Steven Stanley · Ronald E. Purser
Nirbhay N. Singh

Editors

Handbook of Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness

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In loving memory of Shelley Stanley (1951–2016)
                                                    Steven Stanley

To B. Alan Wallace, who has been a guide, friend,
and spiritual mentor
                                                    Ronald E. Purser

To my dharma brothers, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Bhikkhu
Anālayo, for the journey ahead
                                                    Nirbhay N. Singh

Preface

Mindfulness has become a therapy, a mass movement, and global industry. Yet where are the ethical foundations of mindfulness to be found? In our individual experience, ancient texts, or the wider social worlds in which we live? Is the secular mindfulness taught in mindfulness-based courses inherently ethical and moral? Is mindfulness itself religious, secular, or post-secular? *Handbook of Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness* is a cutting-edge, international, multidisciplinary exploration of the ethical and moral dimensions of the global mindfulness movement. It provides no easy answers, but many challenging questions.

World-leading researchers, clinicians, and teachers—from academic psychologists to Buddhist teachers, from scholars of religion to educationalists, and from organization theorists to environmental sociologists—discuss current debates concerning the ethics of mindfulness across the applied fields of education and pedagogy, business, economics, and environment. This handbook takes a broad and critical perspective on mindfulness, ethics, and morality and frames the debates against the background of Buddhist traditions and within the context of our contemporary world and escalating global crises. This handbook is comprised of 18 chapters and divided into four parts which together show how matters of mindfulness can no longer be reduced to the sole domain of therapeutic efficacy alone. The ethical foundations of mindfulness, however variously they are formulated and interpreted, are simultaneously matters of *how we live together* in this changing world.

Cardiff, UK   Steven Stanley
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About the Editors

Steven Stanley is a Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University (Wales, UK). A critical psychologist interested in the qualitative study of social life in capitalism, he has investigated historical changes in meanings of mindfulness and meditation, ethics and politics of the mindfulness movement, and mindfulness meditation as a psychosocial research methodology. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Theory & Psychology*, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, and *New Ideas in Psychology*. His current research comprises discourse analysis of interaction in mindfulness courses and is titled *Constructing the Mindful Subject: Reshaping Experience Through Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction*. Steven also teaches mindfulness as contemplative education and critical inquiry to sociology, social psychology, education, and social work students. He completed the *Committed Dharma Practitioner Programme* (Gaia House, Devon, UK) and *Pali Summer School* (Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Oxford, UK).

Ronald E. Purser is a Professor of Management at San Francisco State University. He is co-author of five books including, *24/7: Time and Temporality in the Network Society* (Stanford University Press, 2007), and over 60 academic journal articles and book chapters. More recently, Professor Purser's writings critically examine Buddhism's encounter with modernity, capitalism, and individualism, particularly in corporate settings. Dr. Purser began his Buddhist training in 1981 at the Tibetan Nyingma Institute in Berkeley. In 1985, he was a student at the Cleveland Zen Center under Koshin Ogui Sensei who had been Shunryu Suzuki's personal assistant in the early 1960s. He has studied with numerous Zen teachers and Tibetan lamas and is now an ordained Dharma instructor in the Korean Zen Buddhist Taego order. His recent articles include *White Privilege and the Mindfulness Movement*, *Confessions of a Mind-wandering MBSR Student: Remembering Social Amnesia*; *Clearing the Muddled Path of Traditional and Contemporary Mindfulness; Revisiting Mindfulness: A Buddhist-Based Conceptualization* (with J. Milillo); *Zen and the Art of Organizational Maintenance; Zen and the Creative Management of Dilemmas* (with Albert Low); *Deconstructing Lack: A Buddhist Perspective on Egocentric Organizations;* and *A Buddhist-Lacanian Perspective on Lack.* His articles *Beyond McMindfulness* (with David Loy), *Mindfulness' Truthiness Problem*

(with Andrew Cooper), and *Corporate Mindfulness Is Bullsh*t* (with Edwin Ng) went viral in the *Huffington Post* and *Salon.com* in 2013, 2014, and 2015. He is co-editor of *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture*, *Content and Social Engagement* published by Springer in 2017.

Nirbhay N. Singh is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Health Behavior at the Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University, Augusta, Georgia, USA. Prior to his current appointment, he was a Professor of Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Psychology at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine and Director of the Commonwealth Institute for Family Studies, Richmond, Virginia. His research interests include mindfulness, behavioral and psychopharmacological treatments of individuals with disabilities, and assistive technology for supporting individuals with severe/profound and multiple disabilities. He has over 680 research publications, including 22 books. He is the Editor-in-Chief of three journals: *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *Mindfulness*, and *Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, and Editor of three book series: *Mindfulness in Behavioral Health*, *Evidence-Based Practice in Behavioral Health*, and *Children and Families.* He has had a life-long practice of meditation in the Soto Zen tradition, with additional training in other schools of meditation in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. He is editor of *Psychology of Meditation* and a co-editor of *Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness*.

About the Authors

Ajahn Amaro is an Abbot of the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in the United Kingdom. He graduated from the University of London in 1977 with a B.Sc. in Psychology and Physiology. He began his monastic training in the forest monasteries of northeast Thailand with Ajahn Chah in 1978. He continued his training under Ajahn Sumedho, first at Chithurst Monastery in West Sussex, England, and later at Amaravati Buddhist Centre outside of London, where he lived for 10 years. In June 1996, Ajahn Amaro moved to California to establish Abhayagiri Monastery. Ajahn Amaro lived at Abhayagiri until the summer of 2010, holding the position of co-abbot along with Ajahn Pasanno. At that time, he was then invited back to Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England, to take up the position of abbot of this large monastic community. His recent publications include *The Breakthrough*—talks and meditation guidance, *Roots and Currents*—articles and essays 1991–2014, and *Feeding the Cedars*—a photo-journal of a pilgrimage to Japan.

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David Brazier is President of the Instituto Terapia Zen Internacional, Head of the Order of Amida Buddha, a Buddhist priest, an author of nine books, a

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William L. Mikulas is a Professor Emeritus at the University of West Florida, where he taught courses in Buddhist Psychology. He received his doctorate in General Psychology from the University of Michigan. His work focuses on combining Western psychology with the world's psychologies, health systems, and wisdom traditions. His books include *The Integrative Helper: Convergence of Eastern and Western Traditions* (2002) and *Taming the Drunken Monkey: The Path to Mindfulness, Meditation, and Increased Concentration* (2014).

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Richard K. Payne is currently the Yehan Numata Professor of Japanese Buddhist Studies at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkley. His engagement with Buddhist practices began in the late 1960s and has spanned a variety of traditions, including Soto Zen, Vipassanā, Nyingma, and Shingon (Japanese Tantric Buddhism). During his doctoral research on the fire ritual in Shingon, he completed training on Mt. Koya, Japan, and was ordained as a Shingon priest in 1983. His special interest has been popular American religious culture and its influence on the development of Buddhism in the West.

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Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness

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Steven Stanley, Ronald E. Purser, and Nirbhay N. Singh

Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Welsh Buddhologist Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922)—then the world's foremost interpreter and popularizer of Buddhist texts—predicted that Buddhism would greatly influence European thought. Working as a translator and government official in late nineteenth-century British-colonized Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and as a Pāli scholar who founded the Pāli Text Society in collaboration with his wife Caroline Rhys Davids, Thomas William believed that Buddhism, as a historical phenomenon, would spread across many lands and that, in each, it would acquire somewhat distinctive characteristics. Rhys Davids predicted that Buddhism would come to influence European discourse on *social issues*—war and peace, women's rights, and social class (Wickremeratne, 1985). But he was skeptical that Buddhist morality was practicable in modern societies. Buddhism comprised an ethically intoned, world-renouncing asceticism and selfless, benevolent compassion for all living beings that he thought was inimical to Western individualism.

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Humanities scholars have rarely been noted for their ability to accurately predict the future. Yet, in his case, we might forgive Rhys Davids for failing to predict how, over one hundred years later, Buddhism would come to (a) be understood in the Western world not so much as a religion per se and primarily influence discussion of social issues but rather more as a *psychology*, comprising a collection of useful therapeutic tools—such as "mindfulness," (b) influence our understandings of mental health and distress and be made compatible with the discoveries of a modern "science of happiness" (or positive psychology), and (c) seemingly secure individualism, along with the "liberal neutrality" and "open-mindedness" required for the successful workings of democratic consumer capitalism (Cohen-Cole, 2014; Farb, 2014; Schmidt, 2016).

Indeed, Rhys Davids could not have predicted how a "mindfulness movement" (or so-called revolution) would come to spring up among mostly white, middle-class, city dwellers and thereby become a staple part of our contemporary therapeutic culture (Illouz, 2008). Despite his prophetic failure, however, Rhys Davids' influence and legacy is abiding and lives on. In several fundamental ways, Rhys Davids set the scene and much of the interpretative framework for the debates currently raging among scholars and clinicians about the ethics of mindfulness within the professional mindfulness field. Indeed, although his influence has now largely been forgotten, his sentiments echo across the centuries and can even be heard in the debates about the significance of the contemporary mindfulness movement, and most relevant to us now, in the debates about the ethical foundations of mindfulness taking place within the present volume.

The topic of ethics and mindfulness has previously been the subject of volumes concerning Buddhist thought (Badiner, 2002; Harvey, 2000; Keown, 1992). This is the first academic handbook to explicitly address, from within the psychological and behavioral sciences, some of the ethical and moral issues surrounding the emergence of mindfulness as a therapeutic modality in the modern world. The field of mindfulness studies has, up until relatively recently, been predominantly occupied with, and almost exclusively focused upon, the therapeutic effectiveness and efficacy of mindfulness, its mechanisms of action, and its impact upon physical and mental health and personal well-being, arguably to the neglect of broader social issues beyond personal well-being alone (Stanley, 2012). By topicalizing the ethics and morality of mindfulness, including the ethics and morality of the field of mindfulness studies itself, along with the broader mindfulness movement or industry as a popular, globalized self-help culture, this volume addresses issues which cannot be so easily confined to psychological and medical science.

Popular expressions of mindfulness suggest that we can feel good and happy simply by paying better attention to what we are currently doing in the present moment. By noticing more, the argument goes, we thereby enhance our well-being. A mindful mind is, by implication, a happy mind (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). And, in popular psychology and self-help culture, it is often suggested that to be mindful is to be well and that to be well is not only to be a happy person but also to be a good person. A good person conscientiously makes themselves well by working to be more mindful and thereby achieving the good life. Yet, arguably, each of

these promises is deeply misleading, and based upon problematic premises, for at least one simple reason, they each overlook *what we are doing* while we are paying attention with mindfulness. The popular and commonsensical understanding of mindfulness as a meditation *technique* presumes that we can feel good and happy simply by being more mindful (i.e., noticing and paying careful attention) alone and irrespective of our sustained ethical and moral conduct in the world. That is, irrespective of the substantive content of what we think, say, feel, and do in our everyday and working lives and, indeed, irrespective of what has happened to us and how others have treated us over time (Smail, 1987). For certain advocates of mindfulness, "it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it"—to quote the British band Bananarama—that counts.

This volume attempts to redress this problematic and undeveloped understanding of mindfulness in the popular imagination by seeking to remedy the neglect of ethical issues in the psychological literature on mindfulness. In the very broadest of senses, we examine how we (should) treat each other and ourselves and the consequences of how we treat each other. We reconsider the relations between mindfulness and how we live together in this world. What kind of a world do we want to live in? How do we get there? And who are "we" in this process?

The broad aim of this volume is to bring ethical and moral issues to the forefront of the professional discourse and scholarly debate about mindfulness and, most importantly, to the attention of researchers, clinicians, and professionals in the emerging field of mindfulness studies—a multidisciplinary matrix predominantly comprising vocal and powerful institutional interests within integrative medicine, psychiatry, clinical psychology, and cognitive neuroscience (among other established academic, clinical, and applied disciplines), as well as simultaneously addressing a diverse audience of students, trainees, doctors, therapists, counselors, psychologists, neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, and health-care and social workers, along with policy-makers, managers, business leaders, journalists, independent consultants, coaches, and trainers. "The very fact that a major scientific publisher thinks the subject of mindfulness and ethics is relevant enough to invest its resources to bring this topic into this conventional form of mainstream academic discourse is significant, as is the fact that there are so many different credible voices and perspectives being expressed from vastly different backgrounds" (Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. 1126).

We complement and extend the growing mainstream literature on mindfulness, as it is developing predominantly within the psychological, biomedical, and cognitive neurosciences, with critical attention to the ethico-moral dimensions of mindfulness. This move immediately takes us into complex territory and contested terrain concerning the social, cultural, political, historical, religious, and spiritual aspects of mindfulness, meditation, and contemplative practices in our rapidly changing contemporary world. This turn in research, scholarship, and practice has been variously named as "critical," "social," and "civic" mindfulness and represents an attempt to shift the emerging fields of mindfulness and contemplative studies to better encompass and more directly tackle pressing issues of injustice and inequality concerning the contemporary social, cultural, political, and environmental issues of our time (Carrette, 2007; Healey, 2015, pp. 21–22; Konik, 2016; Ng, 2016;

Walsh, 2016). This critical turn involves engaging in challenging multidisciplinary exchanges and collaborations across mainstream "psy-," "neuro-," and "biomedical" disciplines, the social sciences and humanities, and the worlds of activism and engaged Buddhist teaching and practice, especially as applied to social movements working for social, economic, and cultural change. The present volume, in this sense, represents a continuation of the ambitious project initiated in the *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social engagement* (Purser, Forbes, & Burke, 2016) and can also be read alongside the *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions* (Monteiro, Compson, & Musten, 2017) which primarily addresses ethical issues arising from teaching mindfulness to specific populations.

In this introductory chapter, we will set the scene by articulating some of the background context and historical conditions which frame the current debates about the ethical foundations of mindfulness, in addition to how these have been most recently approached. We will then overview the topics addressed by each of the four parts of the volume, before providing concise summaries of each of the 19 chapters making up the present volume.

Mindfulness in the Modern World

Since at least the industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, peoples of predominantly European and Anglo-American societies—the Western countries of the "Global North"—have turned to Asian body-mind practices and training regimes, as therapeutic ways of living with rapid socioeconomic change and political turmoil (McMahan, 2008; Williams, 2015; Wilson, 2014). Mindfulness, or Buddhist *sati*, is a case in point. Emerging out of complex, intercultural exchanges—notably British colonial expansion in Southeast Asia—mindfulness meditation, or *Vipassanā*, now features as a prominent feature of the globalized self-help industry and therapeutic cultural scene. North America, the United Kingdom, and the Nordic countries of Western Europe are perhaps the most striking exemplars of the exponential growth and expansion in the provision and practice of mindfulness, meditation, and related contemplative practices in the modern world.

Morone, Moore, and Greco (2017) have recently estimated that over 2 million adult Americans alone have used mindfulness meditation for health purposes. Psychologists and neuroscientists, along with respected Buddhist teachers, have arguably been the key representatives and dominant voices in the mainstreaming of mindfulness. Yet, when it comes to the professional authority required to evidence mindfulness in the mainstream, the center of gravity appears, at least on the surface, to have been decisively shifted from religion to science. Today, scientific interest in mindfulness is expanding at an astonishing rate. Over 3000 scientific articles have been published on the topic of mindfulness since 2010, with no sign of this publication trend abating (American Mindfulness Research Association, 2017; Valerio, 2016). The broader movement of mindfulness—sometimes parenthetically associated with "slow" culture—has, ironically, moved so rapidly and gained unprecedented momentum, perhaps due to its institutionalizing as an academic and professional field,

in addition to its community-led and grassroots initiatives. This seems to be particularly the case of the situation in the United Kingdom (Mindful Nation UK, 2015).

To date, along with the scientific publications, the academic and popular debate about mindfulness has so far been characterized by polemics, pivoting around issues that can broadly be considered as ethical and moral and tending to become starkly polarized between proponents and critics of mindfulness.

On the one hand, of the growing number of psychology and neuroscience articles published on mindfulness since the 1980s, the overwhelming majority positively evaluates mindfulness as an effective therapeutic tool. Clinicians have shown how standardized, 8-week courses of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013) can be effective for the relief of chronic pain, stress, anxiety, and depression. In the United Kingdom, this evidence base did not initially result in the rollout of public provision, but in 2014, a *Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group* was established. Members of the MAPPG taught mindfulness to 130 parliamentarians and 220 Westminster staff, aiming to build on the momentum of the "grassroots" mindfulness community and lobby politicians to fund mindfulness provision and roll mindfulness out en masse across diverse civil society sectors—health, education, the workplace, and criminal justice. Their vision was to turn the United Kingdom into a "mindful nation." Meanwhile, mindfulness was being eagerly taken up by leaders of nation states and CEOs of transnational corporations, especially technology corporations, to prop up their shared projects of enhancing national and global mental health and well-being (Davies, 2015). Global leaders listened to the "happiest man in the world," the French-born philanthropic Tibetan Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, who taught them meditation at the *World Economic Forum* in Davos, Switzerland, alongside the American film actress Goldie Hawn. An explosion of mindfulness self-help books, magazines, and meditation "apps" has since flooded the mind-body-spirit marketplace. And, in a perhaps bizarre twist of fate, mindfulness-based programs are now being exported from the United States and United Kingdom east not only to the social democratic countries of Western Europe but also back to the East Asia of China, Japan, and South Korea as well as Southeast Asian countries including Sri Lanka and Thailand—countries where these practices arguably originated and flourished, as part of liberal democratic development programs promoting "global mental health" (Cox & Webb, 2015; Huang, Fay, & White, 2017). Where liberal democracy and consumer capitalism go, it seems, "mindfulness" must follow in their wake.

On the other hand, the oftentimes evangelical promotion of mindfulness as a neutral and universally applicable panacea for world peace (Tan, 2012) has given way to a backlash, with critics arguing that mindfulness has been oversold (Brazier, 2013) and corporate McMindfulness is exposed as a capitalist bandwagon (Purser & Loy, 2013). Critics of mindfulness contest the extent to which mindfulness, as a therapeutic or social movement, is a revolutionary force for individual awakening and liberation, or a conspiracy to enslave individuals to consumer capitalism, by making them individually responsible for their own suffering, distress, and well-being. According to one particularly vocal critic, mindfulness, as a development of

a Western Buddhist "awareness movement," is arguably becoming established as "the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism," its meditative stance "the most efficient way, for us, to fully participate in the capitalist dynamic while retaining the appearance of mental sanity" (Žižek, 2001, pp. 12–13). Humanities scholars have, in turn, shown how Asian disciplines, such as mindfulness, have been transformed into therapies and made compatible with empirical science. They have illustrated how Asian religious traditions have been reframed psychologically as "spiritualities" and meditative practices commodified for consumers of Western digital capitalism, through the development of meditation self-tracking apps, like Headspace, Buddhify, and Calm.com, which potentially contradict their arguably socially radical origins in Buddhism (Carrette & King, 2005; King, 2016).

