues on management and spirituality, for example, *Journal of Management Education* (2005, 2006), *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (1999, 2002), *Leadership Quarterly* (2005), *Organization* (2003, 2004), *Journal of Social Economics* (1996,

1998), *Pfeiffer Annual of Training and Consulting* (2004), *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 9(2), and *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 7(1). In reflecting on the papers they received for their special issue on “Spirituality, Management, and Organization”, published in *Organization* 10(2), Marta Calás and Linda Smircich wrote:

What we found [...] were some shared concerns regarding the limits of science as a mode of understanding, laments about the lack of meaning in work and a sense of lack of purpose in the workplace, and an interest in connecting work with love and social justice. Altogether, it appears that the ‘spirituality and organization’ discourse is conceived as a means to counteract self-interest at a time when all other messages seem to point in the opposite direction. (Calás and Smircich 2003)

Like art-based methods, spiritual doctrines and practices in management education have been used, directly or indirectly, in many ways and for many purposes. For example, short (60–90 seconds) sessions of focusing on breathing have been used to focus students’ attention at the start of class (Crumleyn and Schutz 2010). Meditation, prayer, and other spiritual practices have been used to counter the negative impact on managers’ health that can come from working in stressful, fast-paced, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous environments. Seeing management as a vocational calling or a *service* (Greenleaf 1970) to customers, employees and other stakeholders or simply for the common good has been used to infuse business with a sense of meaning, value, and purpose beyond mere production of goods and services and accumulation of capital. Techniques for cultivating Christian virtues have been suggested as a way to protect leaders (and consequently their organizations) from the pitfalls of human vices and unethical behavior as these leaders rise to power (Delbecq 2000, 2016). The Buddhist concepts of compassion, mindfulness, and no-self have been suggested as practices that support the management teacher in delivering high-quality teaching (Kernochan et al. 2007). Mindfulness has been seen to support the development of a broad range of leadership competencies (Brendel and Bennett 2016). The Christian view of humans as simultaneously created in God’s image and fallen from grace has been suggested as a more nuanced alternative to the two views of human nature

that managers according to McGregor generally use to guide their management efforts (Daniels et al. 2000). McGregor proposed that managers use either theory X or theory Y (McGregor 1960). Theory X assumes that humans (or at least the average employee) are lazy, unintelligent, and egocentric and only work to secure a steady income. This view leads to strict managerial control. By contrast, theory Y assumes that humans naturally enjoy improving themselves and enjoy responsibility. This view leads to a more hands-off kind of management. The Christian view of humans as both fallen and created in God's image combines these two views and leads to a management style where managers both trust the angelic aspects and control the devilish aspects of humans. William Isaacs' work at the Dialogue Project at MIT is based on the ideas of David Bohm and the spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti (Isaacs 1999). Similarly, the Native American medicine wheel (Cowan 2007), Jung's concept of synchronicity (Jaworski 2011) and archetypes (Moxnes and Moxnes 2016), and many other spiritual and religious doctrines have been used in various ways in management education.

It is not uncomplicated to take elements from traditions which aim at bringing about profound transformations in the way humans experience and relate to self, other, and life and use these elements for the purpose of creating better managers in organizations. Consequently, this is done with varying degrees of depth. Spirituality in management ranges from *substantial* leadership practices described by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, who was deeply grounded in spiritual traditions (Gandhi 2011), to *superficial* practices which are little more than management consultants using spiritual lingo to market their products. In this chapter, I argue that the depth depends on whether the adoption of religious doctrines and practices results in changes of the sensory templates managers use to comprehend and engage with the situations they encounter in their organizations.

In this chapter, I will focus on the use of practices for cultivating virtues in manager education. I have chosen to focus the chapter in this way for two reasons. First, this work is one of the more developed streams within the field of spirituality and religion in management education. Second, looking at these practices in some depth offers a good illustration

of how spiritual doctrines and practices more generally can be understood as methods for improving management practice by changing particular sensory templates.

Before I turn to the exploration of how to develop virtues in management education, it is useful to address two distinctions: the distinction between spirituality and religion and the distinction between doctrines and practices.

In the field of Management Spirituality and Religion, there is a debate around how to distinguish between spirituality and religion. I will not go into this debate here, but simply clarify that I will use the word “religion” to refer to the doctrines and practices of the major world religions Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. I will use the word “spirituality” to refer to doctrines and practices aimed at improving the spiritual life of humans, which has been developed through the process of distilling what individual teachers believed to be the essence of religious teachings and separating this from what they considered religious ceremonial epiphenomena. Sometimes this distilling is arrived at through comparison between religions or between religions, psychological theory, or non-religious philosophy, including scientific theories. Spiritual teaching can be found in the teaching of individuals who may or may not see themselves as part of a particular religion, such as Jiddu Krishnamurti, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, Claudio Naranjo, Eckhart Tolle, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ken Wilber, Byron Katie, Ram Dass, Alan Watts, Hameed Ali Almas, and Marianne Williamson. Whether it is possible to separate religious teaching from ceremonial practices without losing something essential is an important discussion, but one I will not go into here.

I will use the word “doctrine” to refer to specific beliefs or sets of beliefs. Examples of Christian doctrines include the belief that Jesus is God in the flesh and the belief in the existence of original sin. Similarly, the four noble truths and the doctrine of dependent origination are examples of Buddhist doctrines. I will use the word “practice” to refer to activities through which the doctrines can be understood, communicated to students, and adhered to. Contemplative prayer and confession are examples

of practices used in Christianity. Zazen (belly meditation) and visualization of various Buddha figures are examples of Buddhist practices (found in Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, respectively). Doctrines are ideas one can believe. Practices are activities one can engage in to investigate those beliefs for oneself and activities which make sense to perform once one has accepted the beliefs. In the vocabulary of sensory templates, one can say that doctrines point to a particular way of organizing experience and practices are methods the student can use to adopt these ways of organizing experience or courses of actions following from this way of organizing experience.

6.2 Development of Virtue in Management Education

When hearing about the teaching of virtues as part of management education, managers may initially be skeptical. A manager may argue that virtues are nice and commendable, but that being bound by a moral code may be a competitive disadvantage which does not help managers manage profitable organizations. From this point of view, virtues may be seen as a luxury—a sort of moral high ground—that can be afforded only when things are going well in the organization.