The default social science position on mindfulness (and similar psycho-spiritual practices) is that it resembles a neoliberal therapeutic self-technology—one which medicalizes, psychologizes, and individualizes well-being and distress as being the sole responsibilities of autonomous individuals within consumer capitalism (Arthington, 2016; Barker, 2014; Cohen, 2010; Stanley & Longden, 2016; Rose, 1998). From this perspective, the emergence of Kabat-Zinn's "Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program" ("SR + RP") in 1979 (later renamed as MBSR in the 1990s) dovetails closely with the political and economic reforms of the Reagan (United States) and Thatcher (United Kingdom) governments of the 1980s. Practitioners of mindfulness are "entrepreneurs of themselves," flexibly coping with the vulnerabilities of risk, change, and social fragmentation and facing the increasing withdrawal of social support of the welfare state or community fabric (Binkley, 2014). When understood historically, mindfulness can be understood as an outgrowth of medical research on the psychophysiological stress response cycle and as an attempt to develop techniques of therapeutic relaxation to bring the body-mind of individually stressed people into better balance and equilibrium (Jackson, 2013; Nathoo, 2016). According to critics, the mindfulness movement, taken as a whole, is an "individualizing" culture and therefore ethically and morally suspect.

Critics have built upon this social scientific research and humanities scholarship to develop socially engaged mindfulness-based interventions, engaging particularly with traditions of "engaged Buddhism" (Bell, 1979; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Bentz & Giorgino, 2016; Doran, 2017; Gonzalez-Lopez, 2011; Lee, 2015; MacNevin, 2004; Purser, Forbes, & Burke, 2016; Stanley, 2012a, 2012b; Stanley, Barker, Edwards, & McEwen, 2015; Stanley, Edwards, Ibinarriaga-Soltero, & Krause, 2018). They have questioned whether mindfulness meditation should be best understood as a transhistorical and universally applicable stress reduction technique—comprising ancient perennial wisdom translated for modern times and proven by neuroscience—or rather a modern Buddhist religio-spiritual, ethico-moral, and socially engaged practice of awakening, designed to uproot greed, hatred, and delusion.

Yet, the mindfulness milieu, as a cultural field as a whole, arguably emerges out of several intertwining and sometimes hidden (or at least overlooked) historical roots which, in total, may produce an effect that is more complex than "individualization." When understood historically, mindfulness appears to be a complex and

hybrid cultural genre—a kind of "culture jam." Indeed, Wilson (2014, p. 74) asked whether the so-called mindfulness movement signals "the triumph of Buddhism in a non-Buddhist culture, or its death knell?" Is MBSR a new Buddhist "lineage" (Cullen, 2011) or a degenerate corruption of "original" Buddhism? Helderman (2016, p. 962) similarly asked "Is the translating religion approach of therapeutic mindfulness practices a case of capitalistic secularization or a re-enchanting subversion of secular spheres?" It is in this regard that mindfulness-based therapies have been accused of promoting a so-called "Trojan horse," "stealth," or "crypto-Buddhist" secular religion in public civil institutions, especially in schools (Brown, 2016; Compson & Monteiro, 2016; Purser, 2015).

Arguably, not all of the historical roots of mindfulness are within the Buddhist traditions (Dryden & Still, 2006). We mentioned the root of medical stress research above. But, as well as British colonial expansion and military intervention in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southeast Asia, several of the roots of the mindfulness movement can also be found in the "countercultural," "New Age" spirituality, and "anti-psychiatry" movements of the 1960s and their subsequent development in the human-potential movement, psycho-spiritual growth, and humanistic and transpersonal psychologies and psychotherapies of the 1970s. A single example will suffice to illustrate one of these "hidden" roots. In 1971, after the closure of the experimental therapeutic community Kingsley Hall in London, the controversial and radical Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing took a sabbatical year, during which it is reported he spent 2 months studying Theravāda Buddhist texts and learning meditation at a monastery in Ceylon, before travelling on to India (Kotowicz, 1997). Laing's radical experiments in self-healing and his attempts to make psychiatrists more receptive to understanding the personal meaning of mental distress parallel subsequent developments in complementary, alternative, and mind-body medicine and traditions of therapeutic relaxation, as well as mindfulness, which all gain ground across liberal democratic societies from the 1970s and 1980s onward (Nathoo, 2016; Sointu, 2012).

Scholars are now asking if matters of mindfulness are more complex and contradictory than the individualization and psychologization theses of neoliberalism suggest. While the pattern identified above of the "psy-," "neuro-," and biomedical dominance of the mindfulness field can certainly be detected, there are signs that something more complex is happening. Other, more contradictory, themes can be detected through empirical social science research, especially research being conducted by sociologists, anthropologists, and critical psychologists. We can briefly mention three relevant insights, before moving from background considerations to a discussion of the central theme of the book.

First, there is emerging evidence to suggest that mindfulness might pose a challenge to the ideal of self-contained individualism, thereby exposing the limits of neoliberalism (Carvalho, 2014; Cook, 2016; Mamberg & Bassarear, 2015; Samuel, 2015). Mindfulness teachers may encourage social and political engagement and self-transcendence among their students, along with self-responsibility and self-improvement (Reveley, 2015). Second, while mindfulness-based courses often involve teaching people to close their eyes and look within to find liberation from

suffering and inner peace inside themselves, practices of mindfulness are also most commonly taught in small groups or to relatively large-scale collectives at professional conferences—sometimes en masse to hundreds of people at a time (Pagis, 2009). These patterns suggest that something more than just individualizing might be happening within the mindfulness milieu. And, third, while mindfulness is often presented as a merely secular therapeutic technique, it is also often suggested to be a spiritual or sacred practice or indeed a "universal dharma" being skillfully taught in secular settings. This suggests that mindfulness is something more than simply a secular cultural field alone but also may contain "post-secular" threads (Arat, 2017, pp.174–175).

While it is likely that mindfulness will continue to be presented in popular and professional circles as simply and solely a therapeutic tool for self-healing, grounded in ancient wisdom yet proven to be beneficial by contemporary science, our volume suggests that more significant and fundamental issues are at stake, and that more complex and nuanced sociocultural changes are afoot, when we take the mindfulness movement as a whole into broader account. In the following section, we build upon the inevitably partial and schematic scene setting provided above and turn explicitly to current debates about the ethical and moral foundations of mindfulness, which frame the contributions to this volume.

Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness

What are the ethical and moral foundations of mindfulness? This question could be understood and answered in a multitude of ways. In an obvious and immediate sense, the title *Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness* implies mindfulness might, or should, have a basis in ethico-moral conduct and that this basis is composed of multiple features. The ethical foundations of mindfulness are named as being plural, rather than singular. Following this argument, it might be assumed that mindfulness alone lacks ethical foundations, guidance about which is to be found within the present volume, or, by contrast, that the ethical foundations are considered endemic to mindfulness itself, a core feature of its practice or a course in mindfulness. With respect to the latter point, it might be argued that a course in mindfulness, understood as a practice or "way of being," *always and already* involves sensitizing us to ethico-moral issues, that is, how we treat ourselves and each other, and the resulting consequences of this treatment, as these emerge in a patterned way over time.

Where we situate ourselves with respect to these fundamental issues partly depends upon how widely we draw the boundaries of the "ethical" and the "moral." And, indeed, in providing a basic outline of some potential lines of investigation now, several of which are being explored in the wider literature, we are already addressing themes explored in much more depth and detail throughout the chapters of the present volume.

A commonly expressed and arguably dominant position within the professional field of mindfulness theory and practice is that the roots of mindfulness are to be found within the Buddhist traditions—often referred to generically and abstractly as "ancient," "original," "traditional," "classical," "spiritual," or "contemplative"

wisdom traditions—and that the ethical foundations of mindfulness are therefore best found in the various Buddhist lineages that make up this multifaceted and pluralistic "religion." Indeed, in common understanding, Buddhism is widely respected as "one of the world's most ethical religions" (Keown, 1992, p. 9). Yet, there are multiple viewpoints, diverse positions, and profound conflicts and disagreements, with precious few points of consensus, within and outside of the "Buddhist" traditions themselves, concerning basic questions of the meaning of mindfulness and ethics, whether "Buddhism" is a singular or multiple phenomena, is itself a religion (or a psychology or philosophy or universal dharma), whether the historical Buddha was himself a Buddhist, and the relative status of Buddhism to science when it comes to crucial and pressing debates about mindfulness and ethics (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

When taken in broad brush strokes, however, there does seem to be a general scholarly tendency in the contemporary field of mindfulness studies to view the early *Pāli* discourses of the *Theravāda* school of Buddhist thought of Southeast Asia—the "school of the elders" or "abiding" or "original" teaching—as being perhaps the central authority concerning mindfulness and ethics, at least when it comes to the Buddhist traditions as a whole. This tradition arguably contains some of the most extended and rich discussions of Buddhist ethical cultivation. After all, according to *Pāli* scholar Gombrich (2009), the "whole universe is ethicized" (p. 35) in the historical Buddha's teaching.

This may go some way to help explaining why the modern neo-*Vipassanā* or insight meditation schools of Southeast Asia have had such a profound influence on the mindfulness-based therapies, both traditions being heavily influenced by the *satipaṭṭhāna* discourse while simultaneously also courting so much controversy as reform movements and modernizing influences upon the Buddhist tradition (Braun, 2013; Jordt, 2007; Houtman, 1999). Their alleged emphasis on so-called "mindfulness only" or, perhaps, "bare attention" (Thera, 1954) practices which arguably lack ethical discernment and moral judgment would later come to leave a major mark on subsequent debates about the ethics of mindfulness (King, 2016; Wallace & Bodhi, 2006; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Kabat-Zinn's (1994, p. 4) operational definition of mindfulness as a conscious awareness that arises when we "pay attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" has been a particular focus of critique and debate.

Recent commentators have suggested that many of the debates within so-called secular contemporary mindfulness discourse mirror earlier debates within the history of Buddhism, especially debates concerning controversial Buddhist reform movements (Harrington & Dunn, 2015; Lavelle, 2016; Lindahl, 2015; Sharf, 2015). Indeed, Kabat-Zinn's (1994) definition closely mirrors the words of the North American psychologist and meditation teacher Kornfield (1977), who described the attitude of Buddhist mindfulness in the following way: "The attitude of non-judgmental, directed observation allows all events to occur in a natural way. By keeping attention in the present moment, we can see more and more clearly the true characteristics of our mind and body process" (p. 13).

The basic principle that the roots of mindfulness are to be found in the early Buddhist discourses, that this is the place to look for the ethical foundations of

mindfulness, along with the related idea that these discourses represent a kind of ethical psychology, rather than as a religion per se, can all be traced back to Thomas William Rhys Davids. It is worth us now explaining his significant contribution to current debates about mindfulness and ethics, which have arguably yet to be properly acknowledged in the literature thus far.

Rhys Davids and the Construction of Buddhism

During his lifetime, Rhys Davids was the leading Western interpreter of Buddhism. His popular books explaining Buddhism for a Western audience were well known, including being widely read as introductions to Buddhism within Southeast Asia. Rhys Davids was so well regarded that in 1894/1895, the American philosopher-psychologist William James invited Rhys Davids to Harvard University to lecture on "Buddhism: Its History and Literatures." Yet, sadly, and as he feared might happen, outside of small academic circles, Rhys Davids is now a largely forgotten figure. Certainly, popular accounts of mindfulness meditation are much more likely to mention a certain American scientist, than they are to acknowledge their debt to this obscure Welsh figure. While Rhys Davids might have been largely forgotten, at least in terms of the detailed specifics of his contributions to Buddhist thought, his influence lives on in the present, and we might do well to remember his legacy and that of his wife, Caroline. Three of these influences can be briefly charted.

First, Rhys Davids' interpretation of early Buddhism was *humanistic* and *rational*: he understood Buddhism as a religious tradition with a historical founder, Siddhartha Gautama. In 1877, Rhys Davids was the first to date the death of the historical Buddha at 412 BC (a recent attempt similarly dates the Buddha's death at 80 years old sometime between 411 and 399 BC; Gombrich, 1992). This is in stark contrast to the Theravāda Buddhist tradition itself, which tended to see the Buddha as one among many Buddhas repeatedly reborn into the world to teach the eternal *dhamma* (Snodgrass, 2007) (a similar position to that adopted by those contemporary advocates who believe mindfulness courses contain an inherent "universal dharma"). The Rhys Davids are important figures in the broader project of constituting "Buddhism" as an Asian religion. As many scholars of world religions would point out, Buddhism is partly a nineteenth century invention of European orientalists and colonizers (for a critical discussion of this idea, see Hallisey, 1995). The Rhys Davids are key representatives of what subsequently came to be known as "Protestant Buddhism" or "Buddhist Modernism": a historically recent form of Buddhism made to be compatible with the empiricism of Western psychological science, Darwinian evolutionary theory, and democratic individualism (Gombrich, 1988; McMahan, 2008; Sharf, 1995). This Modernist Buddhism constitutes one element of what Taylor (1989) has described as the subjective turn of modernity in which citizens look within to gain meaning in their lives rather than looking to external authority and tradition for guidance. For example, James (1902) understood the heart of religion to be a psychological experience existing within the individual person. The Rhys Davids, along with William James, were influential figures in interpreting

Buddhism as a religion in which the authority of experience is prized. Indeed, Rhys Davids showed how early Buddhism did not make a distinction between secular life and religious life. In his personal life, he reflected on the Buddhist doctrines of *kamma* (intention and action), *anicca* (change), and *anattā* (not-self). He displayed a lifelong personal and scholarly obsession with what came to be understood as the "early Buddhism" preserved in the Pāli Nikāya (baskets of teachings Carpenter, 1923; Chalmers, 2004; Rhys Davids, 1881).

Second, Rhys Davids helped to initiate a *textual* understanding of early Buddhism and specifically established scholarship of the Pāli Canon as the central authority from which to gain understanding of Buddhist teachings. Pāli scholarship just about survives now among a minority of influential Buddhists and academic Buddhist scholars, some of whom are on display within this volume. Rhys Davids founded the Pāli Text Society in London, and Thomas and Caroline Rhys Davids, as a married couple of Pāli scholars, were the first to translate the Pāli canon into a European language. Pāli is the ancient Indian language in which the "words of the Buddha" were preserved. The Pāli canon includes the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, a discourse on the establishment of mindfulness, modernized interpretations of which have come to play a vital role in laying the foundations of the modern mindfulness movement, as illustrated especially in the chapters contributing to the first part of this volume.

Third, and most significantly to the interests of the present volume, Rhys Davids was the first to offer mindfulness as a translation of the Pāli word *sati*. He wrote that it is one of the most difficult words in the whole Buddhist system of "ethical psychology" to translate. Its etymological meaning is memory, and indeed in his first book, Rhys Davids (1877) translated *sati* as memory or recollection, the verb *sarati* meaning to remember. But Rhys Davids (1890) argued that the Buddha of the Pāli canon more commonly gave *sati* an ethical meaning: "that activity of mind, constant presence of mind, wakefulness of heart, which is the foe of carelessness, inadvertence, self-forgetfulness … it is a very constant theme of the Buddhist moralist" (p. 58). While sometimes rendering *sati* as self-possession, in modern times his translation of *sati* as mindfulness has endured.

In making their translations of the Pāli canon, the Rhys Davids were influenced by their Christian colonial context. We have mentioned above that, as a young man, Thomas William was himself a civil servant stationed in Ceylon. In offering his translation of *sati*, Rhys Davids was partly influenced by the use of the adjective "mindful" in the King James Bible (1604–1611) (see Bible: King James Version, 2017):

> My son, be mindful of the Lord our God all thy days, and let not thy will be set to sin, or to transgress his commandments: do uprightly all thy life long, and follow not the ways of unrighteousness.
>
>   For they were pricked, that they should remember thy words; and were quickly saved, that not falling into deep forgetfulness, they might be continually mindful of thy goodness.

Perhaps this "hidden" Christian influence on the translation of this key Pāli Buddhist word partly explains how we have come to inherit the idea of being mindful as somehow morally good or righteous. Mindlessness and mind wandering are,

in turn, considered to be something like new, secular cardinal sins. In *The Wellness Syndrome*, Cederström and Spicer (2015) called this "the wellness command": the moral injunction for an individual to be well, or indeed to flourish, through being mindful and the equation of wellness with moral rightness. If we are well, then it must be assumed, we are also good.

When Rhys Davids offered mindfulness as a noun referring to both an Asian Buddhist meditation practice and mental function, as he did in the nineteenth century, he thereby laid the groundwork for mindfulness to later become an inner mental object, prized by psychologists and Buddhist scholars alike. This was necessary for mindfulness to be treated as a psychological category and taken up as an object of scientific investigation in the twentieth century. Psychologists could stack mindfulness up alongside their related concepts of attention, metacognition, and—that most elusive of psychological categories—consciousness (Danziger, 1997). It would even go on to become the title of a prestigious scientific journal.

In retrospect, we can appreciate that Rhys Davids was an unconventional scholar and perhaps ahead of his time. Unlike the orientalists and missionaries before and after him, and despite being a British civil servant, he did not look upon Buddhism and Buddhists with disdain, regarding Buddhism as an inferior religion to Christianity. He did not conform to colonial exploitation of the colonized. Instead, he was a sensitive interpreter of the Buddhist culture. He learnt Sinhala, the language of the Sinhalese people. He was a careful and respectful translator and a scholar of early Buddhism. He was inspired by the early Buddhism of the Pāli Canon and the monastics he met, particularly Yātrāmullē Unnānsē, from whom he learnt the Pāli language. Rhys Davids devoted his life to the study of Buddhism and its promotion in Victorian society.

In this sense, he was a nonconformist, like his father. Rhys David's father, Thomas William Davids (1816–1884), was a Welsh nonconformist congregational minister. His father was born and raised in Swansea but he relocated to Hackney, London, to study for the ministry and became a minister in Colchester, Essex. He was fondly referred to as the "Bishop of Essex." Along with being a popular preacher, he was fascinated by ecclesiastical history, especially the history of nonconformist Christianity. Familiar with religious persecution, his son brought to Buddhism a congregationalist mistrust of established religion and liberal willingness to independently question religious belief and authority. Rhys Davids was apparently "rather fond of poking fun at the symbols and trappings of imperial splendor and did so with impish irreverence" (Wickremeratne, 1985, p. 164).

Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011), writing about the emergence of mindfulness within clinical and popular settings, has recently commented that:

> We take the rendering 'mindfulness' so much for granted that we rarely inquire into the precise nuances of the English term, let alone the meaning of the original Pāli word it represents and the adequacy of the former as a rendering for the latter. The word 'mindfulness' is itself so vague and elastic that it serves almost as a cipher into which we can read virtually anything we want. Hence we seldom recognize that the word was chosen as a rendering for sati at a particular point in time, after other terms had been tried and found inadequate. (p. 22)

The voice of Rhys Davids occupies what we might appropriately see as more of a "middle way" between proponents and critics of mindfulness. Deeply acknowledging historical contingency and change might help us to put a limit on our narcissistic sense of originality and entitlement while also demanding that we pay our debts to the past. In that sense, we cannot leave all of the subsequent developments of the mindfulness movement at his door and by implication at the door of Europe and America. We must also do well to remember the Asian modernizers who have participated in these processes, often in response to Euro-American colonialism. We will be remembering some of these figures in the chapters that follow: Thich Nhat Hanh, Ledi and Mahasi Sayadaw, Ajahn Chah, U Ba Khin, and S. N. Goenka. Without acknowledging our debts to these and many other Buddhists and Buddhist scholars, we will be unable to learn our lessons from the past as well as the present.

Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness: Contemporary Debates

We will now turn to a consideration of three central ways that the current debate about mindfulness and ethics are carried out. In the following sections, we will summarize some of the characteristics of these debates. We can broadly characterize the key positions as suggesting that the ethical foundations of mindfulness are (a) "lost in translation," (b) implicitly inherent, and (c) constitutive of a wider milieu. We will discuss each in turn as a way to introduce the crosscutting themes that are explored in more depth within the chapters that follow.

Lost in Translation

The lost in translation argument is that, through being modernized and secularized, contemporary versions of mindfulness training—whether mindfulness-based programs as a whole or their corporate-style workplace-based McMindfulness variants—have been "de-ethicized" or "demoralized" to an unacceptable degree, when compared with their Buddhist religious traditions of origin (e.g., Kirmayer, 2015; Purser & Milillo, 2015; Stanley, 2013, 2015a, b). This argument is often predicated upon making a distinction between the original or traditional Buddhist religious and contemporary secular manifestations of mindfulness. The lost in translation position is popular among Buddhist teachers, Buddhist Studies scholars, as well as some psychologists, who will tend to engage in practice and textual scholarship, especially of the early *Pāli* Buddhist discourses, in order to reclaim the "lost" ethical foundations of mindfulness. Buddhist scholars and psychologists often bring a similar eye for detail when they conduct careful textual and conceptual examinations of the categories of mindfulness and *sati*, which for psychologists informs the development of applied interventions and psychometric measurement of mindfulness.

Such an argument forms the basis for developments in so-called "second-generation" mindfulness interventions, which teach mindfulness in a more explicitly Buddhist framework. Reflecting on the ambiguity of mindfulness-based

interventions (MBIs) vis-a-vis religion and spirituality, and challenging the ethics and credibility of the claims that MBIs are simply and solely secular, Shonin, Van Gordon, and Griffiths (2013) address a potential "identity crisis" of MBSR, especially as it moves into the context of the UK NHS (see also Purser, 2015). This point of view has, perhaps predictably, given weight behind arguments about "Trojan Horse" stealth Buddhism in public institutions, as discussed above.

Buddhist John Peacock (2014) has recently written of the mutual suspicion that is evident among practitioners on both sides of the divide between representatives of the ancient Buddhist religious approach to *sati* and the modern clinical science of mindfulness. While the latter might suggest the Buddhist background is unnecessary or irrelevant to understanding and practicing mindfulness, the former might see mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) as "somehow 'dharma' light" (p. 2). For example, in relation to MBCT in the United Kingdom, Gilpin (2008, p. 228) distinguished a Theravāda spiritual perspective—grounded in monastic religious contexts—and the secular perspective of MBCT, grounded in an "evidence-based" clinical psychology.

Generally speaking, the lost in translation argument appears to be the majority view within the literature on mindfulness and ethics, commensurate with the points made above about the Buddhist roots of mindfulness, and therefore is broadly represented across this volume, especially in the first part, on *Buddhist Foundations of Ethics and Mindfulness*. It is also evident in later chapters by Titmuss, Lucas, Schipper, and Kearney and Yoon-Suk Hwang.

Implicitly Inherent

The next most common argument made concerning mindfulness and ethics is that the practice of mindfulness, especially as it occurs within the teaching of mindfulness-based courses such as MBSR and MBCT, contains an *implicitly inherent* ethico-moral orientation that is sufficient to satisfy the purposes of these programs. Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) argue that MBIs such as MBSR and MBCT are "Dharma-based portals" (p. 12) which contain a "universal dharma" taught in secular settings (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 301). For example, Kabat-Zinn (2017) argued "the mainstreaming of mindfulness in the world has always been anchored in the ethical framework that lies at the very heart of the original teachings of the Buddha" (p. 1125). MBSR is a skillful means of mainstreaming and making available the "universal essence of dharma" (p. 1130) available to course participants, which is implicitly (rather than explicitly) transmitted to them through the embodiment and "authentic presence" (p. 1134; endnote 15) of the mindfulness teacher. Therefore, from his point of view, nothing has been "lost in translation" in the mainstreaming of contemporary mindfulness courses (see also Grossman, 2015).

Yet, while being regularly articulated by the influential "founding father" (Baer, 2017) of the mindfulness field, this is not the only position espoused as part of the implicitly inherent argument. Within the community of mindfulness teachers and researchers, there is criticism of Kabat-Zinn's position. McCown (2013) argued that

it is ethically undesirable and inappropriate to look to Buddhist thought for an ethical psychology to ground or supplement mindfulness teaching, given the secular settings in which most mindfulness courses are taught. It is also unnecessary, he suggests, because there is already an implicit "relational ethic" embedded in the ethical space of the mindfulness course, which now needs to be articulated and made explicit. McCown develops this perspective further in his chapter in this book.

In a somewhat different register, Baer (2015) has recently proposed an "implicit ethics" stance by suggesting that "psychological science provides well developed alternatives for researchers and clinicians interested in secular approaches to ethics-related issues in MBIs" (p. 956), which are evidence-based. A collective of esteemed founders and key proponents of the mindfulness movement within clinical settings have recently endorsed the broad argument of ethics being implicitly inherent within the teaching of courses in mindfulness. For example, Crane et al. (2017) suggested, "MBP teachers operate within professional ethical codes anchored within their root profession (i.e., medicine, clinical psychology, teaching, etc.) … and appropriate to the ethos and ethics of the mainstream public institution within which they are implementing" (p. 996); "[t]he embodied practice element of ethics within MBPs are thus emergent and cultivated through the practice rather than being mandated" (p. 995).

Constitutive of a Wider Milieu

For many social scientists and humanities scholars, including those contributing to the contemporary field of mindfulness studies, ethical and moral issues are widespread and cannot be easily separated from the specifics of clinical or social practices. At the same time, so-called psychological topics, such as mindfulness, attention, and consciousness, cannot easily be separated from ethical and moral life. Indeed, researchers and scholars within the interpretative social sciences and humanities are often investigating practices, such as mindfulness, in order to say something about the wider social and cultural worlds in which we live. For interpretative scholars, the ethical foundations of mindfulness might, therefore, be found in the broader social and cultural frameworks, which people draw upon to make sense of this practice, as it is employed within its wider fields of intelligibility. For such scholars, mindfulness can never be a stand-alone phenomenon.

The debates discussed above, concerning the neoliberal and secular-religious status of mindfulness, are all couched within the broader assumption that mindfulness, as a practice, is constitutive of a wider milieu. That is, for many social scientists and humanities scholars, broadly speaking, mindfulness would be considered both the product of and itself as feeding back into broader social and cultural trends. Indeed, research on the rise of a global therapeutic culture or ethos attests to the broader milieu or social water in which we currently swim (Illouz, 2008). It is therefore arguably now very difficult, if not impossible, to engage with Buddhist ideas and practices in the modern world, without also feeding into this therapeutic culture, in which we understand ourselves as psychological beings in need of therapy.

In several of the chapters in this volume, the authors are concerned to elucidate the ways in which mindfulness simultaneously both represents and transforms a broader cultural milieu, including wellness ideology (Reveley), and post-secularity (Sullivan and Arat). The argument that mindfulness is constitutive of a wider milieu is an attempt to broaden out debates about ethics and mindfulness beyond the pragmatics of clinical intervention alone, to encompass the various and multiple contexts of its practice—social, cultural, religious—and how these in turn give meaning to mindfulness. This general orientation is illustrated by Wilson (2014), who suggests that the boundaries between the religious and the secular are not as clear-cut as might be implied when we talk about a secular mindfulness movement, "No matter how much effort is expended to remove the religious nature of mindfulness, it still continues to have the capacity to operate in a religious manner. We might call this a secular religion, one devoid of the supernatural and the afterlife yet operating as a deep well of values, life orientation and utopian vision" (p. 185).

In the final section, we turn to briefly summarizing each of the chapters, which have been thematically divided into the following subsections, reflecting key areas of contemporary debate concerning the topic of the ethical and moral foundations of mindfulness: (1) Buddhist foundations of ethics and mindfulness; (2) education and pedagogy; (3) business, economics, and environment; and (4) religion, secularity, and post-secularity.

Part 1: Buddhist Foundations of Ethics and Mindfulness

Bhikkhu Anālayo situates the ethical foundations of mindfulness within the Noble Eightfold Path, as it has been documented and preserved in the Pāli Canon of early Buddhist discourse and specifically in the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths. Anālayo employs scholarly detective work to piece together textual fragments to show how the practice of mindfulness, as it is described in these early discourses, is based upon a "firm foundation in virtuous conduct." Anālayo describes how the historical Buddha of the Pāli Canon advocated walking a "middle path" between asceticism and sensual indulgence, articulated as a noble eightfold path, which "provides the ethical context for the cultivation of mindfulness."

David Brazier continues the project of investigating the foundations of mindfulness within the Pāli Canon, particularly in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, or discourse on the establishment of mindfulness. Brazier is critical of the decontextualizing of mindfulness from its Buddhist origins, which he identifies in "utilitarian" mindfulness initiatives, such as MBSR, fearing the potential loss of the essence of the original meaning of mindfulness. However, he argues differently from Anālayo that the practice of "right mindfulness," as advocated by the Buddha, is itself the foundation of ethics that is required in the modern world. "From the Buddha's point of view, the essence of ethicality lies not in the rules and codes, but in the activity itself. It is not that mindfulness requires a code as a boundary around it, it is, rather, that mindfulness, correctly understood, is itself the foundation for any code there might be." The very idea of an ethical foundation of mindfulness, from this point of view, is therefore contentious.

Ajahn Amaro gives practical guidance for the development of a mindful ethical sensitivity. In doing so, he places the practice of mindfulness within the interpersonal context of relationships, specifically as applied to the acts of asking for forgiveness and feedback. Amaro suggests that our ability to flourish as human beings is contingent upon how we treat each other and ourselves, that is, upon our practical conduct. He writes that "part of the mindfulness that leads to true well-being is being able to discriminate wisely" and describes practical exercises for mindfully investigating our patterns of thinking and judging ourselves and others. Amaro recommends applying Buddhist ethical codes of conduct as guidelines for action and as virtuous foundations for happiness and well-being.

Christian Krägeloh provides an introduction and overview of how the topic of ethics has tended to be approached within psychological studies, which have sought to measure mindfulness. He argues that "[u]nlike in Buddhism, where ethical evaluations play an important role in mindfulness, no such emphasis is given in common Western conceptualizations where mindfulness is often described as non-judgmental awareness." Krägeloh illustrates this tendency by reviewing psychological literature emphasizing "acceptance" and "nonjudgmental," "present-moment" awareness in conceptualizations of mindfulness. In an attempt to remedy what could be described as de-ethicized concepts of mindfulness in the psychological literature and in order to address the "theoretical confusion" of the field, Krägeloh embarks on an investigation of the Buddhist concept of "heedfulness" (*appāmada*). In exploring and importing this additional Buddhist concept into the psychological literature, which implies a kind of moral watchfulness, Krägeloh hopes that we can "distinguish between various aspects of mindfulness" and enrich our understanding of the conceptual foundations of modern mindfulness-based interventions.

William Mikulas proposes that essential Buddhism, which contains the fundamental principles of Buddhist thought attributed to the historical Buddha, is a universal psychology rather than a philosophy or religion. Beginning with a summary of the Noble Eightfold Path and five lay ethical precepts, he then goes on to consider ethics and morality across the three yanas, or vehicles, of Buddhism—Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana—from what he calls a psycho-spiritual orientation. "Ethical behavior facilitates the development of mindfulness, and the cultivation of mindfulness facilitates acting ethically and appropriately."

Deborah Orr engages in a philosophical examination of moral action and skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*) as these are envisioned in the early Buddhist discourses and in the thought of Nagarjuna. Her particular focus is upon how Buddhist ideas can be employed to challenge Western ideas about the self-contained and autonomous self by developing wisdom concerning the essence-less nature of our interdependent selves. She connects Buddhist insights about dependent origination and compassionate action with research on empathy, moral development, and an ethic of care and responsibility. She argues that while there is no "ethical foundation" of mindfulness in Buddhism, in the sense that ethics is understood in modern Western discourse, mindfulness nevertheless allows us to "develop the wisdom and compassion out of which moral action develops and which can be brought to bear on our knowledge to develop skillful solutions to our social and global problems."

Part 2: Education and Pedagogy

Donald McCown adopts a different perspective to the chapters in Part 1 by showing how the "space" of a mindfulness-based course can itself be understood as an "ethical space." McCown describes and illustrates the practical conduct of teachers and students within a course of mindfulness. McCown attempts to decenter the debate about the ethics of mindfulness from what he argues is an individualistic view to instead focusing on the level of the group itself: "the activities of teaching and learning mindfulness in a group (even in a dyad) are an ongoing co-creation that involves and affects teacher and participants equally." By situating ethics spatially within the "shared activity of the pedagogy" of mindfulness-based interventions, McCown is able to delineate three dimensions of ethical conduct, as understood relationally: doing, non-doing, and friendship. He proposes that this model may be useful for "thinking about refinement of curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher training." He discusses the implications of his model in relation to different orders of morality at play in a mindfulness course.

James Reveley interrogates what he calls the "Mindfulness-As-Manipulation" (MAM) thesis represented by Cederström and Spicer (2015) and applies this argument to mindfulness training within compulsory schooling. The MAM argument is that, when trained in mindfulness at school, children will "suffer as a result of mindfulness training if it draws them into the wellness syndrome" whereby they feel self-responsible and morally duty-bound to enhance their own well-being. Mindfulness practice might, perhaps inadvertently, inoculate schoolchildren against developing subjectivities that are resistant to neoliberal capitalism, thereby possessing a "vaccination effect," by shutting off pathways to radical political action and social transformation. Reveley suggests, by contrast, that school-based mindfulness training might also contain a potential emancipatory possibility as a result of what he calls a *spillover* effect. By teaching emotion management strategies to children, mindfulness teachers might be "preparing young people for the emotional demands and challenges of activism" including "acts of resistance beyond the school gates" such as challenging neoliberal capitalism and oppression. Reveley explores the potential implications of mindfulness training in schools via consideration of radical humanist and care ethical perspectives.

Part 3: Business, Economics, and Environment

Christopher Titmuss explores the application of mindfulness and ethics to the world of corporate business. He begins by offering an introduction to Buddhist lay ethical precepts before employing these as tools for investigation concerning four major kinds of financial corruption in business: deception, bribery, fraud, and embezzlement. Titmuss broadens the conversation about corporate mindfulness by taking corporate corruption as an object for contemplation and ethical reflection, which he argues "remains firmly entrenched in the unspoken world during mindfulness workshops held in numerous businesses." Titmuss extends his analysis to apply

the precepts as guidelines for investigation concerning a variety of moral issues, clarifying that *sīla* (ethics/virtue) is a "practice, a training … a development of healthy and wholesome attributes." "Thoughtful Buddhists need to engage in deep analysis on the moral issues of our time, and to learn too from the analysis on ethics by certain Buddhist academics, scholars and activists."

Mike Lucas extends the investigation of mindfulness and ethics to the neoclassical paradigm of economics that presumes society is composed of "atomistic, self-interested individuals." He argues against this paradigm for its obsession with economic growth, materialism and consumerism, and for perpetuating economic inequality. Lucas advocates a "Middle Way" Buddhist economics combining a holistic Buddhist worldview and ethical virtues of compassion and kindness with Western concepts of justice and equality. He makes a series of proposals for economic restructuring which would serve as foundations for allowing right livelihood and well-being to flourish, as well as providing inspiring practical examples of alternative implementations of Buddhist economics from initiatives, which crucially involve learning from people living and working in the "Global South."

Janine Schipper extends the discussion of mindfulness and ethics to our relationships with our natural environment, against the background of urgent problems such as climate change, species extinction, and deforestation. Taking the specific topic of water scarcity as her focus, she asks how we can practically shift from an individualistic ethic of domination of the natural world—perpetuated by private corporate interests and a "rugged individualism" of lifestyle consumerism—to an interdependent and holistic ethic in which we become stewards of our natural world. Schipper proposes a synthesis of dynamic systems theory with Buddhist notions of "Interbeing" in order to challenge materialistic individualism, guiding the reader in an imaginative water meditation as a way to cultivate and embody an ethic of interdependence. In combining mindfulness practice with sustainability activism and eco-justice movements, the limits of the therapeutic mindfulness focused on self-care are vividly exposed.

Lama Karma broadens the scope of discussion concerning mindfulness and ethics beyond a focus on interconnection, extending the debate to encompass a groundless ethic of wisdom and compassion. Drawing upon Mahāyāna Buddhist thought and practice, he argues that "the true nature of compassion is groundless emptiness" and illustrates how practices of Samatha-vipashyanā (calm abiding and insight), stemming from Indo-Tibetan Buddhist contexts, may be recruited to extend secular mindfulness-based interventions, in order to respond appropriately to global crises, and open to the sacred. Lama Karma synthesizes Tibetan Buddhist thought with European philosophy, including the work of Slavoj Žižek, to examine the feelings of falling he argues capture the collective human predicament. "Only by facing groundlessness individually and collectively can the sacredness of life on this planet be universally appreciated and honored."

Hugh Willmott shows how we might resist becoming the "cheerful robot" of McMindfulness training by critically synthesizing three important traditions of critical social thought and praxis—C.W. Mills' sociological imagination, Carol Hanisch's feminist politics, and Paulo Freire's "conscientization'—and engaging

them with traditions of Tibetan Buddhist meditation. Disrupting the received wisdom that meditation involves an "inward-looking passivity that eschews public or political involvement," Willmott shows how meditation practice might offer an embodied way of connecting personal troubles with public issues, the personal with the political, and allow for open dialogue with the Other. Meditation is both personal and political, Willmott suggests, because "the effect of meditative mindfulness is a withdrawal from ego-invested struggles that simultaneously brings about change in prevailing structures and relations of power." He shows how meditation might be employed as part of a critical reflection on contemporary ethical issues through a collective and politicized consciousness-raising.

Part 4: Religion, Secularity, and Post-secularity

Patrick Kearney and Yoon-Suk Hwang advocate a "return to the original nature of dharma, and a reassessment of the Buddha's understanding of ethics." They argue that the teachings of the historical Buddha, as recorded in the Pāli Nikāyas, "can be seen as an essentially secular enterprise" comprising universal human values and virtue ethics. The Buddha's teachings, on their account, primarily comprise a humanistic project for the cultivation of human flourishing, to be realized through a first-person radical empiricism and phenomenological exploration of experience: "When we see the Buddha as teaching a dharma that is firmly grounded in empirical data, and that is concerned chiefly with living a satisfying human life without dependence on faith-based metaphysical commitments, then we may be able to take full advantage of understanding of the practical craft of attention training contained in the Nikāyas, the collections of the Buddha's discourses."

Kin Cheung proposes that "awareness of the broader historical debates" concerning ethical cultivation can help to illuminate contemporary positions and appreciate different conceptions of ethical conduct. Cheung conducts comparative scholarship on how Confucian philosophers in premodern China debated the relationship between human nature and ethical cultivation. Cheung places their positions across intellectual/practical and implicit/explicit axes that are then, in turn, used to illustrate parallels with the positions on ethics of contemporary advocates of mindfulness-based programs. Cheung illustrates these parallels through interviews with contemporary mindfulness teachers. "I advocate leaving the discussion on implicit and explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs behind, and shifting attention towards whether mindfulness-based practices can lead to change in ethical behavior."

Richard Payne establishes a "taxonomy of the conflicting rhetorics regarding the relation between mindfulness and ethics" and problematizes the presumption that "there is an identity between religion and morality, a presumption that is foundational for the contentiousness of the debates." Advocates of mindfulness training commonly argue that morality is inherent within the practice of mindfulness or that the morality of the Buddhist tradition is an integral part of mindfulness training. Others suggest morality can either be implicit or explicit to a mindfulness course. Payne argues that because these differing conceptions of the relations between

mindfulness and morality are rarely explicitly thematized, discussants are talking past one another, and the conversation has reached an impasse. In an attempt to move the debate forward, Payne discusses more fundamental conceptions of religion and secularity which the debates are based upon, particularly the identification of religion with morality, a taken-for-granted idea which arguably contributes to creating a crucial conundrum: "Mindfulness is operationalized as a technology and therefore value neutral, but is then also identified as having a moral dimension, making it also a member of the category 'religion.'" He argues that this identification with religion and morality represents a cultural preoccupation of Euro-American society and legacy of the Reformation and Enlightenment, rather than being rooted in the Buddhist tradition itself.