However, there are strong arguments for why managers should care about the virtues described in religious traditions. André Delbecq was a scholar of complex decision-making at senior management level, the Eighth Dean of Fellows of the Academy of Management, and one of the pioneers in the Management Spirituality and Religion (MSR) movement. Delbecq points out that we often hear stories about leaders who are praised at the start of their career and who later get involved in scandalous behavior which damages the organization—and even threatens the world economy and peace (Delbecq 2016). Furthermore, he points out that empirical research shows that half the time strategic decisions fail it is due to such distorted behaviors of leaders (Nutt 2003). From this point of view, virtue is not a luxury that organizations can only afford when things are going well. From this point of view, virtue protects managers from succumbing to their inner corruptive forces and making

flawed strategic decisions which damage the organization, the organization's environment, and the manager's own career. In an interview Delbecq explained the situation as follows:

... 50% to 70% of the time strategic decisions—the most important, the most complex decision challenges leaders face—fail largely not because of an absence of information or an absence of analytics. Rather, it is a lack of psychological maturity on the part of the people engaged in the decision-making. There are dark variables like venality, greed, and hubris, but a lot of the failure is much more innocent. It's impatience and unwillingness to explore all the dimensions of the problem; insufficient ability to be sensitive to alternative or nonconfirming voices. Therefore, psychological, and in my view, spiritual maturity are required when you deal with those decisions that are most significant to the calling of the senior leader. At the senior level, decisions aren't "expert decisions" where you connect means and ends within a complex but predictable paradigm. The problems that come to the senior leader are the ones that seem unsolvable, covered with emotional and political intrigue, having greater uncertainty, and that require a discovery process. You have to discover the nature of the problem, you have to discover the elements of the solution, and you have to involve a variety of stakeholders holding disparate points of view while doing so. It requires a patient, sensitive process of deep listening, and the willingness to involve all of the stakeholders. You can't do that if you're anxious, fearful, self-centered, impetuous, authoritarian; so if you're a moral dwarf, it's unlikely you are going to be a successful senior executive. Spiritual maturity makes a difference. (Allen and Williams 2016, 4)

Delbecq (2016) writes that the two main vices leaders at all levels are tempted by and which can lead them to make poor strategic decisions are hubris and greed. Drawing on the Christian tradition, Delbecq suggests that such vices can be countered by the cultivation of corresponding virtues and that in doing so leaders can avoid the detrimental impact of their vices on the organization and on their own career. He exemplifies this by looking at hubris. He sees hubris as composed of arrogance and dominance, which can be countered by the cultivation of humility and love.

Arrogance is a self-aggrandizing vanity and pride which is often supported structurally in the organization by the privileges afforded to the

leader and by the fact that successful leaders are often gifted with visionary thinking, eloquence, quickness of intellect, and courage in action. Being praised for their personal gifts, experiencing organizational success, and being given special privileges can nurture the seeds of arrogance in the leader. As a result, leaders can become less receptive to criticism, start blaming external circumstances for unfavorable results and failures, and become more impatient. They may rationalize their increased impatience by referring to the need for getting things done. Arrogance can be countered by the cultivation of humility. The core of humility is the acknowledgement of the imperfect nature of one's own views, ideas, and action plans. It is not self-debasement or self-devaluation. It is also not being uncritical of others' ideas and going along with everybody else's whims. In practice, it is just the offering of ideas in a tentative way and the willingness to change one's own view when it can be improved or when it simply is wrong. It is focusing one's attention on bringing about good results together with others without being worried about how others may see and evaluate oneself and one's particular contributions. The virtue of humility is sometimes aptly summed up by stating that humility is not thinking less of oneself, but thinking of oneself less. When managers cultivate humility, it brings a climate of openness and inclusion to the organization which is highly motivating for employees.

Dominance is the use of power that is motivated by impatience with the consensus building process. The development of dominance is supported in that management groups often consist of like-minded individuals, and within such groups it is easy to develop the notion that failures in implementation are due to subordinates' laziness, incompilance, or simply their stupidity. Dominance leads to leaders getting out of touch with what is going on in the organization and a false sense of confidence and invulnerability, a sense of over-entitlement, lack of empathy, and protection of self-interests over the interests of the organization and lower level employees. The virtue that can counter dominance is love. In brief, cultivating the virtue of love will make the leader's vision a vision of service, and it will make the leader see the strengths and gifts each employee brings to the organization and use these, rather than wishing the employees were different.

In short, Delbecq suggests that when managers cultivate virtue, they will acquire the patience needed to develop good and well-informed strategic decisions that are more likely to lead to organizational (and personal) success. Virtue is not about giving up anything of real value. It is about cultivating patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting which lead to human flourishing instead of harboring patterns which lead to sub-optimal functioning—or simply to dysfunction.

6.3 Virtues and Vices in Greek Philosophy, Christianity, and Buddhism

Delbecq argues convincingly for the usefulness of cultivating virtues as a way of protecting managers from making flawed strategic decisions under the influence of vices such as hubris and greed. But how can virtues be cultivated in practice? To answer this question, I begin by providing a brief overview of a few key ideas about vice and virtue found in Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Buddhism. I then argue that cultivation of virtue is not merely a matter of adhering to a particular code of conduct, but is better understood as the adaptation of specific sensory templates from which virtuous acts follow spontaneously and without any effort.

The idea that certain vices can be countered by cultivating certain virtues is found in many traditions.

Plato's Socrates described the four virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice (sometimes referred to as prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice) (Plato 2000). He saw the cultivation of these virtues as the ultimate good which protects the integrity of the soul. Aristotle created a list of eleven virtues. He related each virtue to a particular domain of life and defined them as a middle way between two vices relating to that same domain. For example, the virtue of courage is a way of relating to the domain of confidence and fear, which can be found as a middle way between two non-virtuous ways of relating to confidence and fear, namely recklessness (too confident) and cowardice (too fearful). Similarly, in the domain of pleasure and pain, self-control is the virtuous middle way between the vices of insensibility and self-indulgence; in the domain of wealth, generosity is found between stinginess and extravagance; in relation to anger, gentleness is found between

Table 6.1 Aristotle's virtues as the golden means between two corresponding vices

Domain	Vice (too little)	Virtue (just right)	Vice (too much)
Fear and confidence	Cowardice	Courage	Recklessness
Pleasure and pain	Insensibility	Self-control	Self-indulgence
Small wealth	Stinginess	Generosity	Extravagance
Large wealth	Niggardliness	Magnificence	Gaudiness
Honor and dishonor	Small-mindedness	High-mindedness	Vanity
Anger	Apathy	Gentleness	Short temper
Truth about oneself	Self-depreciation	Truthfulness	Boastfulness
Pleasantness, amusement	Boorishness	Wittiness	Buffoonery
Pleasantness, daily life	Grouchiness	Friendliness	Flattery
Sense of shame	Shamelessness	Modesty	Self-debasement
Pleasure and pain at fortunes of others	Spite	Righteous indignation	Envy

apathy and short temper; in relation to shame, modesty is found between shamelessness and self-debasement; and so on (see Table 6.1). Christian philosophers, drawing on the Bible and on Greek philosophy, developed several lists of virtues and vices. Famous among these is Pope Gregory's (540–604 AD) seven deadly sins (gluttony, lust, greed, pride, anger, sloth, and envy) and seven heavenly virtues. For the latter, Gregory combined the four cardinal (or human) virtues from Greek philosophy (prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice) with the three theological virtues from the Bible (faith, hope, and love). Another list of virtues, the so-called contrary virtues, was described in the epic poem *Psychomachia—The War Of The Soul: or, The Battle Of The Virtues, And Vices* written by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348–405 AD) (Prudentius 1743). According to this text, each deadly sin can be countered by a specific virtue: abstinence against gluttony, chastity against lust, liberality against greed, humility against pride, patience against anger, diligence against sloth, and kindness against envy. In Buddhism, we find the same basic idea that human beings naturally have flaws which cause suffering. The Sanskrit word used to refer to such flaws is “kleshas”. This word has been translated as afflictions, defilements, negative emotions, mind poisons, or vices. As with the Christian vices, there are different lists of kleshas, but three central kleshas are commonly recognized: moha (ignorance, delusion, or confusion), raga (greed, attachment, or desire), and dvesha (hatred, aversion, or ill will). As in the philosophy of Aristotle

and in Christianity, Buddhists operate with qualities which each can oppose a specific klesha: *prajna* or *jnana* (wisdom, insight, discriminating knowledge) opposes *moha* (ignorance); *dana* (generosity) opposes *raga* (greed); and *metta* (loving-kindness, friendliness, benevolence) opposes *dvesha* (hatred).

Another widespread idea is that cultivation of virtue brings profound happiness, the ability to be happy about behaving in morally good ways, and the experience of and participation in the divine. Thus, cultivation of virtue is simultaneously beneficial for the individual and the individual's community.

Socrates argues that cultivation of virtue is the only possible means of achieving happiness and well-being (translations of the Greek word "eudemonia") and that happiness and well-being cannot be obtained through, for example, acquisition of honors or pleasures (see, e.g., *Apology*). Aristotle emphasizes that cultivation of virtue enables the individual not merely to achieve happiness but to *act* in appropriate and good ways. In Christianity, it is held that cultivation of virtue "make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1995, 1804) and "adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature" (CCC 1995, 1812). In Buddhism, the vices trap the individual to wander in circles (*samsara*) of perpetual suffering, dissatisfaction, and frustration (*dukkha*). Cultivation of the virtues enables the individual to escape this state of affairs—much like the change of sensory template allowed the managers in the research to escape from various frustrating situations in which certain courses of action seemed like the right thing to do yet never brought the desired results.

Even though the different wisdom traditions enumerate *several* virtues, they generally see these virtues as different manifestations of one thing, rather than separate and independent.

Socrates argued that all virtues are one (see *Protagoras*) and that all virtues are a form of wisdom or knowledge (*Meno* 87e–89a and *Euthydemus* 278d–282a). He gave several arguments for the oneness of all virtues. For example, he pointed out the impossibility of being wise and not temperate since both wisdom and temperance have the same opposite: folly. In another argument, he began by establishing that health, beauty, reputation, and wealth can be either beneficial or harmful depending on whether they are used wisely. He proceeded by saying that likewise temperance, justice, and courage also

need to be used with wisdom to be beneficial and thus virtuous. Therefore, all virtue is wisdom. Referring to things that are usually thought of as good, including virtues, Socrates argued:

...the discussion they demand is not on the question of how they are in themselves and by nature goods, but rather, I conceive, as follows: if they are guided by ignorance, they are greater evils than their opposites, according as they are more capable of ministering to their evil guide; whereas if understanding and wisdom guide them, they are greater goods; but in themselves neither sort is of any worth ... Now what result do we get from our statements? Is it not precisely that, of all the other things, not one is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad? (*Euthydemus* 281d–281e)

Aristotle adds to this by stating that virtue is not merely *knowing* how to use things but also acting upon this knowledge. Thus, he prefers to speak about *practical wisdom* rather than simply wisdom. He agrees that virtue is a kind of knowledge, but sees this knowledge as a form of practical shrewdness. In Christianity, the cardinal virtues are seen as rooted in the theological virtues (CCC, 1995, 1812) and among the theological virtues love is the primary. In the gospel of Mathew, Jesus sums up the teaching by stating:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew, 22:37–40)

In Buddhism, all vices spring from ignorance and therefore all virtue springs from insight. This is similar to Socrates' view, but Buddhism emphasizes that such insight is not a purely intellectual insight, but experiential insight. In particular, according to Buddhism, virtue comes from the direct *experience* of the true nature of phenomena and reality—not merely from being convinced by good arguments. In fact, many Buddhist teachers encourage their students not to believe what they say but to take it

as a starting point for their own thorough investigations, so the students may find out for themselves by letting the investigations take them to the direct experience.

Thus, in spite of their individual differences, the philosophy found in Socrates, Aristotle, Christianity, and Buddhism holds that cultivation of virtue is necessary to counter vices and thus achieve not merely a morally good life but also a content and happy life. Furthermore, these traditions all describe virtue as *one* even though Socrates and Buddhism emphasize its wisdom, Christianity its loving nature, and Aristotle its impact on action.

6.4 Virtue Is Not a Code of Conduct but a Change of Sensory Template

Cultivation of virtue is sometimes understood as a matter of adhering to a particular code of conduct which is considered ethically good. That is, cultivation of virtue is understood as consciously striving to be humble, generous, patient, diligent, and so on, in spite of one's impulses for the opposite. However, in this section, I argue that such a conception of the cultivation of virtue is problematic and not entirely in line with the traditions mentioned above. If we think about cultivation of virtue merely as a matter of adhering to a particular code of conduct and controlling our impulses for vice, we risk our efforts to cultivate virtue becoming a constant struggle and, more importantly, we risk only achieving the *appearance* of virtue while, in reality, we are perpetuating our vices in more subtle forms imperceptible to ourselves. As an alternative, I propose that we understand cultivation of virtue as a matter of changing the place from which we act—that is, changing the sensory templates through which we comprehend and engage with various situations. As we saw in Chap. 4, operating from different sensory templates can make managers *prefer* different courses of action. Therefore, cultivation of virtue can be conceptualized as the adaptation of specific sensory templates from which virtuous acts follow spontaneously and without any effort.

Several of the cases described in Chap. 4 showed that shifts in the sensory templates managers used to comprehend a problematic situation *automatically* changed the managers' behavior so it became more virtuous (more patient, more compassionate, more humble, etc.). Had we asked the managers to act in these new ways without changing the sensory template they used to comprehend the situation, these new ways of acting might have seemed silly, unnecessary, or even counterproductive or harmful to them and they would most likely have resented having to act in such ways. For example, Catharine changed from seeing people like water, which is easily moved, to seeing people like a viscous mass that took time to move. As a result, she began patiently and calmly to engage larger parts of the organization in applying pressure on a certain business unit. If Catharine had maintained her view that (intelligent) people should change their behavior immediately (be moved easily) by the results of the scientific tests, she would have found the task of engaging larger parts of the organization in working on the managers in the business units an unnecessary waste of her time and resented having to do it. However, once Catharine understood the inertia of the managers in the business unit as a natural aspect of human nature, it made sense for her to have patience and to include others in the process. She could see the validity of the values the managers of the business unit were fighting (and even admired these values) and did not blame them for their unwillingness to give these up just because of the test results. In short, when Catharine changed the sensory template she used to comprehend humans, her preferred course of action effortlessly changed.

More importantly, even though the research process focused on finding solutions to managerial problems and not on making the managers more virtuous people, the resulting change in behavior was from acting with anger and blame (a vice) to acting with a relaxed, unforced patience (a virtue). She was still firm and did not allow the business unit to do what they wanted, but she was also not angry with them for trying. Thus, by changing a sensory template, Catharine unknowingly and without any effort became more virtuous. If Catharine had been asked (or forced) to act in more patient ways without changing the sensory template through which she understood the situation, she would likely have acted with anger against this suggestion. In fact, as mentioned in the descrip-

tion of the case in Chap. 4, the company's policy was to encourage collaboration by making this part of the managers' performance measurement. This can be seen as an attempt at enforcing virtuous action. Before the research, Catharine was angry at this policy and saw it as impeding her work and as something she needed to do for appearance's sake. After the change in sensory template, she was no longer angry about this policy and no longer felt it impeded her work.