Marek Sullivan and Alp Arat extend the style of analysis presented by Richard Payne by putting forward the argument that "contemporary mindfulness practice exceeds the boundary of religious and secular space to form a distinctly modern tradition, best captured by the concept of postsecularity." Sullivan and Arat employ a case study of the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh (TNH), as an example of how religious forms of spiritual charisma are bound up with the so-called secular proliferation of mindfulness practices in the Western world. They suggest that the figure of TNH and his role in the popularizing of mindfulness attest to the "difficulty of detaching secular mindfulness from Buddhist forms of authority." The Asian monastic body of TNH has become bound up with popular representations of mindfulness as inherently ethical. "An ethically heightened mode of being remains imbued in popular conceptions of being mindful." They suggest that decades of discursive sedimentation have sutured Buddhist authorities like TNH to contemporary mindfulness initiatives and that this historical conjuncture makes it "impossible to practice mindfulness in the West without in some way connecting to distinct ethical dispositions, rooted in the Buddhist tradition and sanctioned by religious forms of authority." Mindfulness is, therefore, neither secular nor religious, but post-secular.

Conclusion

In this conclusion, we review the general project of the volume and consider the similar and different viewpoints evident in the previous chapters, before suggesting future avenues of research and investigation.

The 18 chapters that make up the 4 parts of this volume represent a wide range of contemporary positions on the topic of the *Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness* across the fields of Buddhism, education, and pedagogy; business, economics, and environment; and the domains of religion, secularity, and post-secularity. They illustrate how, when we listen to the many influential voices selected from across the field of mindfulness studies as a whole, the ethical foundations of mindfulness are found to be plural, rather than singular. There is no single position on the ethical foundations of mindfulness. This is perhaps to be expected, not least because the authors are writing from such a diversity of perspectives, and heralding from such

different backgrounds, which in turn make up the broader field of mindfulness studies. Our authors occupy a range of positions—from academic psychologists to Buddhist teachers, from scholars of religion to educationalists, and from organization theorists to environmental sociologists—and therefore they are unlikely to speak with a single unified voice, share the same knowledge base, or possess equivalent levels of expertise.

Bringing a degree of structure, coherence, and clarity to what might be heard as a cacophony of diverse voices is a challenge routinely faced by the editors of academic volumes, and commonly recognized across diverse topics and fields of study, and is therefore not idiosyncratic to the topic of mindfulness. Yet, the challenge is particularly pronounced, we would suggest, when attempting to represent voices of authority from the cutting-edge of a field which is still in motion, with its contours changing rapidly, and where the founder of modern mindfulness has declared it is "too early to tell" what its impact will be (Kabat-Zinn, 2017).

The lack of a common and unified agreement on basic tenets of understanding the ethical foundations of mindfulness might be interpreted more broadly as representing an endemic weakness of the field of mindfulness studies as a whole, especially when viewed from the perspective of science (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015). But, instead of interpreting the divergence of views and assumptions making up the present volume as a crucial flaw, or Achilles heel, of the whole project of mapping the ethical and moral foundations of mindfulness, we might instead turn ourselves *toward* the chaos of the cacophony and see how possible it is for us to "celebrate the Other"—particularly celebrating the voices of those with which we disagree (Sampson, 1993).

We can pause, ponder, and contemplate the collective commotion and ensuing discord. What viewpoints do we struggle to tolerate? What are the boundaries and limits of our equanimity and compassion? What are our own conflicts of interest? And what can we learn from the disagreements and the contradictions, between others and within ourselves, which make up the mindfulness field? After all, the practice of mindfulness often involves "turning toward" our experience of difficulty, which can also include the difficulty of confronting difficult topics, such as the ethical problematics of mindfulness, which are unlikely to feel comfortable, or be easy to encounter.

Where are the ethics of mindfulness to be found? In our individual experience, ancient texts, or the wider social worlds in which we live? Is the secular mindfulness taught in mindfulness-based courses inherently ethical and moral? Or, do we need to supplement mindfulness with other practices and theoretical insights? If we do need to look for ethics and morality in the Buddhist traditions, which "Buddhism" do we choose? Is there a singular Buddhism or multiple Buddhisms? Is Buddhism a religion, a philosophy, a psychology, or a universal dharma? Is Buddhism an ancient wisdom tradition, containing universal truths for the modern age, or itself a modern invention? Is mindfulness religious, secular, or post-secular? Or all, or none, of these? Was the Buddha himself a Buddhist or not? Does it matter? Are intellectual work and critical analysis an absolute necessity, or an impediment, to cultivating mindfulness, ethics, morality, wisdom, and compassion? What are the

kinds of authority and power necessary to make our arguments heard, taken onboard, and believed in this field? Are all of these questions getting to the very heart of the problem or just getting in the way?

On each these issues, as well as many others which we have not had the space to consider here, our contributing authors may disagree, sometimes passionately so.

Yet, notwithstanding the plurality of viewpoints, and points of view, on the rich and pluralistic topic of the ethics and morality of mindfulness, a distinct common theme can be detected. Each of the authors making up the chapters of this volume take it for granted that *matters of mindfulness can no longer be reduced to the sole domain of therapeutic efficacy alone*. Matters of mindfulness are more profound and far-reaching than a sole focus on personal or subjective well-being alone would suggest. Mindfulness, especially when considered in its ethical aspects, prompts us to consider issues of much broader scope than the pathologies of mental ill health, the happiness of nations, or the inner psychological lives of the population. Indeed, several of the chapters in the volume contest the pervasive individualistic ethos of contemporary Western culture and take issue with interpretations of mindfulness that would exacerbate trends of individualism. As such, the ethical foundations of mindfulness, however variously they are formulated and interpreted, are simultaneously matters of *how we live together* in this changing world.

When we speak or write about the ethics and morality of mindfulness, we are immediately flung into the complex and contested territory that Rhys Davids predicted would characterize Buddhist discourse in the West. While we have regrettably given scant attention to the topics Rhys Davids foretold would frame future European debates about Buddhism—relations between mindfulness, ethics, and the still-pressing issues of war and peace, women's rights, and social class—we have made a strong case that matters of mindfulness are simultaneously also *social* matters, as well as also being at once cultural, economic, historical, political, environmental, and religious matters too (on the issues of war, women, and social class in relation to Buddhism, see, in turn, Victoria, 1997; Findley, 2000; Queen & King, 1996).

Just as the personal is political, so the mindful is political, too. There is no escaping the politics of mindfulness, whether we are aware of these politics or not. The political dimensions of mindfulness have been made obvious in recent years through attempts to foster mindful politics and build mindful nations (Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2015; Ryan, 2012). We are now in the position to explicitly topicalize and investigate the complex and fraught political dynamics of mindfulness, which may yet be found to have unanticipated and undesired outcomes. This volume has opened the door for further, more detailed, critical explorations of the ethical and moral matters that are necessarily and inevitably bound up with the contemporary global trend in mindfulness. The field is wide open. Empirical and practice-based studies are urgently needed, for example, of the place of mindfulness in our institutions (such as schools, universities, the military, prisons); its role in perpetuating or alleviating rising inequalities and injustices, against a background of increasing disparities of wealth, income, and power; and the precise ways in which mindfulness fits into a future era promising increasing automation and corporate technological monitoring and control of seemingly every single domain of life.

One of the most remarkable and distinctive features of the field of mindfulness studies is that its contours range across multiple terrains: academic research, theory, and professional practice; secularity, religion, and the sacred; the personal, the institutional, and the global; or from the individual body to the body politic (Stanley & Kortelainen, in preparation). As such, there is a frankly astonishing diversity of academic and applied fields, which bear upon mindfulness. Recent journal special issues attest to something of the multidisciplinary "matrix" of mindfulness: *Contemporary Buddhism* (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011), *Transcultural Psychiatry* (Kirmayer, 2015), *American Psychologist* (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015), and *New Political Science* (Ferguson, 2016). The topic of mindfulness, particularly when twinned with ethics and morality, is being engaged by an intimidating range of fields, spanning across science and technology (experimental and clinical psychological and behavioral sciences, psychiatry, integrative medicine, cognitive and affective neurosciences, computing), the social sciences (sociology, geography, anthropology, critical psychology, economics, politics), and the humanities (history, literature, philosophy, religious studies, theology) (for a synthesis of such varied traditions, see Varela, 1999; Varela et al., 2017). Along with conducting *social studies* of science and technology, scholars of mindfulness can also be found conducting cultural, media, communications, feminist, gender, and postcolonial studies (Purser, Forbes & Burke, 2016). The complexity and diversity of the field demand much better interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working, particularly between mindfulness teachers, Buddhist teachers, and scientists, social scientists, and humanities scholars. Future investigators of the ethical and moral dimensions of mindfulness, perhaps with greater empirical focus and sophistication, will at least need to be able to speak to colleagues across this broad, complex, and continuously transforming terrain.

For some, mindfulness is just a simple technique for helping people to feel less stressed out and can be found in a coloring book or journal in the Mind-Body-Spirit section of a bookstore. For many more, mindfulness is an evidence-based and cost-effective intervention for the effective relief of stress, anxiety, and depression (and so forth) in everyday life and workplace settings. And, for others, mindfulness is now the best hope humanity has for saving civilization and even the planet itself, from apocalyptic collapse. Mindfulness now means "all things to all people" (Wilson, 2014, p. 194). The sheer breadth of the terrain of the mindfulness field, even when viewed through the wide-angle lens of ethics and morality, cannot be easily captured within the scope of a single academic volume. We have only started to touch the surface of the profound and challenging issues arising from the ethical foundations of mindfulness.

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Part I

Buddhist Foundations of Ethics and Mindfulness

Turning the Wheel of Dharma

Bhikkhu Anālayo

Introduction

In early Buddhist thought, mindfulness derives its ethical dimension from the context within which it is cultivated. This context is provided by the noble eight-fold path, a middle path aloof from the two extremes of self-inflicted pain and sensual indulgence. This middle path is the initial topic in what according to tradition was the first teaching delivered by the Buddha after his awakening. In order to explore the ethical context of this middle path, this chapter will trace the meditative and ethical dimensions of the Buddha's own approach to awakening in the way this is recorded in early Buddhist sources. Another point to be explored is the Buddha's choice of employing the scheme of four truths, apparently corresponding to an ancient Indian form of medical diagnosis, to convey his realization to his first five disciples in what traditionally is reckoned to be his first discourse of turning the wheel of dharma. Taken together, these two trajectories provide the context within which the ethical role of mindfulness in early Buddhist thought can be appreciated.

In Quest of Awakening

The early discourses do not provide a continuous account of events from the time the Buddha-to-be set out on his quest for liberation until its successful completion. The providing of continuous narratives of the Buddha's life is more a concern of later periods, by which time interest appears to have been predominantly concerned with hagiographic depictions of what was believed to have preceded the

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bodhisattva's (a term here used exclusively to refer to the Buddha Gotama during the time before his awakening) actual going forth. Hence for constructing an account of Gotama's struggle to reach awakening, passages from different discourses need to be employed in such a way as they seem to fit best together (as done, for example, by Ñāṇamoli, 1972/1992, pp. 10–29). Of particular relevance are various passages that begin with the explicit qualification that the event portrayed took place "before awakening, when still being an unawakened bodhisattva" (Anālayo, 2010, 15–21), making it certain that the episode described should be considered as part of the Buddha's experiences before he reached awakening. In what follows I survey a selection of such passages that appear to have a bearing on what eventually led to the formulation of the noble eightfold path as the framework within which mindfulness is ideally to be practiced, that is, from the viewpoint of early Buddhist thought.

Elsewhere I have undertaken comparative studies or translated the parallels to the passages surveyed in this chapter; wherefore in what follows I provide reference to the location of the respective Pāli discourse passage together with a mention of the relevant study. In order to avoid gendered terminology and to ensure that my presentation does not give the impression of being meant for male practitioners only, I translate equivalents of the term *bhikkhu* with "monastic," reflecting the fact that the Indic term was originally not meant to restrict instructions invariably to male monks only (Collett & Anālayo, 2014).

The first passage to be taken up stems from the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, which in agreement with a parallel preserved in Chinese describes how the bodhisattva faced fear during the time of his quest for awakening. Here is the relevant portion:

> Then this occurred to me: "Whatever recluses and brahmins resort to remote forest dwellings in the wilds without having purified their bodily actions, unskilled fear and dread is evoked in those recluses and brahmins because of the flaw of not having purified their bodily actions. But I do not resort to remote forest dwellings in the wilds without having purified my bodily actions, I am with purified bodily actions. (MN I 17; Anālayo, 2011, p. 38; 2016, p. 14)

The *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its parallel continue by describing the need to have similarly purified verbal actions, mental actions, and livelihood. Bodily, verbally, and mentally virtuous behavior and gaining one's livelihood in ethically sound ways set the foundation in moral conduct required for being able to live in a secluded manner conducive to intensive meditation without experiencing "unskilled fear and dread." In this way an ethical distinction between types of action and livelihood that are purified and their impure counterparts sets the basis for the bodhisattva's withdrawal into seclusion as part of his quest to gain mastery of the mind.

Besides this foundation in morality, the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its parallel mention several other qualities that are similarly required, one of which is mindfulness. The relevant passage proceeds as follows:

> Then this occurred to me: "Whatever recluses and brahmins resort to remote forest dwellings in the wilds with mindfulness lost and without clear comprehension, unskilled fear and dread is evoked in those recluses and brahmins because of the flaw of being with mindfulness lost and without clear comprehension. But I do not resort to remote forest dwellings in

the wilds with mindfulness lost and without clear comprehension, I am with mindfulness established. (MN I 20; Anālayo, 2011, p. 39; 2016, p. 17)

In this way, mindfulness features alongside several other qualities required for progress to awakening, all of which are based on a firm foundation in virtuous conduct. This shows that mindfulness already had a role in the Buddha's struggle to reach awakening. However, the present passage speaks just of mindfulness, not of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s. This leaves open the possibility that the fully fledged scheme of cultivating mindfulness by way of these four *satipaṭṭhāna*s could be an outcome of the Buddha's experience during his progress to and eventual realization of awakening. This would have enabled him to present the practice of mindfulness in such a way that, by covering the body, feeling, mind, and dharmas, a meditative approach emerges that is highly conducive to liberating the mind from defilements.

The ethical distinction made in the passage above between purified forms of mental conduct and their opposites can be supplemented with more details taken from a passage in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*. In agreement with a parallel preserved in Chinese translation, this discourse reports how the bodhisattva Gotama implemented a basic distinction of his own thought into wholesome and unwholesome types. Here is the relevant part:

> Before my awakening, when still being an unawakened bodhisattva, this occurred to me: "Suppose I were to dwell having divided my thoughts into two types, dividing them into two types."
>
> So, monastics, I set to one side whatever thought of sensuality, thought of ill will, and thought of harming, and I set to the other side whatever thought of renunciation, thought of non-ill will, and thought of non-harming.
>
> Monastics, dwelling like this with diligence, energy, and dedication, a thought of sensuality arose in me. I understood this: "This thought of sensuality has arisen in me. It leads to affliction for oneself, it leads to affliction for others, it leads to affliction for both, it destroys wisdom, leads to distress, and does not conduce to Nirvāṇa." (MN I 114; Anālayo, 2011, p. 138)

The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel continue by describing that in relation to thoughts of ill will and harming the bodhisattva similarly understood that these lead to affliction for oneself and others; they destroy wisdom, lead to distress, and do not conduce to Nirvāṇa. The two discourses continue by reporting that, based on this twofold distinction and the reflection that thoughts of sensuality, ill will, and harming lead to affliction and do not conduce to liberation, the bodhisattva abandoned such thoughts.

This description draws out in detail the basic ethical distinction mentioned in the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its parallel in terms of purity. Sensuality, ill will, and harming are afflictive to oneself and others; they destroy wisdom and do not lead to liberation. Therefore they are classified as being unwholesome and require being abandoned whenever they manifest in the mind.

The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel also explain how such abandoning will affect the overall condition of one's mind. They explain that frequently thinking in

a particular way will lead to a mental habit. Frequently indulging in thoughts of sensuality, for example, will lead to a corresponding mental habit, to a tendency to sensual thoughts and associations. Repeated abandoning of sensual thoughts counters such a tendency and will gradually lead the mind out of the habit of sensuality. The same holds for ill will and harming.

The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel continue by describing the arising of wholesome thoughts, which are not afflictive and conducive to liberation. These are thoughts of renunciation, of non-ill will, and of non-harming.

The difference between the two sets of three thoughts finds illustration in both versions in a simile that involves a cowherd. The arising of unwholesome thoughts compares to a time when the crop is ripe and the cowherd has to guard the cows closely; he has to keep hitting them with a stick in order to prevent them from straying into the ripe crop. The arising of wholesome thoughts, however, finds illustration in the situation at a time when the crop has been harvested and there is consequently no longer any danger that the cows stray into the crop. In this situation, the cowherd just needs to be mindful of them with the thought that the cows are over there.

The terminology used in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel for this relaxed attitude of the cowherd is *sati karaṇīyaṃ*/作是念, both of which involve the term used in the respective texts to refer to "mindfulness" (*sati*/念). The Chinese expression conveys the sense of a reflection, which suits the context well, since together with being mindful the cowherd has the thought "the cows are there." He is not just practicing a nonconceptual form of awareness, but rather he is mindful and concomitantly knows that the cows are over there.

This part of the simile can be considered to express a quality of mindfulness in the sense of a receptive and widely open mental attitude that is aware of the whole situation without any pressing need to interfere or react to it. At the same time, it also reflects the fact that, in early Buddhist thought mindfulness is not necessarily nonconceptual but can rather operate in conjunction with thought.

Although thinking wholesome thoughts is certainly conducive to liberation, the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel also make it clear that to keep on thinking in this way is not sufficient in itself. Instead, thought needs to subside in order for the mind to become concentrated. The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* reports that the Buddha-to-be expressed this with the following reflection in relation to wholesome thoughts:

> Yet with excessive thinking and reflection my body will be tired, and the body being tired the mind will be strained. The mind being strained, it will be far away from concentration. So, monastics, I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, unified it, and concentrated it. (MN I 116; Anālayo, 2011, p. 139)

How the bodhisattva cultivated concentration of the mind, once thoughts of sensuality, ill will, and harming had been abandoned, can be seen in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel. These describe a series of mental obstructions, beginning with doubt, which the bodhisattva gradually overcame. The relevant passage concerning the first obstruction of doubt proceeds as follows:

Then this occurred to me: "Doubt arose in me, and because of the doubt my concentration fell away … so I shall act in such a way that doubt will not arise in me again!" (MN III 158; Anālayo, 2011 p. 736)

Besides doubt, the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel mention several other mental obstructions, such as lack of attention, sloth-and-torpor, apprehension, elation, inertia, excess or lack of energy, etc. The fact that they do not mention sensual desire or aversion gives the impression that their description is concerned with a stage of meditation when these two rather gross hindrances have already subsided. At this juncture, progress to the experience of deeper stages of concentration requires leaving behind the other mental obstructions they list.