A similar transformation from anger to patience occurred in the case of Frank, who after the process went to his colleague's office to engage in a non-judgmental and open dialogue about why this colleague had broken an agreement. It is unlikely that the colleague would have responded by admitting that he was at fault and reestablishing the agreement if Frank had acted from an inner state of anger. If Frank had not changed the sensory template through which he perceived his colleague, he might still have engaged his colleague in dialogue, but it would have been with the intention of manipulating him and convincing him that he was wrong, and it is likely that his colleague would have resisted this attempt at manipulation—even if it had been presented in a very “civilized” and “virtuous” way. What allowed Frank to act with the virtue of patience was the change of the sensory template he used to understand his colleague and the nature of dialogue. Yet another example was Gary, who decided to organize weekly meetings with his unstable but brilliant programmer as a way to offer him the acknowledgement and appreciation he needed to work in a focused way. Gary also changed from a form of anger to patience. If he had not changed the sensory template he uses to understand “communication”, he would have resented this arrangement and seen it as unnecessary. With such resentment, it would have been difficult to hold meetings where the employee felt that he received the acknowledgment and appreciation he needed to focus.

It is worth noting that even though Catharine initially felt justified in her anger, and therefore expressed it freely through blaming, she knew that it wasn't really helpful in the situation. However, the sensory template she used to organize her experience produced anger and made her feel in the right about being angry. In contrast, both Frank and Gary felt their anger was not fully justified, and therefore they tried to hide or control it. However, trying to hide or control the anger only created inner conflict in Frank and Gary. They

saw anger as something bad that should be diminished, but at the same time, the sensory template they used to organize their experience produced anger. The actions that flowed from this inner state of conflict may on the surface appear civilized, but they are nothing more than rationalized and cool expressions of anger. For example, before the workshop, Frank and Gary might argue their views in a calm and composed way, but without listening to or respecting the other person's views or emotions. They might put in an effort to meet the colleague or the employee because they have learned that this is a good thing to do, but at the same time find it tedious to have to do this. They may think: Why is this necessary? Why can't they just do their job? Why can they not see what is needed in the organization and do it? And they may feel superior to their troublesome colleagues and employees because they themselves appear to be more rational and magnanimous. All of these thoughts and feelings are civilized expressions of the anger produced by the use of particular sensory templates. Such examples show how even if the managers knew that their anger was unhelpful, even if they did not feel justified in their anger, any attempts at embracing the virtue of patience would most likely fail—unless they changed the sensory template they used to comprehend the situation. Inversely, the cases show that when the managers *did* change the sensory template, the virtue of patience was not something they had to force themselves to be, but something that came spontaneously and effortlessly.

In general, if we ask (or force, encourage, push, entice, persuade, etc.) managers to engage in virtuous behavior because it is virtuous, conducive to the larger good, admirable, or for any other reason, without addressing the underlying sensory templates which underpin their current non-virtuous behavior, we are in effect asking these managers to do something that does not make sense for them to do. We are asking them to do something that appears to be silly, unnecessary, counterproductive, or harmful given the way they at present comprehend the situation. It can, for example, appear as if we are asking them to give up something which is valuable to the organization or pleasurable, or beneficial to them personally, for some metaphysical cause of no practical value.

If they trust our authority and knowledge on the matter, they might change their behavior and this may, if we are very lucky, lead to a corresponding shift in sensory templates. But it is equally, if not more, likely that managers will reject the proposition altogether stating that it is lovely to be nice to each other but that this is not possible in the competitive world of scarce resources they operate in, or, if the social pressure to act virtuously is strong, the managers may find ways of *appearing* as if they perform the virtuous acts to gain social approval, while secretly, or even unconsciously, sticking to the non-virtuous agendas. In other words, they may engage in deceit and image management—the vice of vanity. This explains why managers generally espouse the virtuous model II while (unconsciously) operating from model I. In the following quote, Fineman illustrates well how managers have used the virtuous ideals and language of humanistic psychology without changing the fundamental sensory templates of control and manipulation:

...in recent years, control in many organizations has shifted from being overtly coercive to diffuse. It now aims to engage employees' energy and commitment through empowerment—flattening organizational hierarchies and pushing responsibility downwards. Significantly, it promises a happier employee. At first blush this appears appealing and liberating. Who would not want to be empowered, especially when it is presented as a way of increasing one's pleasure at work? Critical researchers, though, are skeptical. They point to the paradox of management using its own power to "empower" others—but usually on management's terms. Beneath empowerment's humanistic trappings, one can see a subtle form of control aimed at getting more performance from workers, often for relatively less reward, leading one writer to describe empowerment as a "therapeutic fiction". And, indeed, against the success stories of empowerment reported in the popular management literature, there is a growing body of evidence on failures. Far from raising employee happiness, this research reveals increasing levels of cynicism and resistance. (Fineman 2008, 4)

If managers adopt the ideals and language of humanistic philosophy without adopting sensory templates from which these ideals make sense, their words will refer to the same old management of employees as

analogous to the physical manipulation (i.e., pushing and pulling). Managers can speak about “empowering”, “motivating”, “coaching”, and so on and all of these words can be grounded in the same basic sensorimotor experience of pushing objects toward desired destinations, which more truthfully can be referred to as “forcing”, “coercing”, “manipulating”, and so on. To avoid similar situations when teaching virtues based in spiritual doctrines, it is therefore important to contemplate which sensory templates underlie these spiritual doctrines and to address the need for change of sensory templates directly.

Teachers of virtue in the various wisdom traditions have been keenly aware of the risk that simply telling people to be generous, humble, patient, diligent, kind, abstinent, and loving without addressing the inner state from which such virtuous actions flow can lead people to take up the *appearance* of virtue, in language and public actions, without this resulting in any real transformation from vice to virtue.

Aristotle points out that the same concrete action may be virtuous in one situation but not in another. For example, a courageous act is somewhere between cowardice and recklessness, but where to draw the lines between these three kinds of action varies from situation to situation. He proceeds to argue that the only way we can know which acts are virtuous in a given situation is by developing *practical wisdom*. He further proposes that the way to develop practical wisdom is to emulate individuals we know to be virtuous. Thus, for Aristotle virtue resides in this practical wisdom and not in the concrete actions themselves. In the words of this book, practical wisdom can be seen as a matter of adopting sensory templates which allow efficient action, and these can be learned through social learning, that is, by observing someone who already operates from these sensory templates.

In Christianity, we also find the notion that the inner motivation for performing virtuous actions is key and that actions performed for the wrong reasons will generate no merit. For example, a vain or proud person may perform acts of generosity, patience, or abstinence, but because the vain or proud person performs these acts (at least in part) in order to impress others, the resulting acts will merely be a thinly veiled expression of the vices of vanity and pride, rather than actual virtue. This is addressed in the gospel of Matthew:

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:1–6)

When it comes to virtue, it is not merely the concrete acts that matter, but also the place of love from which the acts flow. Engaging in virtuous acts is not only an end but also a means of finding the inner state of love from which these acts make sense and from which one is happy to fulfill them without receiving any reward in terms of recognition. Once this state of love is found, virtuous acts flow spontaneously and effortlessly. Then adhering to a code of conduct is no longer necessary. Too much emphasis on performing the right acts can easily distract the individual from finding the inner state that is the true reward of their practice and from which the practice flows effortlessly. Where Aristotle called the inner state practical wisdom, the Christian tradition tells us that the inner state we are looking for is love. This does not tell us about what change of sensory template we are looking for, but it gives us a test—if we adopt a sensory template and it does not bring about a state of love, it is not the sensory template we are looking for.

In Plato's masterpiece *The Republic*, Socrates investigates through a number of dialogues the virtue of justice. In one of these, Glaucon (one of Plato's half-brothers) challenges Socrates to show that justice is something we would do well to seek for its own sake and not because of any benefits or rewards we receive for appearing just. He begins by proposing that there are things that we value for their own sake and not because they produce any results, like simple pleasures, things that we value both for their own sake and for their consequences, like sight and good health,

and things we value only for their consequences which we would not have for their own sake as they are unpleasant, like physical exercise, an unpleasant medical cure for a disease, and working to earn a living. When he asks Socrates in which category he would place justice, Socrates places it in the second category. Glaucon then claims that most men would place justice in the last category, that is, something that “we should cultivate in return for payment and reputation on account of public opinion, but which purely for itself is to be avoided like the plague” (Plato 2000, 38).

Glaucon’s challenge to Socrates is of crucial importance for teaching virtue in management education since many managers would agree with Glaucon. On the one hand, appearing virtuous in the eyes of the public brings important rewards. On the other, not having to adhere to virtuous codes of conduct also brings rewards. If the organization earns a public reputation as highly ethical, they may get bigger market shares and charge more for their products. If the organization earns a reputation for unethical behavior, their customers may boycott them. Organizations may, for example, gain a reputation for high ethics through having a matching gifts program, like General Motors and Apple, where the organization matches any donation, within a certain range, any of their employees gives to selected charities. Other organizations, like Fairphone, gain a reputation for being ethical by making their supply chain transparent and producing their products with minimal harm to people and the environment. Such initiatives may come out of real virtue, but as we have seen above, they can also come out of vice. If an organization can keep their unethical conduct secret and still gain a reputation for being ethical, they can gain both the rewards of positive public opinion and the freedom to engage in unethical behavior when it is profitable to do so. Furthermore, if these initiatives are motivated because it is good business to be recognized as virtuous by society, it is not actually virtue—although they are still wonderful initiatives. Glaucon’s question is whether there are reasons for virtuous behavior beyond the reward that such behavior may elicit from the public.

Glaucon proposes that Socrates should show that an unjust man who has the reputation of being just is worse off than a just man who has the reputation of being unjust. Showing this, he claims, would prove that

justice is desirable for its own sake and not merely for the rewards a *reputation* for being just may bring. He then delivers a speech in defense of the unjust life (which later would be of great inspiration to Thomas Hobbs (1651) in his formulation of social contract theory). Glaucon proposes that justice is simply an agreement people come to when they have both profited by doing wrong to others and suffered from others doing wrong to them and found that the pain of the latter outweighs the benefits of the former. Having experienced this, people create laws against doing wrong and call these laws justice. Based on this view, he then argues that an unjust man who has a magic ring of invisibility that enables him to do anything he likes and be sure to get away with it while preserving a reputation for being just must be happier than a just man who throughout life suffers the punishments of being seen as an unjust man by society. Referring back to Chap. 2, we may say that Glaucon sees the praise of justice as avoidance of the cognitive dissonance stemming from the discrepancy between our adherence to just laws and our desire to act unjustly.

Socrates takes up this challenge and delivers a fairly long argument in defense of justice. Socrates' argumentation is an argument by analogy in which he suggests that one can analyze what justice is in a city and then by analogy examine whether it is the same in an individual. The main thrust of his argument is that justice is the state of a system (either the city or the individual) where each element is performing its proper task in harmony with all other elements. In the individual, this is the state where wisdom rules both the spirited (emotional) and the appetitive (instinctual) parts of our soul and the individual acts as "a perfect unity of diverse elements, self-disciplined and in harmony with himself" (Plato 2000, 141). In other words, it is a state where impulses to do great things and impulses to seek pleasure are both guided by and not in conflict with reason. Defining justice in *this* manner shows that just actions are those which, guided by wisdom, generate and preserve this inner state of harmony. By contrast, unjust actions, guided by ignorance, are actions which bring about inner conflict and ruin the unity of the individual—regardless of whether the unjust action is punished by the external environment or not. Socrates concludes that the just man is happier than the unjust, because "when the body's natural constitution is ruined, life seems

not worth living, even with every variety of food and drink, and all manner of wealth and power” (Plato 2000, 143).

Socrates’ defense of justice is in effect a change of the sensory template through which we can comprehend the virtue of justice (and any other virtue). This change in sensory template, in turn, changes what course of action the individual prefers. Glaucon models his comprehension of justice on the sensory template of two forces pulling us in two opposing directions—the forces being our desire to do injustice to others and our desire to be safe from injustice done to us by others. He sees justice as a rationalization of the compromise where we renounce the most desirable possibility of taking from others whatever seems good to us in order to receive the benefits of being sure others do not take from us what we would like to keep. In Chap. 4, we saw several examples of managers using this sensory template of finding a balance point between two opposing forces to comprehend various situations, and we saw how using this sensory template often leads to the creation of apparently impossible choices between two indispensable but mutually exclusive options. In Glaucon’s case, the use of this sensory template makes the virtue of justice appear as nothing more than the desire for safety, and it makes it appear to be in opposition to following one’s desire. Three courses of action are enabled and supported by this way of comprehending the situation. One can renounce one’s desire and enjoy the safety of being protected by the law. One can renounce the benefits of being accepted by society and enjoy the freedom to follow one’s desires untamed. One can keep immoral actions secret in an attempt at preserving the benefits of a virtuous reputation while simultaneously acquiring the benefits of following one’s desire unhindered.

Socrates, on the other hand, defines justice as a state of internal unity and harmony and as actions which preserve this inner state. In this way, he shows that there is no real difference between being virtuous and following our desire, once we recognize that what we desire most is to be happy in a state of unity and harmony. Gaining wealth and power through actions that ruin our inner harmony is not desirable because rather than helping us, this prevents us from achieving the happiness we ultimately desire.

This argument builds on one of Socrates’ fundamental beliefs, namely that all human desires are *ultimately* for good—never for evil. When people do bad things, they either lack the knowledge that it is bad or they (mistakenly) think it is a necessary means to get what is truly good (*Gorgias* and *Meno*). If we examine the cases in Chap. 4, we see that any

impulse to blame or attack employees or fellow managers does not arise from any inherently malignant part of the manager, but is part of frustrated attempts at reaching something good, such as the smooth operation of the organization and the well-being of self and others. Impulses to blame or attack employees or fellow managers are never an end in themselves. According to Socrates, we may see that all concrete desires are ultimately a desire to be happy, in the fullest sense of the word, combined with more or less informed ideas about the means through which such happiness can be reached. In the words of this book, all desire is desire for happiness plus the sensory templates through which we comprehend what happiness is and how we achieve it.