Both versions report that, on having overcome each of these mental obstructions, the bodhisattva developed concentration up to absorption attainment in different ways and that each type of absorption concentration was cultivated by him for a whole day, a whole night, or a whole day and night. This specification puts into perspective the suggestion in the Pāli commentary that the development of concentration described in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* took place during the night of the Buddha's awakening (Ps IV 209). This suggestion by the commentary does not tally with what the discourse indicates. Instead, the cultivation of the mind described in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel must have taken more time than just a single night and therefore needs to be positioned at a point in time considerably earlier than the night of the Buddha's breakthrough to liberation.

This much is also implicit in the account given in the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its Chinese parallel of a time of apprenticeship the bodhisattva spent under two teachers by the name of Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. During this period of apprenticeship, he reportedly attained deep concentration that presupposes the ability to enter absorption. What he attained are the third and fourth immaterial attainments, called the attainments of "nothingness" and of "neither-perception-nor-non-perception," the reaching of which according to early Buddhist meditation theory requires mastery of the four absorptions. This makes it fairly safe to conclude that the description given in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel should be placed before the time of apprenticeship described in the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel.

Before reporting this period of apprenticeship, the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel also offer a description of what motivated the Buddha-to-be to set out in quest of awakening. The relevant passage proceeds as follows:

Then this occurred to me: "How is it that, being myself subject to birth, I seek what is also subject to birth; being myself subject to old age, subject to disease, subject to death, subject to sorrow, and subject to defilement, I seek what is also subject to old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement?"

"Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, having seen the danger in being subject to birth, I were to seek the supreme freedom from bondage, Nirvāṇa, which is free from birth; being myself subject to old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement, having seen the danger in being subject to old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement, I were to seek the supreme freedom from bondage, Nirvāṇa, which is free from old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement?" (MN I 163; Anālayo, 2011, p. 171; 2013a, p. 25)

A minor difference in the Chinese parallel is the absence of a reference to birth. Nevertheless, the two versions agree that the bodhisattva set out in quest for freedom from old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement. The last mentioned topic of freedom from defilement reminds one of the three types of unwholesome thoughts mentioned above in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*, namely thoughts of sensuality, ill will, and harming as the type of defiled thought that are to be set apart from their commendable opposites, thoughts of renunciation, non-ill will, and non-harming.

The first of the three types of unwholesome thought, thoughts of sensuality, comes up also in the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta* and its Chinese parallels, although here it is only the Pāli version that explicitly relates this description to the pre-awakening period of the Buddha's quest. The passage proceeds as follows:

> Before my awakening, when still being an unawakened bodhisattva, I had well seen with wisdom that sensual pleasures are of little gratification and of much dissatisfaction, of much turmoil, predominant herein is their disadvantage. Yet as long as I did not reach the joy and happiness that is apart from sensuality and apart from unwholesome qualities, or something more peaceful than that, I knew that I had not yet gone beyond being enticed by sensual pleasures. (MN I 92; Anālayo, 2011, p. 122)

The reference to being "apart from sensuality and apart from unwholesome qualities" corresponds to the standard phrase that introduces absorption attainment, making it safe to conclude that the joy and happiness mentioned in the passage above refer to such concentrative experiences. The point of the present passage therefore appears to be that absorption experience, even though it does not solve the problem of sensuality for good, does provide considerable support for the path to freedom by making it more easy to stay aloof from the attraction of sensual pleasures. In fact the cultivation of absorption described in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel must have been an important aspect of the bodhisattva Gotama's progress to awakening, although at the same time it was not yet sufficient to lead him to the fulfillment of his quest.

Quite probably based on having mastered absorption, according to the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel, the bodhisattva went in his search for what is free from old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement. He apparently felt sufficiently attracted by the teaching on "nothingness" propounded by Āḷāra Kālāma, as potentially offering a path leading to the accomplishing of his quest, to want to become Āḷāra's disciple. The *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel agree that the Buddha-to-be soon mastered the attainment of nothingness that had been realized by his teacher. On being informed of this, Āḷāra Kālāma invited the bodhisattva to share the teacher's position with him. Yet the Buddha-to-be declined and left, reflecting:

> Then this occurred to me: "This teaching does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and Nirvāṇa." (MN I 165; Anālayo, 2011, p. 176; 2013a, p. 28)

The same pattern repeats itself with the bodhisattva's subsequent apprenticeship under Uddaka Rāmaputta, where he reached the attainment of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This, too, was not the final goal he was searching for, and he left in search of what could indeed lead him to the supreme type of liberation that he had set his mind on reaching.

Having so far been unsuccessful to find a solution to the pressing problem of being subject to old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement by what could perhaps be referred to as "meditative transcendence," the bodhisattva reportedly next tried to reach his goal by confronting defilements head on through asceticism. His attempts in this respect are reported in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and a parallel extant in Sanskrit fragments.

Of no direct relevance to the present context is another description in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* and its Chinese parallel of ascetic practices undertaken by the Buddha before his awakening. The *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* mentions his undertaking of ritual bathing in water three times a day alongside a description that over the years on his body dust and dirt had accumulated to the extent that it was falling off in pieces. The same discourse also mentions his nakedness as well as his wearing of different types of ascetic garments. Such practices are to some extent mutually exclusive and could therefore be carried out properly only in a whole lifetime of asceticism. They do not fit easily into the period of a few years that the bodhisattva is on record for having engaged in asceticism. Moreover, during this period he was in the company of five men who later became his first disciples; yet, according to the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, he dwelt in such total seclusion that he would hide as soon as he would see a human from afar (MN I 79; Anālayo, 2011, p. 116).

The solution to this apparent conundrum can be found in a *Jātaka* tale, according to which the Buddha had undertaken these ascetic practices during a former life as a naked ascetic (Jā I 390). During a former life of asceticism, it would indeed be possible to spend a longer period of time in ritual bathing and another period without washing at all, to practice nudity for some time and then wear different ascetic garments, etc. Thus the ascetic practices described in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* and its parallel appear to belong to the same category as various other tales the Buddha narrates in this discourse about his past life experiences. For this reason, they are not part of the account of his struggle to reach awakening during his last life as Gotama.

The ascetic practices undertaken, after having left Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, were according to the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its Sanskrit fragment parallel forceful control of the mind, various forms of breath control, and fasting. Here is the description of the first of these from the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, a description given by the Buddha to a visitor by the name of Aggivessana:

> It is just like a strong man who were to take hold of a weaker man by the head or the shoulders and were to constrain him, subdue him, and dominate him. In the same way, Aggivessana, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, having through my mind constrained, subdued, and dominate my mind, sweat poured down from my armpits. Aggivessana, my energy was stirred up without fail, my mindfulness established without loss, yet my body was overwrought and not calm

because of being exhausted by the strife of this painful striving. Aggivessana, even such painful feeling arising in me did not pervade my mind and remain. (MN I 242; Anālayo, 2011, p. 236)

The description that this attempt to enforce control over the mind with gritted teeth resulted in profuse sweating gives an impression of the degree of forcefulness of this approach. Realizing that the attempt to force defilements out of the mind in this way was not successful, the bodhisattva engaged in various modes of "breath-ingless meditation" by holding the breath. When this also did not lead him to the goal he was aspiring to, he decided to engage in fasting. In this way, after having earlier tried the path of "meditative transcendence," now he tried in various ways to fulfill his aspiration through forceful control. Notable in these descriptions is that he kept on monitoring his own practice with mindfulness, which enabled him to experience painful feelings without being overwhelmed by them. It appears to be precisely such mindful monitoring that eventually made him realize that this, too, was not the way to liberation.

Apparently reviewing what had happened so far, the bodhisattva is on record for eventually recollecting an experience of the first absorption he had experienced in his youth. The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* reports this as follows:

> Then this occurred to me: "I recall that when my father, the Sakyan, was working and I was seated in the cool shade of a Jambu-tree, being secluded from sensuality and secluded from unwholesome qualities, I dwelled having entered the first absorption, which is with initial and sustained mental application and with joy and happiness born of seclusion. Could this be the path to awakening?" Then, Aggivessana, following on that mindful recollection I became conscious that: "This is indeed the path to awakening."
>
> Then, Aggivessana, this occurred to me: "How is it that I am afraid of that happiness, which is a happiness that is apart from sensuality and apart from unwholesome qualities?"
>
> Then, Aggivessana, this occurred to me: "I am not afraid of that happiness, which is a happiness that is apart from sensuality and apart from unwholesome qualities." (MN I 246; Anālayo, 2011, p. 240)

This passage depicts a shift of perspective. Needless to say, the implication of the bodhisattva's realization described above could not be that the path to awakening is just the attainment of the first absorption. Such attainment the bodhisattva had according to this very passage already gained much earlier, and the same must hold for his teachers Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, for example, since without even attaining the first absorption, they could hardly have reached the attainments of nothingness or of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

The shift of perspective that the above passage appears to have in mind rather lies in the evaluation of the type of happiness experienced when being in the first absorption. In fact the above passage clearly implies that the attitude, which had guided the bodhisattva so far, was to be afraid of happiness, no matter what type. This is why he asks himself "How is it that I am afraid of that happiness?" Such an attitude is understandable, in that, from the viewpoint of his quest, succumbing to the attraction of any type of happiness might have appeared an obstruction to reaching freedom from old age, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement. This past reasoning of the

bodhisattva is in fact explicitly reported in the *Bodhirājakumāra-sutta*. The relevant passage proceeds in the following way:

> Before my awakening, when still being an unawakened bodhisattva, this occurred to me as well: "Happiness is not to be reached through happiness; happiness is to be reached through pain!" (MN II 93; Anālayo, 2011, p. 481)

This type of reasoning implies that the true happiness of liberation cannot be reached through a pleasant mode of approach; rather, it requires the pain of asceticism. This is precisely the reasoning that seems to stand behind the bodhisattva's engagement in the ascetic practices of forceful mind control, breath control, and fasting.

The shift of perspective reflected in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* involves a departure from this assumption, a departure that gives importance to the distinction between what is unwholesome and what is wholesome. Applied to the case of happiness, this means that there are types of happiness that need not be feared, such as the happiness of deep concentration. It is this understanding that forms the path to awakening. As far as I am able to see, this would be the implication of the statement in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* that the bodhisattva realized: "This is indeed the path to awakening." Although the passage itself is cryptic, the proposed interpretation suits the narrative context and offers a simple solution that follows the law of parsimony in as much as it does not require bringing in any additional assumption that conflicts with other discourse passages.

In this way the basic ethical distinction described above in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallel is reinforced and seen to be applicable to types of happiness and not just to thought. This in turn makes the ethical dimension in the early Buddhist approach to meditation decisive, just as it had been decisive in the bodhisattva's own quest for awakening. In contrast to the assumption underlying ascetic practices and conduct that, as long as one is giving oneself a hard time, this must be leading eventually to liberation, a more refined distinction at the mental level is required. Implementing this distinction requires, as a foundation, the establishing of mindfulness in order to realize what is happening within oneself. It has as its basic reference point, in order to evaluate one's inner experiences, the fundamental distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.

The *Kīṭagiri-sutta* and its parallel exemplify this crucial distinction of feelings based on their wholesome quality rather than their affective tone. The relevant passage reports the Buddha explaining this distinction in relation to pleasant feeling in the following way (the same of course applies similarly to painful feeling):

> Because it is known by me, seen, experienced, realized, and contacted by wisdom that "when someone here feels such a kind of pleasant feeling that unwholesome qualities increase and wholesome qualities decline", therefore I say "abandon such kind of pleasant feeling" … because it is known by me, seen, experienced, realized, and contacted by wisdom that "when someone here feels such a kind of pleasant feeling that unwholesome qualities decline and wholesome qualities increase", therefore I say "dwell having entered on such kind of pleasant feeling." (MN I 476; Anālayo, 2011, p. 378)

This type of exposition appears to be an outcome of the fundamental realization of the all-pervasive scope of the distinction between what is unwholesome and what is wholesome, exemplified by the happiness of absorption, which the bodhisattva had finally recognized as something that need not be feared. It need not be feared since it is apart from sensuality and apart from unwholesome qualities. With this decisive understanding gained, the bodhisattva had finally found the way to liberation.

Having taken some nourishment to regain his physical strength and based on cultivating the attainment of the fourth absorption, which he would have already mastered earlier, he developed recollection of his own past lives. This reflects another of the benefits of absorption attainment, namely supreme stability of the mind as a basis for the arising of insight. Recollecting his past lives in a way continues in line with his earlier recollecting of what had happened so far in this present life, which from his various unsuccessful attempts to reach awakening had finally led him to remember his absorption experience in his youth. Further extending this line of inquiry, he now reportedly accessed memories of his own past lives. According to the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its Sanskrit fragment parallel, this was the realization he gained in the first watch of the night of his awakening. The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* describes it in this way:

> I recollected my many past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many eons of contraction [of the universe], many eons of expansion [of the universe], many eons of contraction and expansion [of the universe]:
>
> There I was of such name, such clan, and such physical appearance, I [partook of] such nourishment, experienced such happiness and pain, and had such length of life. Passing away from there I reappeared elsewhere and there, again, I was of such name, such clan, and such physical appearance, I [partook of] such nourishment, experienced such happiness and pain, and had such length of life. Passing away from there I reappeared here. (MN I 248; Anālayo, 2011, p. 243)

In the second watch of the night of his awakening, the Buddha-to-be is on record for developing the "divine eye." The divine eye stands for the ability to witness the passing away and reappearing of other living beings. This complements the bodhisattva's recollection of his own lives by showing him that the same principles operate for oneself as well as for others. The description in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* proceeds as follows:

> With the purified divine eye that surpasses that of humans I saw living beings passing away and reappearing, being inferior or superior, handsome or ugly, fortunate or unfortunate; I knew how living beings pass on according to their karma:
>
> These worthy living beings who were endowed with bad bodily conduct, endowed with bad verbal conduct, and endowed with bad mental conduct, who reviled noble ones, had wrong view and put into action their wrong view, with the destruction of the body after death are reappearing in a state of loss, in a bad bourn, in a place of perdition, in hell.
>
> But these worthy living beings who were endowed with good bodily conduct, endowed with good verbal conduct, and endowed with good mental conduct, who did not revile noble

ones, had right view and put into action their right view, with the destruction of the body after death are reappearing in a good bourn, in a heavenly world. (MN I 248; Anālayo, 2011, p. 243)

This passage describes a realization that serves to confirm the all-encompassing pervasiveness of the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome. It does so by showing that the operation of karma over different lives is based on the same principle. Those who undertake unwholesome actions will according to this presentation experience the bitter retribution for their deeds, just as those who are dedicated to live in virtue can expect a heavenly reward.

It is based on this in all respects complete realization of the scope of this basic ethical distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and based on the meditative momentum and insight gained during his quest so far, that the bodhisattva realized full awakening in the third watch of the night. The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its parallel describe his actual realization of awakening in terms of insight into the four noble truths.

I directly knew as it really is that "this is *dukkha*"; I directly knew as it really is that "this is the arising of *dukkha*"; I directly knew as it really is that "this is the cessation of *dukkha*"; and I directly knew as it really is that "this is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*."

I directly knew as it really is that "these are the influxes (*āsava*)"; I directly knew as it really is that "this is the arising of the influxes"; I directly knew as it really is that "this is the cessation of the influxes"; and I directly knew as it really is that "this is the path leading to the cessation of the influxes."

Knowing this and seeing this, my mind was liberated from the influx of sensuality, my mind was liberated from the influx of becoming, and my mind was liberated from the influx of ignorance. (MN I 249; Anālayo, 2011, p. 243)

It is to the significance of the four noble truths that I turn in the next part of this chapter.

The Four Noble Truths

The four noble truths are according to the traditional account of the first teaching given by the Buddha to the five men who had been with him during his ascetic practices. After the realization that his ascetic striving was fruitless had led the bodhisattva to the decision to abandon his austerities, these five men left him in the belief that he had given up striving and reverted to a life of indulgence.

The *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its Chinese parallel report how the Buddha, after having reached awakening, reflected with whom he might first share his discovery of the path to liberation. His first choice was his former teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, yet he soon found out that by then they had both passed away. So he decided to approach the five men who had been with him during his ascetic period. While being on the way to meet them, he encountered an ascetic on the road who was at first apparently quite impressed by the Buddha's bearing and asked who

was his teacher. When the Buddha proclaimed to be fully awakened and without a teacher, however, this ascetic was not convinced and just left.

This interlude would presumably have alerted the Buddha to the need to find a skillful way of communicating his realization to the five, who were still under the belief that he had given up the type of practice that is required for awakening. It would not suffice to make a bare claim to awakening as such. Instead, any such claim needed to be expressed in a way that enables understanding how he had reached awakening and what this entails. In fact when the Buddha disclosed his realization to the five, their first reaction was according to the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* as follows:

> Friend Gotama, by your conduct, your practice, and your undertaking of asceticism you did not reach a condition beyond that of ordinary men, a distinction in knowledge and vision fitting for noble ones. How will you reach a condition beyond that of ordinary men, a distinction in knowledge and vision fitting for noble ones now that you live in abundance, have given up striving, and have reverted to a life of abundance? (MN I 172; Anālayo, 2011, p. 185)

It is in this narrative setting that the initial part of the Buddha's first teaching acquires its significance. According to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, this proceeds as follows:

> Monastics, there are these two extremes that one who has gone forth should not follow. What are the two? They are the pursuit of sensual happiness [by indulging] in sensuality, which is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and not related to benefit; and the pursuit of self-mortification which is painful, ignoble, and not related to benefit. Without going to these two extremes, monastics, the Tathāgata has awakened to a middle path that produces vision and produces knowledge, that leads to peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and Nirvāṇa.
>   Monastics, what is that middle path awakened to by the Tathāgata that produces vision and produces knowledge, that leads to peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and Nirvāṇa? It is this noble eightfold path, namely right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. (SN V 421; Anālayo, 2015, p. 356)

According to the report in the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, in this way the Buddha made it clear to the five men that his giving up of asceticism should not be considered as a form of reverting to abundance. Instead, he had opted for following a path of practice that steers a middle way between asceticism and sensual indulgence. This middle path can be formulated as a noble eightfold path which, as mentioned at the outset of this chapter, provides the ethical context for the cultivation of mindfulness. Before exploring this noble eightfold path in more detail, however, the entire scheme of the four noble truths requires examination.

The teaching of the four noble truths appears to be modeled on an ancient Indian scheme of medical diagnosis. Although we do not have incontrovertible proof that ancient Indian medicine at the time of the Buddha employed such a scheme, the absence of such proof needs to be considered in light of the fact that extant ancient Indian medical treatises in general stem from a later period than the early Buddhist

discourses. Judging from several passages that explicitly draw on this parallelism between the four truths teachings and medical diagnosis, it seems fair to conclude that some such diagnostic scheme must have been in existence at least at the popular level (Anālayo, 2015, p. 33). The correlation between this medical diagnosis and what is perhaps the most central Buddhist doctrine can be visualized as follows:

Disease: *dukkha*
Pathogen: craving = arising of *dukkha*
Health: Nirvāṇa = cessation of *dukkha*
Cure: noble eightfold path

The term *dukkha*, often somewhat misleadingly translated as "suffering," is a term whose meaning ranges from what is outright painful to what is of an unsatisfactory nature (Anālayo, 2003, p. 243). Relevant to the present context is that the definition of *dukkha* in the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* has considerable overlap with the description of what motivated the bodhisattva to set out on his quest in the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*, as both mention birth, old age, disease, death, and sorrow.