In Buddhism, ignorance is seen as the main vice from which other vices, such as greed and hatred, spring. In particular, it is ignorance about the way in which phenomena (including the phenomenon of self) exist that makes us inclined to either grasp (greed, attachment, desire) or push away (aversion, ill will) such phenomena. Thus, as in the philosophy of Socrates/Plato, it is ignorance that is at the root of the vices—rather than a desire to engage in vices for their own sake. However, Buddhism specifies that vice springs from a *mistaken ontological assumption*. Three doctrines in Buddhism describe the mistaken ontological assumption which is the root of vice and suffering. Though they may sound different at first, these doctrines are in fact synonymous. Buddhism states that our ignorance is that we see phenomena as permanent even though they are impermanent (the doctrine of impermanence), that we see phenomena as independently self-existing even though they only exist in relation to and dependence on other phenomena (the doctrine of dependent origination), and that we see phenomena as having a substance or essence of their own even though they are empty of inherent existence (the doctrine of emptiness). Most people will state that they *do* know that all phenomena are impermanent and eventually vanish. We know that all humans eventually die. We know that the Earth with everything on it will eventually be destroyed when the Sun starts burning helium instead of hydrogen and expands to a red giant swallowing the earth. And we know that the Sun itself will eventually burn out. From modern physics, we also know that even the smallest particle of matter can change into energy and thus stop existing as that particular particle of matter. Similarly, academics with an inclination toward social constructionism

will state that they *do* know that phenomena only exist in relation to other phenomena as social constructions. A chair is only a chair as long as it exists in a context where social convention defines and uses it as such. A handshake is only a form of greeting by social convention. However, according to Buddhism, such proclaimed knowledge is merely our espoused theories—not our theories-in-use. No matter what we *claim* to believe, we still *act* as if phenomena were permanent, existing independently, and had their own substance. Having this mistaken ontological assumption at the heart of our theories-in-use is, according to Buddhism, the root of all vice.

Before proceeding, it is worth mentioning that Buddhism is sometimes understood as stating that *nothing* exists. This is not so. Nagarjuna (150–250 AD), a highly influential Buddhist philosopher and often considered one of the founders of Mahayana Buddhism, proposed that the ontological view of Buddhism is a middle way between realism, where things are seen as existing in themselves, and nihilism, where nothing exists. Lama Yeshe writes succinctly about Nagarjuna’s view of the empty nature of phenomena:

Things do exist, but not in the concrete way we habitually suppose. The challenge of cultivating the correct view of emptiness is to refute completely all notions of independent self-existence without denying valid interdependent existence. (Lama Yeshe 1987, 66)

According to Buddhism, certain practices such as meditation or prayer can calm the vices, but the only thing that can permanently eradicate the vices (and thus bring virtue) is correcting our mistaken ontological view by gaining insight (*prajna* or *jnana*) into how phenomena truly exist. Such “insight” is not a matter of understanding or believing something upon hearing compelling arguments and explanations. Such “insight” refers to actually *experiencing* phenomena as impermanent, existing interdependently, and empty of inherent existence in one’s everyday interaction with these phenomena. It is a transformation of one’s lived experience. In other words, it is a change in our theories-in-use—not merely a change in our espoused theories.

Gaining insight into how all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, we also gain insight into the nature of the mind beyond phenomena. We come to experience the mind in which phenomena arise as analogous to empty space. Compared to the *content* of the mind, the mind *itself* is peaceful, clear, unmoved and untouched by any phenomenon it may contain at any given moment—just like physical space is untouched by the physical objects it contains at any given moment. Experiencing the true nature of the mind—before the emerging of any phenomena—leads to the realization that the core of who we are is an indestructible peace, love, happiness, and so on, and that while the content of our mind can *blind* us to this fact by distracting us, it can never *alter* it. Therefore, when we are aware of the true nature of our mind, virtue is not the result of conscious striving but emerges spontaneously and effortlessly.

The deep, peaceful clarity of our essential mind is the nature of love. And in this calm atmosphere the disturbances of hatred and anger have no place. While absorbed in this deep state of awareness, there is no chance of a harmful thought to agitate us. It is not a question of consciously deciding to refrain from anger and behave virtuously; this loving, benevolent feeling arises spontaneously and effortlessly from the depth of our being. (Lama Yeshe 1987, 76)

In the above section, I have argued that cultivation of virtue is not simply a matter of adhering to a code of conduct and consciously putting in an effort to be generous, humble, patient, diligent, kind, abstinent, and loving and to control one's impulses for the opposite. While engaging in such acts does have a certain value, if one engages in these activities without any change in the state from which one acts, one risks reproducing vice in more hidden forms rather than cultivating virtue. Furthermore, I have argued that changes in sensory templates can bring about virtuous actions in a spontaneous and effortless way. Just like operating from different sensory templates made some of the managers in the research described in Chap. 4 prefer different courses of action, so operating from certain sensory templates brings a preference for vice, whereas operating from other

sensory templates brings a preference for virtue. In other words, changes in sensory templates can make individuals happy to act virtuously, rather than striving to do so due to social pressure and against their own inclinations. Finally, I have argued that Buddhism can be understood as stating that the change in sensory templates that brings a spontaneous and effortless preference for virtue is a change from seeing phenomena as permanent, self-existing, and possessing their own substance to seeing them as transient, dependently arising, and empty of inherent existence.

Thus, the question of how to cultivate virtue becomes a question of how to make the view of phenomena as impermanent, existing interdependently, and empty of inherent existence a basic sensory template upon which we found our theories-in-action. In the next chapter, I will describe a selection of practices that can help bring about this shift. However, it is useful to further clarify the link between the mistaken ontological view and vice and to make a few remarks on how it is possible to talk about sensory templates if nothing has inherent existence.

6.5 How Does Perceiving Phenomena as Self-Existing Lead to Vice?

To understand how perceiving phenomena as self-existing leads to vice, we must first understand how Buddhists see the true nature of human beings.

According to Buddhism, our true nature (and the true nature of everything) is primordial happiness, perfection, and bliss—not a state of lack. When our experience is undivided by any acts of comprehension, we feel happy, whole, peaceful, alive, blissful, lovable and loving, and so on. This experience has been called Nirvana, Moksha, and other names in different wisdom traditions and it has often been likened to space in that it is ever present, everything occurs within it, and we rarely notice it, because we are too focused on the things in the space instead of the space itself. In the following, I will call the totality of this experience “core space” and the individual aspects, such as happiness, wholeness, peacefulness, aliveness, etc. I will call “core states”.