After having identified such manifestations of *dukkha*, the diagnostic scheme of the four truths proceeds to put the spotlight on craving as the chief culprit, the "pathogen" that leads to the malaise of *dukkha* in its various forms. This puts responsibility for *dukkha* squarely back on oneself, in that it is one's own craving that contributes to the arising of *dukkha* in one's own experience. Alongside these disconcerting revelations, however, the same teaching of the four noble truths presents a conception of supreme health through the attainment of Nirvāṇa and a practical cure to be undertaken, namely, the noble eightfold path.

Within the narrative setting of the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels, the use of this diagnostic scheme, apparently inspired by popular medicine in ancient India, serves the same purpose as the introductory statement on the two extremes to be avoided, namely presenting the Buddha's awakening in such a way that it could be easily understood by the five men to whom this first teaching is being addressed. The *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels in fact make it quite clear that what the Buddha had to teach was "unheard before." This explains why he would have had to find new ways of expression.

In this search for something that appropriately conveys his realization, the Buddha apparently found himself more at home with medicine than with other types of contemporary religious doctrines and philosophies. By taking up a diagnostic scheme from medicine, he could express his realization by relying on concepts and ideas already known but applied in a different context. This conforms with a tendency evident also in other discourses, which portray the Buddha employing terms commonly known and putting them to a different usage, done in such a way that it makes his audience reflect and gain a deeper understanding. In the present case, the overall result of employing medical diagnosis to express his awakening is that this first teaching points directly to a psychological, or perhaps even therapeutic, attitude toward *dukkha*.

The *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels also show that this mode of teaching was successful, since one of the five men reached the first level of awakening. The success of this mode of presentation explains its repeated occurrence in other context, such as, for example, the description of the Buddha's awakening in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its parallel. This does not mean that at the time of his awakening the Buddha started to formulate the four noble truths as concepts in his mind or that he had four different insights, each corresponding to one of the four truths. The realization that occurred in the night of his awakening, after recollecting his own past lives and cultivating the divine eye, was the experience of Nirvāṇa. The realization of Nirvāṇa is at the same time the realization of the cessation of *dukkha*, and through such experience *dukkha* is at last completely understood. Full realization of Nirvāṇa equals the eradication of the arising of craving, which constitutes the final completion of the path. It is this realization of Nirvāṇa to which the whole scheme of the four noble truths points and which it intends to express.

This much is in fact made fairly clear in the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels themselves, as they present the Buddha's realization in terms of three turnings that need to be executed in relation to each of the four noble truths. Building on a first appreciation of each truth as the first turning, the second turning reflects the need for *dukkha* to be understood, its arising to be eradicated, its cessation to be realized, and the eightfold path to be cultivated. Only once this has been completed will the third turning be accomplished. This third turning takes place once Nirvāṇa has been fully realized, whereby *dukkha* has been fully understood, craving has been eradicated, and the eightfold path has been cultivated to its consummation point.

Just as the diagnostic scheme underlying this teaching on the four noble truths, the emphasis on the three turnings in *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels highlights the need to go beyond mere theoretical appreciation. The theoretical appreciation is only the first turning. This needs to lead on to the second turning, which requires applying oneself to the task, and it is only after having applied oneself to the task at hand that the third turning can come into being, the completion of the task through attaining liberation.

The diagnostic scheme of the four truths and the three turnings converge on conveying a thoroughly pragmatic attitude underlying this first teaching of the Buddha. The same pragmatism also finds its expression in the teaching of the middle path, which can be considered as reflecting different aspects of the Buddha's own quest for awakening. Presented in the form of a list, this middle path comprises the following: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

The first of these, right view, is nothing other than the very diagnostic stance enshrined in the four noble truths. It is a diagnostic attitude that honestly acknowledges the existence of *dukkha* and is willing to take responsibility for one's own craving as one of the contributory causes for the arising of *dukkha*. This type of right view is what informs the whole path of practice and makes its other members become "right," *sammā*, or more literally "toward one point" or "connected in one," in the sense of "togetherness" (Anālayo, 2003, p. 74). This togetherness comes

about through right view, in fact the *Mahācattarīsaka-sutta* and its parallels refer to right view as the forerunner of the path. Here is how right view performs these functions in relation to the next path factor of right intention:

> Monastics, how does right view come first? One understands wrong intention to be "wrong intention", and one understands right intention to be "right intention", this is one's right view. Monastics, what is wrong intention? Intentions of sensuality, intentions of ill will, and intentions of harming, monastics, these are wrong intentions. (MN III 72; Anālayo, 2011, p. 658; 2013a, p. 298)

This relates back to the passage from the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallels mentioned earlier, where, as part of his progress to awakening, the bodhisattva had set thoughts of sensuality, ill will, and harming on the one side and in contrast to the opposite type of thoughts, namely, thoughts of renunciation, of non-ill will, and of non-harming. Such thoughts of renunciation, of non-ill will, and of non-harming indeed make up the definition of right types of intention.

Building on the directive provided by right view and its support in right intention, the noble eightfold path then covers the foundation building through virtuous conduct already mentioned in the first passage at the outset of this chapter, taken from the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, namely, right speech, right action, and right livelihood. These three are to be undertaken in wholesome ways and without inflicting harm on others.

Right effort then reflects the need to endeavor to overcome unwholesome states of mind and cultivate wholesome ones. The type of effort required need not follow the example of the bodhisattva's own attempt to control the mind by sheer force, as reported in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its parallel. A more gradual approach to the problem of unwholesome states of mind can be seen from the *Vitakkasaṇṭhāna-sutta* and its parallel, where forceful control of the mind functions only as a last resort, after a whole series of other methods to overcome unwholesome thoughts have failed (MN I 120; Anālayo, 2011, p. 142; 2013b, p. 153).

The last factor of right concentration expresses the realization that led the bodhisattva to discover the path to awakening, namely that the pleasure and peace of deep concentration need not be feared. Although the path of meditative transcendence does not lead to awakening on its own, the attainment of absorption does offer a substantial contribution to the path to liberation.

It is within this context of the other seven factors that mindfulness features as an integral component of the noble eightfold path. Such mindfulness takes the form of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s. From the viewpoint of a comparative study of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* in the light of its Chinese parallels, the main import of these four seems to be to cultivate an understanding of the true nature of body, feelings, and the mind, as well as to cultivate the mental condition that enables awakening (Anālayo, 2013b). These aspects can in turn be considered as deriving from the account of the bodhisattva's own quest for awakening surveyed above.

Already the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its parallel mention the need to establish mindfulness, alongside the need to build the proper foundation in virtuous conduct

in order to be able to dwell in seclusion without unskilled forms of fear. Such establishing of mindfulness seems in fact a continuous feature of the bodhisattva's different practices, where he keeps on monitoring what effects a particular practice has and how far this leads him onwards to awakening, the last aspect being a practical counterpart to the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The mortal nature of the body, one of the predicaments that the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel present as the motivating force for the Buddha-to-be to set out on his quest, relates to the topic of the last of the body contemplations in the first *satipaṭṭhāna* described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels. This contemplation requires comparing one's own body to a corpse which, after being thrown away in a charnel ground, would go through various stages of decay (MN I 58; Anālayo, 2011, p. 84; 2013b, p. 97).

The second *satipaṭṭhāna* requires being aware of feelings without reacting to them, just remaining mindful of their affective tone. This relates to the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its parallel, where the bodhisattva made an explicit point of noting that the painful feeling that had arisen during his various ascetic practices did not pervade his mind and remain.

The distinction drawn in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* and its parallels between unwholesome and wholesome states of mind informs the first mental states mentioned under contemplation of the mind in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels, which distinguish between a mind with sensual desire or with anger and its opposite (MN I 59; Anālayo, 2011, p. 87; 2013b, p. 142). The same contemplation of the mind also covers a state of mind that is concentrated or not concentrated, a distinction that underlies the bodhisattva's gradual overcoming of various mental obstructions to absorption attainment, described in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel.

Whereas in this way the first three *satipaṭṭhāna*s can be seen to relate to aspects of the bodhisattva's quest, the orientation underlying the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* appears to have been relevant throughout, from the initial decision to go forth all the way up to the night of awakening. This orientation finds its expression in the mindful examination if anything undertaken does indeed "lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and Nirvāṇa," to use the terms employed in the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and its parallel. This is at the same time also the overall directive informing mindfulness practice in early Buddhist thought, which provides the ethical context for its cultivation, namely, the crucial question if it leads to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, awakening, and Nirvāṇa.

Abbreviations

Jā   *Jātaka*
MN   *Majjhima Nikāya*
Ps   *Papañcasūdanī*
SN   *Saṃyutta Nikāya*

(Translations are by the author)

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Mindfulness as Ethical Foundation

3

David Brazier

Introduction

Let us begin from the observation that in Buddhism, mindfulness is one of the factors of enlightenment, whereas attention is not. In contemporary usage these two terms have become virtually synonymous, but this was not originally the case. Originally, attention was merely one component or dimension of mindfulness, and not even one that characterized the whole of mindfulness. Attention is a feature of conscious mental activity, but mindfulness originally also had a large unconscious component. Mindfulness in its original sense refers to what the mind is full of, or permeated by, and, therefore, what kind of influence lies beneath or behind the states that then come to the conscious mind, the attraction that we have to the things that we subsequently pay attention to.

The recently developed idea of mindfulness as conscious, deliberate attention to here-present, in-this-moment, sensations will here be referred to as utilitarian mindfulness. I employ this term because this contemporary development presents a kind of mindfulness as a deliberate conscious activity that can serve as a treatment or intervention. A huge amount has now been written upon the supposed virtues and efficacy of this technique. In this chapter, however, I am mostly concerned with the original meaning of mindfulness in its Buddhist origins. I hold that this original Buddhist usage is not much different from the use of the term as it was in Standard English up until about 20 years ago when the new development appeared, adopted, and adapted the term, thereby giving it a new connotation in popular usage.

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My interpretation of the original Buddhist textual material differs a little from what has come to be commonly accepted. Most significantly, perhaps, I take it that the key Buddhist text, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, does not refer merely to "the setting up of mindfulness" but also and more particularly to "what mindfulness sets up." I do not take it that the exercises outlined in the early part of the sutta define mindfulness, because they are exercises done with mindfulness already established, which help one to learn things that one then goes on being mindful of, not merely exercises that themselves create or constitute mindfulness.

My understanding, therefore, is that mindfulness itself is largely unconscious most of the time but that we can get some leverage upon its functioning by the kinds of exercises just referred to, namely, by noticing consciously and deliberately what happens to body, feelings, and mind when mindfulness is present. In this last statement, the implication is really of when *right* mindfulness is present. A certain kind of mindfulness is always present in the sense that the mind is always full of something. The Buddhist message proposes that the untrained, uncultivated, unenlightened mind is full of rubbish—in particular, is full of greed, hate, and delusion—whereas the trained, cultivated, enlightened mind is full of wisdom, compassion, love, sympathetic joy and equanimity, and of all the wholesome objects of mind that support such beneficent states and processes.

Such right mindfulness is one of the limbs of the eightfold path (or more correctly, eight-limbed path). The eightfold path defines the enlightened life. I will again diverge from commonly accepted interpretation by suggesting that in the four truths for noble ones, the fourth is the outcome of the first three. My justification for this interpretation can be found in my book *The Feeling Buddha* (Brazier 2002). In any case, most authorities will, I think, concur that the eightfold path constitutes a definitional description of the kind of life that Buddha recommends. There is nothing better. Right mindfulness is part of this path, along with right view, right thought, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right rapture, and right concentration. I need not take time here to define all the other limbs. It is sufficient to note that this is the epitome of right living in the Buddhist perspective.

Is Utilitarian Mindfulness Ethically Neutral?

Utilitarian mindfulness has become widely practiced and currently is the subject of a great deal of attention, not only in the domain of popular psychology but even in industry, politics, and the military. It has penetrated our culture and reached into many corners of contemporary life and has done so with remarkable rapidity. It answers to a number of contemporary cultural concerns including a widespread worry about the stress of modern high-speed life and about the epidemic occurrence of depression in our society and, perhaps in a more subtle way, concern about the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the popular conception of science and that of spirituality.

In its popular form, it is closely associated with the name and work of Jon Kabat-Zinn who derived the idea from his experience of attending Buddhist meditation retreats and applied it to the alleviation of the suffering of the patients in the hospital where he worked, especially those patients for whom conventional medicine seemed to have little to offer. In order to make the method acceptable to his medical colleagues,

he made a strenuous effort to decontextualize it from its Buddhist origins. This process amounted to a substantial redefinition. Mindfulness now became deliberate, conscious, nonjudgmental attention to phenomena impinging upon the senses in the here and now. Thus defined, utilitarian mindfulness bears a considerable similarity to what might be called the "scientific attitude." Science is supposed to be concerned with an unbiased examination of evidence detectable by the senses. The advances of science have proven to be of immense value, and this has given science and its methodology high prestige in our culture. Many have come to believe that only what is detectable by the scientific attitude can be considered to be real and true. Thus, this new form of mindfulness, defined to look as much like the scientific attitude as possible, found ready support in some sections of the scientific community with the result that many scientific papers have been written on the subject, thus enabling utilitarian mindfulness to associate itself with an already highly prestigious pillar of our culture.

So far, so good. However, some misgivings have recently started to appear. Science is a supposedly value-free activity. The fruits of science can be used to cure or to kill, to build or to destroy, and to develop or to corrupt. Many of the greatest dilemmas facing our culture derive from this fact. Science has enabled the human population to expand enormously. Babies that would once have died, now live. This is good. However, the human population has now, in consequence, reached a level that is barely sustainable. Science has enabled new forms of energy to be used—coal, oil, and nuclear power. Consequently many forms of industry are facilitated and homes are kept warm. This is good. However, the problems of pollution are reaching dangerous proportions, and the same nuclear science has made possible the creation of the most destructive armaments ever known. Science, or rather the technology deriving from it, seems to have given us an unprecedented level of comfort while, and by the same means, seriously threatening the survival of our species.

So much for science itself. What about mindfulness? It is coming to be realized that training in deliberate, conscious attention to sensorily detectable evidence arising in the present moment is valuable not just to the patient facing an unpleasant medical procedure, or the person seeking some relief from morbid obsessions, but also to the sniper, the burglar, the assassin, and the hunter. Indeed, it may even be more native to the latter group than to the former. Awareness is related to wariness. The times when a person is naturally given to paying most acute, conscious attention are those times when there is danger, and this includes those times when the danger is that one's nefarious activity might be detected, or when one is engaged in destructive combat and must be heedful of the intentions of an enemy. Is it possible that utilitarian mindfulness is actually more closely associated in its natural provenance with activities generally considered evil than with ones normally considered good? Whatever the answer to this question, the sheer fact that it is a question with an obvious claim upon our attention makes it important for us to consider what, if any, the ethical credentials of the new utilitarian mindfulness may be.

Utilitarian mindfulness is a technique that seems to claim ethical neutrality. It can be used for purposes across the whole ethical spectrum. This is not the case with the original Buddhist form of right mindfulness. The process by which utilitarian mindfulness has gained acceptance in our society has produced this transformation. In the course of this transformation, however, other aspects of the original have also been shed or changed.

However, the claim to ethical neutrality is itself open to criticism. The technique is, perhaps, neutral in respect of the ethicality or otherwise of killing, stealing, and so on, but that does not mean that it is completely free of value implications. It carries the values implicit in the scientific attitude itself. It carries judgments such as the valuation of consciousness, of sensory experience, of being in the "here and now," of deliberation, and of attention. These are all values that are established in our culture generally and to which the advent of utilitarian mindfulness adds an extra quantum of apparent validation. They are, however, all values that are open to contention.

It is also notable that the contemporary recension of Buddhism in the West has generally tended to take it that this latter set of values is an inherent and central part of the Buddhist message. This seeming coincidence between implicit Western values and apparent features of the Buddhist creed has surely been one of the reasons that Buddhism has been able to find favor in some sections of Western society. However, it is open to question whether this is not a misperception of Buddhism, or, rather, perhaps an unconscious imposition onto Buddhism on our part of Western assumptions. There is also a certain paradox in the fact that this Western bias toward consciousness, rationality, deliberation, and immediacy is itself largely unconscious, irrational, unacknowledged, and rooted in history.

Mindfulness, Awareness, and Exploration

In the sutta called the exposition of Salayatana (Majjhima Nikāya [MN] 137), it is explained that a good teacher established in mindfulness is one who is unmoved whether he experiences satisfaction or not. He gives teachings out of compassion. If people follow them, he is satisfied. If people do not follow them, he is dissatisfied. Yet, in either case, he remains unmoved. What does this mean? Surely, what it means is that although there is an immediate satisfaction or dissatisfaction in getting or not getting desired results, there is also a longer-term view that gives stability. Mindfulness is close to what may be called "big mind" or wider perspective. A person with a big mind or a big heart can take many things in his or her stride and not be unsettled by success and failure. It is like the advice in Kipling's poem, *If*, "If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and treat those two imposters just the same…." Mindfulness, in this original Buddhist sense, is a foundation for a steady mind, founded upon a longer-term view. It is a mind that is not taken in by the immediate. It sees through immediate appearances. The term *prajna* that is so central to many Buddhist teachings, and that is often translated as "wisdom," is cognate with the Greek *diagnosis* and more literally refers to the ability to "see through" or to "see beyond." Such ability rests upon this kind of mindfulness. The Buddha is concerned that one may not be taken in by ignorant assumptions that then lead one into an unwholesome life.

An ideal Buddhist is "established in mindfulness" (MN 69.14). If he is not established in mindfulness, he is open to the criticism that he has learnt nothing (MN 69.14). What does it mean that he possesses such mindfulness? It means that he "recalls and recollects what was done long ago and spoken long ago" (MN 53, 16).

In conjunction with this mindfulness of age-old wisdom, he also practices awareness. Awareness is a servant of mindfulness, not its master. Thus the practitioner is often spoken of as "mindful and aware." The suttas often use these two terms together. There is no redundancy here. These terms are not synonyms. They are separate functions that are intended to function together.

Awareness functions with mindfulness in two ways. First, as a protection and control. One is aware in order to be awake to the danger of drifting away from mindfulness. In the sutta called the Simile of the Quail (MN 66), the Buddha explains, by various similes, that one can be firmly attached to something infirm or one can be merely weakly attached to something that is firm (reliable) or firmly attached to something reliable or weakly attached to something that is itself infirm. He makes the point that people are often mistaken in this matter, thinking that because their attachment is strong, what they are attached to is strong, or vice versa. He goes on to say that whether the attachment is strong or weak, the person is still "fettered." Thus, he is making two main points: first, that only complete non-attachment is true liberation, but also, second, that among those who are attached, there are better and worse states depending not so much upon what one is attached to but rather upon the strength or weakness of the attachment itself. In the course of this explanation, he indicates that the attached person who is closest to liberation is the one who, when he becomes aware that he is attached to this or that, is able, with some application, to let that attachment go by the application of mindfulness that drives the attachment out, just as heat evaporates drops of water. Such a person is not fully enlightened, because he is still vulnerable to attachments of various kinds, but if, when he becomes aware of an attachment, he recalls and recollects what he has learnt, he is able to overcome it. Such recalling and recollecting is mindfulness.

The second way in which awareness functions with mindfulness is that it aids investigation. Going back to the exposition of Salayatana Sutta (MN 137), we are told that the practitioner practices mental exploration. In particular, in this sutta, he explores mind-objects productive of joy, of grief, and of equanimity. This exploration constitutes the "first dhyāna," or the first stage of meditative rapture. As there are 6 senses, this gives 18 possibilities. However, in relation to each of the 18, there is the possibility of an attitude of attachment or an attitude of renunciation, thus yielding what Buddha calls 36 positions. The attitude of attachment results from the mind being unable to "transcend the mind-object" (MN 137, 14). In other words, prajna is lacking because mindfulness is lacking. Mindfulness does not here refer to awareness of the mind object but wisdom in relation to that awareness.