When we move into action, including acts of comprehension, we generally do so in ways that make us lose awareness of core space—just like we may lose awareness of physical space, when we focus our awareness on

interacting with another person, writing an article, or some other task for which awareness of space does not seem to be necessary. Core space never disappears, but when we move into action in a way that does not include it, we lose awareness of it while engaged in this action. To understand this, you can think about how your feet do not disappear while you are writing an email, but since you (probably) do not use your feet for writing the email, you will generally lose awareness of them while engaged in this task.

Momentarily losing awareness of one's feet while writing an email is not a significant problem, since we can always direct our awareness to them when we need to. However, because many of our acts of comprehension are more or less continuous, the loss of awareness of core space is more or less permanent. Even though core space is always present and available to us, we are continuously too busily engaged in various tasks to notice it. Even when we are not engaged in any external tasks, we are still engaged in inner tasks, such as planning, daydreaming, reproaching ourselves for something, or interpreting, thinking, or emoting, and we often engage in such activities in ways that make us lose awareness of core space. Furthermore, because many of these activities are unconscious, we do not perceive that it is our own engagement in various inner tasks that excludes us from being aware of core space. Instead, we feel as if we have lost it, and since we vaguely remember how blissful, peaceful, alive, and so on it was to feel it, a strong desire to find it again arises in us.

If our efforts to find the seemingly lost happiness of the core space are guided by the belief that all phenomena have a substance of their own, this will start a chain of events leading to suffering, perpetual disappointment, and the vices of greed and hatred—and their many variations. This unfolds as follows. First, we will believe that the happiness we seek (being a phenomenon) is something in itself. If happiness is something in itself and we do not feel it, it must necessarily be because we do not have it—we lack it. This will lead us to search for objects or situations from which we can receive the seemingly lost substance of happiness. We search for things that can fill our happiness vacuum—so to speak. Because the expectation that certain objects can give us the substance of happiness we seek is based on the wrong premise that happiness is a self-existing substance, it will lead us to one disappointment after another. However, these disappointments will not necessarily lead to the alteration of the

underlying beliefs that happiness is a substance, that we lack it, and that we have to find it somewhere. When the acquisition of a particular object fails to bring us the expected happiness, we interpret such disappointment to mean that we were wrong about happiness residing in this *particular* object, and we look for happiness in another object. We do not interpret it to mean that our governing belief that happiness comes from objects is wrong. In other words, we engage in single-loop, rather than double-loop, learning.

We may, for example, believe that we can acquire the substance of happiness through the possession of wealth. Obtaining wealth may initially bring us in touch with the ever-present happiness insofar as the acquisition of wealth may pacify some of our mental actions, such as worrying about the economy, that otherwise distract us from being aware of the happiness of core space. In other words, the cessation of our worries will bring a momentary gap in our mental activity, which normally distracts us from core space, and thus we may become aware of it and feel it as happiness. However, because we believe that happiness is a substance, we will take this situation as confirmation that wealth did, in fact, bring us the substance of happiness. However, as soon as we begin to act in our habitual ways, we will once again lose sight of core space/happiness. Instead of seeing that it is our own engagement with our thoughts that once again began to distract us from sensing the ever-present happiness, we believe either that we need more wealth to regain our happiness or that wealth was not the thing that could bring happiness after all. We may, for example, think that we also need to acquire the right partner from whom we can gain the substance of happiness. Believing this, we may go through many partners and every time a new partner fails to consistently bring us lasting happiness, we blame the partner—rather than the mistaken premises underlying our search, namely that happiness is a substance, that we are lacking it, and that we need to acquire it from an external object (or person). Chögyam Trungpa (2002) has argued that individuals search for the substance of lasting happiness (i.e., lasting release from suffering) in several different kinds of things—but that it is the grasping for happiness as if it were a substance in itself that is the problem. He writes that people look for happiness in three kinds of things: in purely material phenomena, in knowledge, belief systems, points of view, or philosophies, or in emotional states or states of mind such as the peace or well-being one may experience during meditation. However, as long as we see happiness as a substance that we are lacking and that we need to get from something, it does not matter what

that something is; it will eventually lead to disappointment. The material objects are lost or broken or cease to please us. The philosophies or points of view are proven to be limited or wrong. The physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual states are always changing. Even our ability to reach profound or elevated spiritual states will not relieve us from suffering. When we approach the spiritual work with the intention of trying to obtain happiness by collecting spiritual highs, it will only cause more suffering because such highs never last. Chögyam Trungpa fittingly calls this attitude toward spiritual practice spiritual materialism.

Since every disappointment prolongs our perceived separation from the happiness we seek, our desire gradually intensifies, and our pursuit of objects we believe can bring us happiness, as well as our rejection of anything that seems to stand in the way of this pursuit, becomes more desperate. Greed is the wish to possess something potentiated by the mistaken belief that this something will bring us the happiness we feel we have been lacking for too long. Hate is the wish to reject something potentiated by the mistaken belief that this something stands between us and something else that would bring us the happiness we feel has been lacking for too long. Thus, greed and hatred are nothing other than our strong desire to feel the happiness of the core space combined with the mistaken view that phenomena are self-existing and that they therefore can be the source of the happiness we are longing to feel.

In the above, I have used the search for happiness as an example. A parallel argument can be made for love, vitality, freedom, security, peace, power, unity, purpose, meaning, and other phenomena we may strongly desire, since all of these, like happiness, in reality, are part of the experience of core space. Trying to acquire these things as if they were substances we are lacking will lead to disappointment, and the energy of such disappointment and the feeling of being separate from and lacking these essential phenomena will lead to the states of mind we call greed and hate.

If on the other hand we realize that phenomena are *not* self-existing and that happiness (and the other phenomena mentioned above) is not a substance we are lacking and need to obtain from any source, we may see that happiness is a name for the experience of core space, which is always present, and that the reason we lose sight of it is that our awareness is taken by various forms of action—including the actions related to our search for happiness. The lack we feel is part of the sensory template we use to comprehend and

enable our search for happiness. We see ourselves as analogous to an empty cup needing to be filled with the substance of happiness. Using this sensory template to guide our search for happiness will always make us feel lacking and make us lose sight of the fact that unbound happiness is always already present to us in every moment.

Seeing both happiness and our perceived lack of it as dependently arising rather than self-existing leads to a radically different approach to dealing with happiness—just like the changes of sensory templates described in Chap. 4 lead to radical changes in the managers' approaches to their problematic situations. The search for happiness then becomes a matter of becoming aware of the activities our awareness is currently caught up in, disengaging our awareness from these activities, and thus making it possible for us to notice the happiness that is already here. Many of the activities that take our awareness away from the happiness that is already present are unconscious activities. Therefore, to disengage from such activities, we must first become conscious of them. Every time we become conscious of and disengage from such activity, we experience something like relaxation, expansion, opening, flow, unburdening, melting, freedom, bliss, peace, and happiness. In other words, we experience the core space.

This is why disengaging from habitually applied purposes in the process of art creation leads to a sense of increased wholeness (as discussed in Chap. 5). When we disengage our awareness from the habitual pursuit of a particular purpose, this pursuit will no longer distract us from being aware of core space—that is, from being aware of wholeness, happiness, and bliss. Because ceasing activity enables us to become aware of the preciousness that is always already present in us, Buddhists often describe spiritual work as a matter of *becoming what we already are*.