The term *Salayatana* is generally translated as meaning "the six senses," and this is what it refers to. However, literally, it means "the six uncontrollables." What is being talked about in this sutta is what is controllable and what is not. It is not possible to prevent objects impinging on the senses. However, it is possible to control what one does on the strength of those impressions. They can lead one to attachment or to non-attachment and from non-attachment ultimately to the abandonment of "*vedanā* and *saṃjñā*" (MN 137, 26); in other words, the abandonment of the manner in which the ordinary person becomes hooked and entranced by the world around him. Mindfulness is what makes the difference. I think it should be clear

that, as Buddha saw things, the main value of being aware of what impinges upon the senses is that it enables one to avoid being trapped; by combining such awareness with mindfulness of impermanence, one can be liberated and not entranced. The mindfulness is the wisdom element that, functioning in combination with awareness, permits liberation.

Mindfulness is the first of the seven factors of enlightenment because the other factors can be seen as flowing from it. Each of the factors is described as giving rise to the next in the Anapanasati Sutta (MN 118, 29–40). The basic point here is that if one is untrained and unreflecting, one is likely to be caught by immediate, superficial impressions and attach oneself to all manner of impermanent things that offer no permanent succor. Mindful of what one has learnt, through hearing, through investigation, and through wise reflection, one can avoid being ensnared in this way. Mindfulness and investigation thus aid one another. With mindfulness established, one investigates. The investigation yields understandings that further feed one's mindfulness. Being mindful of impermanence, one explores sensory phenomena. Exploring them, one finds that they are, indeed, impermanent and unreliable. This experiential confirmation reinforces one's mindfulness. Awareness and attention play a useful role in the investigation, but they do not wholly constitute the understanding that results nor the all-important continuing mindfulness of that understanding.

In a simple sense, we can say that what such exploration and investigation is concerned with is finding out how things work, which means not simply how they happen to be in the present moment, which can be deceptive, but rather how things occur according to certain deeper spiritual laws over a period of time. The "wise man" (MN 129, 30) when quietly reflecting finds that "the good actions that he did in the past... cover him, overspread him and envelop him," and he thinks "I have not done what is evil... cruel... wicked, I have done what is good... wholesome. I have made for myself a shelter from anguish," and he knows that when he passes away, he will go to a good destiny. This is a "kind of pleasure and joy that a wise man feels here and now" (MN 129, 30).

We can see from this passage that what is prescribed is not attention limited to the here and now but rather reflection that brings satisfaction in the here and now. Nor does "here and now" refer to an instant, it refers to the present stage of one's life; it is a reference to a general ambiance or background to one's affairs that yields pleasure and satisfaction. We also see that there is a cycle. Observation (awareness) and recollection (mindfulness) bring understanding of impermanence and consequentiality; this understanding (prajna) informs action, naturally tending toward what we may call ethics. Ethical action is then something to reflect upon (mindfulness), and this brings satisfaction and well-being. With the mind established in happiness and well-being, awareness and reflection come more easily. Thus the process by which one learns and grows is a self-reinforcing cycle. By implication, the converse is also true. The more one is caught up in harmful action, the more disturbed one's mind, the more difficult reflection becomes, and the more mistakes one makes. Thus we are meant to understand that right action is a foundation for right mindfulness and vice versa.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The primary Buddhist text used by contemporary mindfulness practitioners is the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10). It is, therefore, worthy of some more extensive consideration.

Activating Mindfulness and What Is Activated by Mindfulness

Let us begin with the title. The word *sati* is the Pali equivalent of Sanskrit *smriti*. It means mindfulness. It derives from a word meaning remembrance. *Paṭṭhāna* means activation. The title is thus often translated as "The Setting up of Mindfulness," but we can take it, as with many Buddhist teachings, as circular. What is taught here sets up mindfulness and is set up by mindfulness and activates mindfulness and is activated by mindfulness. This is the style of exploration that is normal and central to the Buddhist method.

This sutta is clearly important. Many of the suttas are records of conversations arising ad hoc between the Buddha and a chance enquirer, or they record the Buddha's response to a situation that has arisen. A few suttas, however, record lectures or expositions and this is one of them. This is one of those times when the Buddha called his disciples together and said that he had something important to explain to them. In verse 2 he declares, "This is the direct path for the purification of beings." In the list of 37 items that Buddha taught, this comes first, and the eightfold path (which also includes right mindfulness) comes last. The whole Dharma begins with mindfulness and culminates in the eightfold path. There can be no doubt, therefore, that this is important.

In verse 3 he summarizes the matter. It is to see the body as a body as it is, to see *vedanā* as vedanā as it is, to see *chitta* as chitta as it is, and to see *dhamma* as dhamma as it is. I have left three terms untranslated here because the correct translation of them is contentious, and it is better that we try to grasp what the original meaning may have been. Commonly they are translated as "feelings," "mind," and "mind-objects," respectively, but there are problems with all of these renderings.

So, the aim set out for the practitioner in this sutta is to appreciate things as they are, particularly as functioning things, things characterized by impermanence and causality-consequentiality. Doing so, we are told, is a way "to the purification of beings," so we can take it that this is intended to be an intrinsically ethical operation. That is what mindfulness is for.

Ardent, Mindful, and Aware

The Buddha also links three characteristics to each of these acts of seeing: they should be done in a way that is ardent, aware, and mindful (MN 10, 3). Regarding these three characteristics, there has been a recent tendency to take it that "mindful"

and "aware" are synonyms. I cannot see any justification for this. "Ardent" and "aware" are not synonyms. Surely, in listing these three in such a crucial text, Buddha intends three different things that conspire together. We can also see that while the work here contributes to the cultivation of ardor, awareness, and mindfulness, it is conducted always with them already established. This is the circular sense of the teaching referred to above. If anything, the teaching leans on the side of mindfulness being the foundation of the exercises that follow, rather than the exercises being a basis for mindfulness. This is clear in the next verse.

The Body Is Just a Body

In verse 4, Buddha starts to talk about contemplating the body as a body. The practitioner, having "gone to the forest" or an empty place, having sat down in an alert posture, and having "establish mindfulness in front of him," "mindful, he breathes...." Surely the point here is that he is to reflect upon the breath. Mindfulness here is reflection, not merely awareness. It is more in the nature of thought than bare attention, and the thought in question is a mixture of remembering the instruction given and new exploration of what is now being experienced. In this way, the practitioner is expected to acquire a degree of control. Mindfulness here refers to understanding how the body functions in order to gain control over the kāyasaṅkhāra "just as a skilled lathe-operator" gains control over the making of wooden objects on a lathe (MN 10, 4). What is the meaning and why this particular analogy? *Kaya* is body and *Saṅkhāra* is mental formation. Kāyasaṅkhāra is what we confect in our minds on the basis of what is going on in the body.

There is a close connection between mind and body, and this becomes particularly evident when we pay attention to the breath. This is because the breathing process partakes of both sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Consequently the breath carries on without any need for conscious attention on our part but yet responds immediately to developments in consciousness too. When one is frightened, the breath changes. When happy, sad, amused, or gripped by any other such coloring of consciousness, the breathing shows it. A study of the breath, therefore, reveals a great deal about the body-mind connection. Why does Buddha want us to study this? So as to gain control over what we create in our heart-mind. The lathe is a good analogy. A lathe is driven by a power, but it is the skill of the craftsman to make something useful, serviceable, and beautiful rather than something shoddy, ugly, or useless. The body powers our mind, but it is up to us to develop the skill to make something functional and beautiful with our mind. So this is another way of looking at what is meant by mindfulness. It is exploration that leads to skill in mastering the mind so as to make with it things of use and beauty. A beautiful and useful mind, in the Buddhist sense of these ideas, will be naturally good: not ethical in the sense of conforming to rules so much as moral in a natural spontaneous way.

In verse 5 we are told to arrive at objectivity in regard to the body. When we become mindful of the fact that this body is just a body, we acquire independence and become free from "clinging" (MN 10, 5). This is not the same as having awareness of bodily

states in order to relax tension. The latter is a fine exercise and valuable, but it is not what is being talked about in this sutta. In this sutta what is at stake is achieving the kind of mindfulness that enables one to be detached in a noble way. The body is just a body. In this respect, my body is no different from the bodies of others. One day it will die. Bits of it decay. Impermanence happens. Reflections of this kind are mindfulness. They give one equanimity, and such equanimity is intended to enable one to be courageous in doing what is good and wholesome and to take the ups and downs of life in one's stride and not be blown off course by social pressures, manipulation, narcissistic anxiety, or other forms of moral weakness.

In verses 6 to 9 we learn that it is not only by observing the breath but also by observing every movement of the body that one can arrive at such knowledge. For this, one needs acute awareness. It is important, therefore, to understand this teaching the right way around. Awareness contributes to learning and understanding, and it is those things that one has learnt and understood that one is then mindful of. Mindful of them, one goes on learning and understanding more. This is the right way round. To think that the awareness is the object and that the awareness itself constitutes mindfulness is to have the teaching the wrong way around, as though what produces bowls is the power source of the lathe, neglecting the skill of the craftsman. Mindfulness is the art of producing a beautiful mind.

That the purpose is a form of learning and understanding is driven home by verses 10–31. In 10 and 11, we contemplate the constituents of the body, its organs, fluids, and contents: "...pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle...," and so on, many of which are not objects of direct sensory awareness, unless one do a dissection of the body. This is not simply a matter of sensory awareness in the here and now; it is a matter of reflection upon what one has learnt through study and observation over a period of time. In 12 and 13, the matter becomes even more conceptual, thinking about the body in terms of the elements, earth, water, fire, and air. These are cognitive exercises that aid detached reflection. Cognition alone is not enough, however. The matter must also be experiential, and in verses 14–30 Buddha sends us to the charnel grounds to observe the stages of decay of the body after death. It is surely clear, here, that Buddha has a purpose: he means us to grasp an important point, and that point is about the impermanence and unreliability of the body, something that he wants us to be eternally mindful of, because keeping it in mind will give us perspective and will enable us to face danger and avoid falling into corrupt action through moral weakness. He is building our moral fiber by showing us that it is not worth it to sell one's soul for the sake of bodily comfort. These are exercises with a moral.

Knowingness and Mental Confection

With verse 32 we come to the contemplating of vedanā as just vedanā. Generally, vedanā is translated as "feelings." It often refers to immediate reactions that we have to a stimulus. When we become conscious of something, that consciousness is colored; it has a valence. We see a chocolate cake and feel attracted, perhaps. We see a

swarm of flies descend upon the chocolate cake and we feel repulsed. We turn our head away and gaze at the lawn outside the window and, perhaps, feel nothing in particular, a calm feeling. This section is, of course, related to the foregoing ones, since much of this feeling happens in the body. However, it is not unrelated to the mind. The word vedanā literally means "knowingness." It is because we recognize something as such and such and because we have an already established heap of associations that our consciousness of the object becomes colored in the particular way. If one's only association with chocolate cake were an occasion when one was hurt or humiliated, one's initial response would not have been attraction, but repulsion and fear. In verses 32 and 33, therefore, the Buddha wants us to understand the arbitrariness and artificiality of how such knowingness comes about. It is not the case that cake is intrinsically attractive; the attraction is in the eye of the beholder. It is not the case that flies are intrinsically repulsive or that lawns are neutral. It is all in the mind, in the saṅkhāra. Buddha wants us to understand the insubstantiality of the saṅkhāra and the danger of taking what is merely our own construction as reality. It is this insubstantiality and unreliability that we are to be mindful of. Being mindful in this way, we shall be free from prejudice, we shall be able to see a rounded picture of things, we shall have perspective, and we shall not get carried away by first impressions.

So the practice here is showing us not only the unreliability of the body and the ephemerality of feelings based on knowingness but also the unreliability of the mind itself. With verses 34 and 35, we explore the fact that the mind is just a mind. The term for mind, here, is chitta. It does not have quite the same range of meaning as the word in English. The basic notion of chitta is that which perceives and cognitively grasps an object, such cognition having particular coloring that we generally think of as emotion. The chitta always has an object, real or imagined, and responds to the object in a colored way—happily, angrily, sadly, enthusiastically, etc. With most of the objects of mind, the coloring is barely noted because it is familiar and taken for granted and we tend therefore to assume that this coloring is part of the object itself, although, in fact, it is part of saṅkhāra, a construction of the perceiving mind. So what the practitioner is to learn here is that his internal camera is biased and that the way that it takes objects is not how they are from their own side but includes a coloring from chitta itself. The most basic colorings are attraction and rejection or, to put it in more evocative, popular language, lust and hate. The text goes through a series of points for the practitioner to come to understand.

Firstly, he or she learns to recognize when the chitta is or is not infected by lust and hate. Then when it is infected by delusion. Delusion here refers to conceit and arrogance on the one hand and dejection and self-abasement on the other, all of which are species of taking one's self to be more significant than it is: the objects in the world mostly do not exist primarily in reference to oneself but for reasons all their own. When the mind is infected by any of these three—greed, hate, and delusion—it is fixated or contracted. The practitioner is to learn how to recognize this happening. He learns this skill because he is mindful of its importance, and learning it facilitates future mindfulness. Also, when the mind is fixated on certain objects, it is easily distracted by them. The practitioner, therefore, also learns to recognize distraction, similarly.

When she has learnt to recognize these malfunctions of chitta, she will be in a position to recognize chitta functioning in a purer way, will be able to distinguish exalted from unexalted, concentrated from unconcentrated, and liberated from unliberated. The practitioner thus becomes skilled in noticing what chitta is up to. Independence and non-clinging derive from mindfulness that the mind is just a mind, doing what minds do: chitta arises, persists for a bit, and then falls away as it finds another object with another coloring to play with. One learns that there is a certain amount of control possible, but there is also the natural activity of the mind lighting upon one object and then another. When one is mindful that this is how things naturally happen, it weakens one's identification with chitta. Chitta becomes simply a useful function carrying on, offering options. One is not obliged to take every option nor is one obliged to believe every coloring that chitta imposes. "That is how a practitioner abides contemplating chitta as chitta" (MN 10, 35).

Dharma Contemplation

Verses 36–45 are concerned with the contemplation of *dhamma*. This is the culmination of the sutta. Mindfully one contemplates dhamma and contemplation of dhamma is mindfulness. Mindfulness in Buddhism is to have a mind full of dhamma. What is dhamma? Dhamma is what is fundamental. In many interpretations of Buddhism, one may be told that the word "dhamma" (dharma in Sanskrit) has many meanings. I do not agree. Dhamma means what is fundamental. There has grown up a convention in English language Buddhist books of writing Dharma with a capital letter (and usually in the Sanskrit form) when it refers to the Buddha's teaching and dharma or dhamma with a lower case initial when it refers to things in the world, that is, to "mind-objects." However, these are all simply instances of fundamentals. Buddha pointed out and taught fundamentals. He taught us not to be taken in by superficial appearances, but to see what was really true, what was fundamental. Buddhism is to wake up to a deeper, more fundamental view. It is unfortunate that the word "fundamentalist" has come to have such a negative coloring in contemporary discourse since in a literal, plain, uncolored use of the English language, Dharma is fundamentalism, the teaching of what is fundamental, and, at the practical level, the teaching of the importance and methodology of exploring just what really is fundamental.

So this section, the culmination of the sutta, is concerned with fundamentals, and with different ways of becoming aware of, discovering, exploring and coming to know and understand what is so in one's life and, therefore, by extension, in the lives of everybody else. Why? So that, on the one hand, one can avoid being taken in by delusion or trapped by passions and, on the other hand, so that one can be compassionate through understanding others in depth. What are these different ways of exploring? They are the main methods and formulations offered by Buddha, the things that a Buddhist should be mindful of. These are the five hindrances (MN 10, 36), the skandhas (MN 10, 38), the sense consciousness and their relation to objects (MN 10, 40), the seven enlightenment factors (MN 10, 42), and the four

truths for noble ones (MN 10, 44). There is no space in this chapter to go into each of these in detail. They warrant a chapter each at least. Suffice to say that these are the core teachings—fundamentals—of Buddhism. They are not objects of here and now attention in the ordinary sense; they are protocols for experiential, introspective, evidence-based, philosophical, and spiritual exploration, analysis, and understanding. They are paths or doorways to prajna, to seeing below the deceptive, mesmerizing surface of things into the fundament of life for the purpose of establishing oneself on firmer ground, it being fundamental to the Buddhist teaching and belief that a person so established is liberated and that liberation naturally induces a life that continues to generate further wisdom, right concentration, right thought, right speech, and right behavior and, therefore, is fundamentally ethical. It leads to ethicality that is not mere compliance.

Anapanasati

The things that mesmerize us most are those that imply self-reference. Buddha's method helps one to become more objective and, therefore, equanimous. Equanimity is clearly vital to the Buddhist way. Equanimity shows itself when something unexpected happens. When something breaks or fails or "goes wrong," it becomes apparent whether the person has equanimity or not. Equanimity is an all-the-time background to life. It is not something that is only present when one is paying attention. Life is full of dukkha. Dukkha often arises unexpectedly and in ways that are outside of personal control: birth, disease, old age and death, separation from what is loved, conjunction with what is loathed, and all the things that constitute dukkha; they arise mostly outside of our control.

Thus, in the sutta of Advice to Rahula (MN 62), Rahula asks about *anapanasati*. Anapanasati means "breathing-in-and-out-mindfulness." It is commonly taken to refer to exercises of paying deliberate attention to the breathing. It is notable, however, that in this sutta in which Rahula specifically asks how to do anapanasati, attention to breathing is only briefly mentioned and may, in fact, have been added later. How then should we understand anapanasati? Probably as "all-the-time-mindfulness." Breathing in and out goes on all the time, consciously or unconsciously, never stopping as long as life lasts. Buddha wants us to have mindfulness that never stops. Rahula wants to know how this is possible. The implication, surely, is that mindfulness, like the breath, must continue both consciously and unconsciously. How is this possible? It is possible because mindfulness here refers to what is well established in the mind or, we could say, in the heart. If one knows something fully, that knowledge does not disappear the moment that one stops paying attention to it. The aim is surely not simply the ability to pay attention; attention is a means to learning, and the Buddha is looking for such learning as it becomes part of one's blood and bones. Only then is mindfulness as well established as breathing is. Only then is it anapanasati.

The main substance of Buddha's reply takes Ananda through a series of deep reflections upon the elements: earth, water, fire, and air. He teaches Ananda to be like the elements because they are not disturbed when clean or dirty things are

thrown upon them. This, then, is training in equanimity. When one is like the earth, undisturbed by whatever is thrown upon one, be it good or bad, then one has learnt what Buddha intends one to learn and one is mindful. One's mind is full of the right things; things that will stand one in good stead come what may.

In the Majjhima Nikaya, Sutta 118 is called the Anapanasati Sutta. It clearly comes later than the satipaṭṭhāna teaching. It begins with the Buddha rejoicing in the progress made by the sangha, the community he has established (MN 118, 1–14). He then says that anapanasati fulfills satipaṭṭhāna and satipaṭṭhāna fulfills the seven factors of enlightenment and the seven factors ensure deliverance (MN 118, 15). Clearly, therefore, in Buddha's teaching, anapanasati is fundamental. It is Dharma. It is not just a technique. For sure, the Buddha does teach techniques, including techniques of attention to and awareness of breathing, but these are taught as a means to pacification of what arises from the body and mind (MN 118, 16–22). The sutta then briefly recapitulates the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and then asks, how does this fulfill the seven factors (MN 118, 29)?