Once we have become aware of core space, we can start learning to move into action *without* losing sight of this space. Becoming aware of core space is sometimes referred to as *realizing* it and learning to act without losing awareness of the space is referred to as *actualizing* it. Actualization is not a matter of learning not to think, but rather learning to think in a way that includes awareness of core space—just like you can learn to engage in physical tasks while maintaining an awareness of physical space. One way of doing so is to make the experience of core space the ground of as many of our concepts as possible.

In Chap. 7, I will present a selection of concrete practices through which one can engage in this kind of work.

To sum up, core space is always present to us, and when we feel it, it feels like happiness, wholeness, peace, bliss, and so on. For example, seeing happiness as something in itself makes us try to grasp whatever we believe is a source of it and reject whatever we believe is blocking our access to it. Because engaging in such actions makes us lose awareness of core space, it seems to us that we are constantly failing in our pursuit and that happiness is elusive. This turns our grasping into greed and our rejection into hate. This is how perceiving phenomena as self-existing leads to vices of greed and hate and, inversely, why seeing that phenomena have no inherent existence leads to virtue.

In this chapter, I have argued that we can use spiritual doctrines and practices more efficiently in management education by understanding such doctrines and practices as means to effectuate particular changes in sensory templates. To illustrate this, I have looked at doctrines of virtue and vice and proposed that virtue can be cultivated by changing the sensory template we use to understand the nature of phenomena from something permanent and self-existing to something transient and empty of inherent existence. When we see phenomena such as happiness as empty of inherent existence, it no longer makes sense to greedily grasp at them or hatefully reject anything that seems to block our access. The more we see phenomena as empty of inherent existence, the more we can let them change without this change triggering greed or hate. The more we see phenomena as empty of inherent existence, the more virtuous acts arise spontaneously and effortlessly.

6.6 Neutral Sensory Aspects Revisited

Before we move on to the next chapter, I will pause and address two questions. Due to limited space, I will deal with these in a light manner, rather than a thorough one. The first question is: How can we think about sensorimotor experience if phenomena are empty of inherent

existence? And the second is: Why does core space appear to us as if it had sensory qualities?

Throughout the book, I have written about neutral sensorimotor experiences such as heavy, light, pulling, pushing, lifting, wet, dry, expanding, warm, cold, and so on. I have claimed that such experiences are the basis for sensory templates. It is worth taking some time to consider what we are talking about when we talk about such neutral sensorimotor experiences.

The neutral sensorimotor words above do not refer to any single concrete experience. They refer to aspects of experience which we never experience in isolation and which are defined relative to other experiences. We learn what these words refer to by comparing and contrasting various experiences. For example, we can learn what the word “blue” refers to by having someone who knows what blue is point out various blue things, such as a blueberry, a Smurf, and a blue sky. We can then discard the elements that are different to these three phenomena, such as size, texture, movement, intentions, and personality traits (the latter mostly found in Smurfs). We can then isolate the color range which is common to the blueberry, the Smurf, and the blue sky and realize that this is what the word “blue” refers to. Furthermore, our teacher may point out turquoise and violet objects to show us the limits of how we can use the word “blue”. Once we have distilled the blueness from our experience through this process of comparing and contrasting, we gain the ability to think about blueness separate from any object, even though we never actually *experience* blue separate from something that is blue. In other words, we gain the ability to simulate “blue” and to use this simulation to think with. We may, for example, imagine things that are not normally blue as blue, such as a blue giraffe or a blue pizza. Or we may use simulations of “blue” to represent certain emotional states as when we say that we are feeling blue. Similarly, by comparing and contrasting various experiences, we learn to simulate other sensorimotor aspects. For example, by comparing heavier objects with lighter ones and comparing warmer objects with colder ones, we develop concepts of heavy, light, warm, and cold. Once we learn to simulate heavy, light, warm, cold, we can begin to use simulations of these

sensorimotor aspects to think with. We can imagine new combinations of sensorimotor experiences which we have not experienced in nature. And we can use heavy, light, warm, and cold as sensory templates to understand work tasks as either heavy or light and people's attitudes toward others as either warm or cold.

Distilling sensorimotor aspects from our experience in this way is a mental achievement. It may seem strange to consider it a mental achievement to know the meaning of heavy, light, warm, and cold since most people accomplish this at a very young age. However, if we think about the training various artists go through, we can see how learning to distill sensorimotor aspects from our experience is a mental achievement. Graphic designers will through the process of contrasting and comparing learn to make more refined distinctions between colors than untrained individuals are capable of. Once they have accomplished this, they will have gained the ability to think with these color distinctions, both to imagine designs using very precise colors and to use their ability to distinguish color as sensory templates to structure other domains of experience. Musicians will through the process of contrasting and comparing learn to distinguish between the timbre of different instruments. Musicians may, for example, compare the timbre of different brands of clarinets and of clarinets playing in different registers and contrast these with the timbre of oboes and bassoons and other instruments. Through this process, musicians learn to recognize individual instruments in the midst of a symphony. They also learn to imagine what a melody would sound like if played on these instruments even if they have never heard this. And they learn to use their ability to simulate timbres of various instruments as sensory templates to structure domains of experience.

Thus, sensorimotor states are something we learn to distill from our experience by comparing and contrasting different experiences.

In the previous section, I have introduced the notion of the core space and claimed that this can appear to us in many different forms—yet that it in itself is nothing but empty space. We can understand this by noticing that empty space can feel different when we compare it to different objects in the space.

Just as children learn what blue is by having someone who knows point out experiences containing the element of blue and just as musicians learn to pick out the sound of an individual instrument from the complex sound of a symphonic orchestra by listening to this instrument playing solo, so it is possible through various spiritual practices and under the guidance of a qualified teacher to become aware of the experience of core space as it appears to us in experiences of unity, peace, vitality, bliss, spaciousness, happiness, love, and so on. And learning this enables us to also recognize core space in the midst of our complex everyday experience.

Since it is our engagement with acts of comprehension that distracts us from noticing core space, we can learn to recognize core space by comparing different experiences where we are more disengaged from acts of comprehension and contrasting them with experiences of being more engaged in acts of comprehension. Because our acts of comprehension limit our perception to only include the elements we believe to be relevant in a given situation, disengaging from these acts is experienced as comparatively more whole. Because our acts of comprehension split our experience into categories, disengaging from such acts is experienced as comparatively more unified. Because our acts of comprehension make our mind active, disengaging from such acts is experienced as comparatively more peaceful. Because our acts of comprehension take energy, disengaging from such acts is experienced as comparatively more energized. Because our acts of comprehension compel us into specific kinds of action, disengaging from such acts is experienced as comparatively more immovable and settled. Because we interpret core space in the light of what we have experienced just before we notice it, its initial appearance can greatly vary—just like a white sheet of paper will initially appear as having the color opposite to the one we have been looking at just before we turned our gaze to the white paper. Because core space is empty, it can simultaneously feel more alive and more peaceful, lighter and heavier, more stable and more flowing than the sensory templates we use in our acts of comprehension. Recognizing our own acts of comprehension and disengaging from these is key to learning to recognize the empty core space. In the following chapter, I will describe a selection of practices that can be helpful in this endeavor.

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