Answering his own question, Buddha asserts that satipaṭṭhāna produces "unremitting mindfulness" (MN 118, 30). I suggest, therefore, as suggested above, that anapanasati and "unremitting mindfulness" are synonymous—unremitting mindfulness is mindfulness that is as unremitting as breathing. Now, Buddha proposes that with such unremitting mindfulness established, the practitioner should deeply investigate that very state. Such investigation constitutes the second factor (MN 118, 31). Clearly the second factor is not possible without the first. Therefore the seven factors are not independent of one another, but are a sequence. As in so many Buddhist teachings, this list is in the form of the first leading to the second, the second to the third, and so on.

Now, surely, for the object of investigation to be worth investigating, it must be something that is not clearly known in advance. If investigation is investigation of unremitting mindfulness, it is investigation of something that is now established in one but not fully conscious. Mindfulness is not simply conscious attention or conscious awareness. It is dharma established deeply in the heart.

The Buddha goes on to say that such investigation yields "tireless energy" (MN 118, 32), which then gives rise to rapture (MN 118, 33), which yields tranquility (MN 118, 34), and then concentration (MN 118, 35). Equanimity arises from observing this thus concentrated mind (MN 118, 36). How is this so? Concentration means immunity from distraction. Distraction arises from our attachment to and intoxication with the objects of greed, hate, and delusion. Thus, this whole teaching can be seen as the means to inoculate oneself from such distraction and the vaccine that achieves this is unremitting mindfulness, which is anapanasati, but which is not a superhuman degree of conscious, deliberate attention. Conscious, deliberate attention is part of a learning process that leads to depth of understanding and prajna, but that understanding does not fade away when one takes a rest or is engaged in the other activities of life. Mindfulness is as "unremitting" as in-and-out-breathing only when such understanding, arising from investigation and experiential learning, is deeply established, but when it is so, it is there when one is conscious of it and also when one is not conscious of it. It becomes the foundation of a wise and naturally ethical life.

Mindfulness and Ethics

In the modern world, there is a tendency to understand ethics as a framework around an activity that places a limit on how that activity is to be practiced or employed. In this way of thinking, the ethics and the activity are two different things, essentially unrelated to one another, except in the fact that the one places a limit on the other. This means that we tend to structure things such that the activity is, in itself, free from ethical content, yet, at the same time we regard ethics as vitally important yet separately constituted. Thus, what has happened with mindfulness in the West is that the method has been stripped of ethics and employed in a supposedly neutral fashion, but that the activities within which it is employed—initially psychotherapy and medicine—are themselves bound by ethical codes. Now that mindfulness has broken out of the confines of these two professions and is appearing in many other contexts, people are starting to ask if mindfulness itself should not have an ethical code attached, and there is some debate about whether this should be the original Buddhist one or a modern secular or humanist one and, if so, which, why, and how? In one sense, what is happening is that an ingredient has been deliberately taken out, later found to be missing, and now there is debate about how to put it back.

In the Samagama Sutta (MN 104), the Buddha summarizes the teachings he has given: "the four mindfulness foundations, four right strivings, four spiritual power bases, five faculties, five powers, seven enlightenment factors and the eightfold path." These 37 items are a widely accepted summary. Mindfulness features explicitly in 6 of the 37 items and implicitly in several (perhaps all) of the others. It is the most salient item. In the same sutta, Ananda, the Buddha's assistant, asserts that there is no dispute among the Buddha's followers about these items. Ananda goes on to say that he is worried that although there is general agreement about these points, there might, after Buddha has passed away, arise disputes about the way of life, or the ethical rules, of the Buddhist community. At this point, Buddha says that a dispute about the 37 items would be for "the loss, harm and suffering of humans and gods," but a dispute about way of life or ethical rules would be a "trifling" matter (MN 104, 5).

We can see from this that the Buddha is concerned with the substance much more than with the boundary. From the Buddha's point of view, the essence of ethicality lies not in the rules and codes but in the activity itself. It is not that mindfulness requires a code as a boundary around it; it is rather that mindfulness, correctly understood, is itself the foundation for any code there might be. The mindfulness of Buddha is the foundation of ethics. True ethicality, in the Buddhist view, is a natural result of realism: of perceiving things as they are; perceiving impermanence as it actually is; perceiving affliction as it actually is; perceiving the body, senses, feelings, heart, and mind as they actually are; and understanding the danger of a world shot through with the fire of greed, hate, and delusion as it actually is. Such realism derives from exploration and mindfulness operating together and from it flow energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity, and with these seven established, an ethical life is a natural consequence because the practitioner clearly sees the disadvantage of the alternative.

The Buddhist conceptual framework for ethics is ignorance not sin. In the monotheistic religions, the foundation of ethics is the judgment day when the believer

has to justify him or herself before God. The motive for good behavior is fear of the judgment and of estrangement from God. Knowing right from wrong and acting accordingly are vital to avoid being sent to hell. On this basis, even in a post-theistic age, Western society maintains a clearly thought out judicial system in which the vital thing is to obey the rules. Bad behavior is sin, an offense against God. In Buddhism, on the other hand, there is no judging God and no judgment day. Consequences are natural, not extrinsically imposed by a displeased deity. Something is wrong because of the disadvantageous consequences of the activity itself. Consequently, what is important in Buddhism is not so much to know what the extrinsic rules are, but, rather, to understand how things work so that the activity itself is intrinsically sound. The idea is that if you don't understand what is going on, you will get yourself into trouble. The method of finding out is a mixture of learning from good teachers and finding out for yourself. These two conspire together. Mindfulness is the key factor. One is to be mindful of what one has learnt. The worst that can be said of a lazy practitioner is that he has wasted his time and learnt nothing. Mindful of what one has learnt one investigates further. Mindfulness is thus the first factor and exploration the second. Everything worthwhile flows naturally from this. From this perspective, codes and rules are makeshift descriptions. They can never account for every situation. They are a useful guidance in a rough and ready way. What matters, however, is not conformity to an external framework, but an inner understanding from which loving, compassionate, wise, and skillful action flows naturally. To get the rules mixed up is a trifling matter, but to go about the activity in the wrong way brings harm and suffering to humans and gods.

In Buddhism, therefore, right mindfulness is the foundation of ethics. The distortion of mindfulness to make something that would fit into the Western way of doing things is a bit like taking the lacing out of a shoe in order to put your foot into it, discovering that it does not fit without the lacing and then tying string around the outside to stop it falling off. The original mindfulness worked perfectly well and did not need unlacing. In order to get something accepted in a new cultural context, it is sometimes necessary to pander to existing prejudices. The question then arises how far such distortion can go before the essence of the original has been completely lost. Mindfulness of the original kind plays a central and vital role in Buddhism, which is to say, in the path of liberation based upon right seeing and right understanding. It is not simply a technique of awareness, not limited to the present moment and not primarily about immediate impact upon the senses, though it draws on knowledge and experience gleaned from explorations using such awareness. Perhaps the current widespread use of such awareness will, in due course, lead back to some of the original mindfulness and, perhaps, from that will grow a different approach to ethics. This, however, remains to be seen.

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Forgiveness: Making Beneficial Judgments in Relation to Self and Others

4

Ajahn Amaro

Introduction

There is a particular meditation practice that the Buddha described and which he engaged in before his own enlightenment. It is a very simple approach, and it is described in the Middle Length Discourses (M 19); it is called *The Two Kinds of Thinking*. He recounts how he would sit in meditation, and, as he watched what thoughts arose in his mind, he would divide those thoughts into two categories. The first of these would be the thoughts that were judged to be wholesome and beneficial to himself and others and were connected with good-heartedness. The other category of thoughts was those connected with the unwholesome, with sensual greed, harmfulness, or negativity and a lack of well-wishing. The thoughts and attitudes of the former group he would deliberately nurture and maintain; the thoughts that were negative or destructive he chose to let fade out and would not give them energy or support.

When describing his reasoning for making these distinctions, he made this very simple statement: " … whatever [one] frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of the mind" (M 19.6). In some respects this might seem to be a truth that is self-evident. However, that little sentence encompasses an enormous amount, both of classical meditation practices and also modern-day neuroscience. It is an intriguing fact that an aspect of mind that the Buddha observed 2500 years ago, just by watching how the mind works, is today being confirmed by the research of neuroscientists. Nowadays we are blessed with ingenious machinery that can, to some extent, map out the tracks that thought makes. This is evidenced in the development or diminution of certain brain structures, or by levels of activity measured in certain areas, by MRI scanners and suchlike. For example, studies

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found have reported that "… compared with bus drivers, [London] taxi drivers had greater gray matter volume in mid-posterior hippocampi and less volume in anterior hippocampi" (Maguire, Woollett, & Spiers, 2006). So that which we regularly dwell upon, that will be the direction in which the mind goes, literally like a rut formed in the road; if the wheels always follow a particular track, that's the groove that the wheels will tend to fall into. In addition, it appears that when we develop a particular line of thought or attitude, the effect of that might not just be a mental habituation, but can have a physical effect on the brain as well. Our judgments can thus become ingrained, both mentally and physically, and criticism of self and others is part of such engraining. The meditation practice described by the Buddha here aims to identify the ruts that lead to benefit and the ruts that lead to harm and to foster the former while disempowering the latter.

The development of the ability to watch the mind in such a way can thus enable an individual to recognize: "This harsh self-critical thought is not based on truth, and it's not really who and what I am. If it's believed and followed, it will lead to more trouble and stress—let it go." Or the same in relation to others: "This grudge, this critical attitude is not fully based on truth, and it's not really who and what that person is. If it's believed and followed, it will lead to more trouble and stress—let it go."

This is not to say that all judgments should be considered to be inherently conducive to stress—far from it—nor that we should never take action based on those judgments; rather this kind of practice facilitates the recognition of when a judgment is unmindful and *reactive* and when it is mindful and *responsive*. In the traditional Buddhist understanding of things, the contrast between these two attitudes is seen to be of great significance.

Critical Thoughts and Forgiveness

The consideration of how to let go of those reactive, critical thoughts brings us to the area of forgiveness. The heart of the method is watching those critical thoughts, and those judgments about ourselves, not solely as a formal meditation exercise in stillness and silence but throughout the events of an ordinary day. We can be watchful of such thoughts as: "I'm a foolish person," "I never really know what I'm talking about," "People don't really like me," "I should be more accomplished as a meditator," and so forth. We can watch those self-critical, unforgiving thoughts and recognize that there is negativity, a harshness there. In response we can ask: "Do I need to believe this and feed that attitude? Does that *need* to be followed?" "Is that the whole story?" "Is that *really* who and what I am?" As noted by Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2013, p. 36), "… negative thoughts and feelings could be seen as passing events in the mind that were neither necessarily valid reflections of reality nor central aspects of the self." We can mindfully reflect in this way and train the mind to leave those judgments aside. In short, we can forgive ourselves, whether any perceived shortcomings are based in actuality or not. The "mindfulness" element is embodied principally in that watchfulness.

Similarly, in the human family, we're not just critical of ourselves, but some of us are very good at complaining about what's wrong with everybody else. Sometimes we have to get on a full commuter train, or be in a car on a busy highway, yet we never think that *we* are the crowd: "I was stuck in awful traffic," "*Those* people on the Tube…" Isn't it curious how *they* are the traffic, not me… we never think: "Oh dear, I'm occupying all this space for these good people who've got significant places to go to—please excuse me."

Or maybe we're accomplished complainers and critics about the particular conduct and attitudes of others: "How could he *do* that?" "Don't you know who I am?" "How could she treat me that way?" "Can you believe what he's wearing?" But we can also watch that and think: "Is this a beneficial attitude to have?" "Is this noble?" "Is this something that is helpful to me and others?" "What is the likely result of this grudge if it's adhered to?" We can develop a quality of forgiveness toward others as well, again, whether any perceived shortcomings are based in actuality or not.

Benevolent and Afflictive Judgments

In *The Two Kinds of Thinking* discourse, there's an interesting simile that the Buddha gives about watchfulness, bearing in mind that he uses common examples of his location and era, like that of a cowherd, which might seem foreign to us in the West today. He says that if your mind is dwelling on wholesome states, it's rather like when it's after the growing season—the crops have been gathered in, the cows can graze freely, and they're not going to get into the planted crops and destroy them,— so you can go and have a nap under the tree, and the cows can wander freely. That is to say, you don't have to be so wary of causing harm, to yourself or others, as only benefit is likely to arise from such thoughts and attitudes.

On the other hand, if your mind is inclined toward unwholesome states, then you have to be like a cowherd in the growing season—at that time there are valuable crops to protect so you have to watch the cows very carefully, in order that they don't wander into the paddy fields and destroy all the rice plants—you can't afford to doze off. You have to be that much more attentive, watching the negative mind states like a wary cowherd, because if the cows go and eat the rice shoots, they are going to get heavily damaged and everybody loses. This means that if you don't pay close attention to those unwholesome, afflictive thoughts and attitudes, harm for yourself and others is likely to result.

Informed, Intelligent Discrimination

In working with the mind in this way, it is important to acknowledge that, in this respect, there's a judgment; a distinction is being made; the mind is recognizing a relative difference between wholesome, beneficial states and unwholesome, afflictive states. In Buddhist teachings, both ancient and contemporary, there is often a talk about making no distinctions, being unbiased, impartial, and nonjudgmental,

but it is also important to understand that part of the mindfulness that leads to true well-being is being able to discriminate wisely. For example, I recognize: "That's the door, that's the wall. If I want to leave the room, I aim for the door. If I aim for the wall it will be very frustrating. I have no aversion towards the wall, it's simply that trying to go through it is not the easiest way to leave the room." Another simple example is coming to a road junction; if I am in London and I want to go to Scotland, I will mindfully take the road to the north rather than to the south. There is no negativity toward the road to the south; it's simply not the way I want to go.

Such judgment, discrimination, is not a harmful thing. What we're doing is we're discriminating between the mind states that are going to be helpful and the mind states that are going to be harmful. And, just as you choose the place where there is a hole in the wall to go through, you mindfully choose the mind states that are going to bring happiness and contentment to yourself and to others rather than those that will lead to stress and pain.

To summarize this process in terms of forgiveness: first, one uses the qualities of mindfulness and attention to watch the mind states as they arise; second, one recognizes that: "This is beneficial, wholesome" or "this is afflictive, unwholesome"; and third, in relation to the array of unwholesome states that have arisen and that are critical of oneself or others, one trains the mind to not follow those by using active practices of forgiveness. This is usually actualized by internally articulating phrases directed toward oneself or others that encourage that quality of letting go, of not carrying around grudges or harsh criticisms.

Making Afflictive Thoughts and Attitudes Conscious

Ajahn Sumedho (2014), a contemporary American Buddhist monk and teacher, described one specific method of supporting this process of letting go:

> If you're really frightened of something, be consciously frightened. Don't just back away from it, but notice that tendency to try to get rid of it. Bring up fully what you're frightened of, think it out quite deliberately, and listen to your thinking. This is not to analyze, but just to take fear to its absurd end, where it becomes so ridiculous you can start laughing at it. Listen to desire, the mad: 'I want this, I want that, I've got to have, I don't know what I'll do if I don't have this, and I want that...' Sometimes the mind can just scream away, 'I want this!' – and you can listen to that.
>
> In this way, we're not believing that those are personal problems, but instead taking fear and anger, mentally, to an absurd position, to where they're just seen as a natural progression of thoughts. We're deliberately thinking all the things we're afraid of thinking, not just out of blindness, but actually watching and listening to them as conditions of the mind, rather than personal failures or problems.
>
> So, in this practice now, we begin to let things go. You don't have to go round looking for particular things, but when things that you feel obsessed with keep arising, bothering you, and you're trying to get rid of them, then bring them up even more. Deliberately think them out and listen … I'm bringing this up into full consciousness, these trivial things, which you can just push aside because they are trivial, and one doesn't want to be bothered with the trivialities of life; but when we don't bother, then all that gets repressed, so it becomes a problem. We start feeling anxiety, feeling aversion to ourselves or to other

people, or depressed; all this comes from refusing to allow conditions, trivialities, or horrible things to become conscious.

When you're just caught in habitual thinking, you can't see the arising of thought, can you? You can't see it. You can only catch thought after you realize you've been thinking; so start deliberately thinking, and catch the beginning of a thought, before you actually think it. … Deliberately think, so that you see the beginning, the forming of a thought, and the end of it, and the space around it. You're looking at thought and concept in a perspective, rather than just reacting to them.

Say you're angry with somebody. You think, 'That's what he said, he said that and he said this and then … he's so selfish.' ... One thing goes on to the next, doesn't it? You're just caught in this one thing going on to the next, motivated by aversion. So rather than just being caught in that whole stream of associated thoughts, concepts, deliberately think: 'He is the most selfish person I have ever met!' And then note the ending of that thought. 'He's a rotten egg, a dirty rat; he did this and then he did that!' – and then the ending of that. You get to see it all as very funny!

Bring it up into conscious form, where you can see it, make it absurd, and then you have a perspective on it and it gets quite amusing. You can see what comedy is about! We take ourselves so seriously, 'I'm such an important person, my life is so terribly important, that I must be extremely serious about it at all moments.' … One thinks of oneself somehow as very important, so then think it, deliberately think, 'I'm a Very Important Person, my problems are very important and serious.' When you're thinking that deliberately it sounds silly, because you realize you're not terribly important—none of us are. And the problems we make out of life are trivial things. Some people can ruin their whole lives by creating endless problems, and taking them all so seriously.

If you want to be a loving and generous type of being, then any type of meanness or jealousy or stinginess is something that you have to repress or annihilate in your mind. So whatever you are most afraid of in your life that you might really be, think it out, watch it. Make confessions: 'I want to be a tyrant!' … or whatever it is. We're not concerned with the quality of it any more, but the mere characteristic that it's an impermanent condition; it's unsatisfactory, because there's no point in it that can ever really satisfy you. It comes and it goes, and it's not-self (Vol. 2, pp. 41–45).

Mindfulness, Loving-Kindness, and Forgiveness

That method can be very effective and liberating; however for some people, the habit of being harsh toward themselves is particularly well entrenched. Such people will often say: "I don't have any problem sending loving-kindness towards all beings… except for one—me." Ironically, sometimes the more good-hearted and compassionate a person is, the more harshly critical they feel about themselves. From the Buddhist perspective, true mindfulness needs to contain an element of loving-kindness. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defined mindfulness as "intentional and non-judgmental awareness" and "paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (p. 4). On reading this in the light of classical Buddhist understanding, the "nonjudgmental" element in it can be said to embody this quality of loving-kindness. This is because, even though we often equate the word "love" with "like," the two are not synonymous:

In English the word 'love' often refers to 'something that I like.' For example, 'I love sticky rice', 'I love sweet mango.' We really mean we like it. Liking is being attached to something

such as food which we really like or enjoy eating. We don't love it. *Mettā* means you love your enemy; it doesn't mean you like your enemy. If somebody wants to kill you and you say, 'I like them', that is silly! But we can love them, meaning that we can refrain from unpleasant thoughts and vindictiveness, from any desire to hurt them or annihilate them. Even though you might not like them—they are miserable, wretched people—you can still be kind, generous and charitable towards them. If some drunk came into this room who was foul and disgusting, ugly and diseased, and there was nothing one could be attracted to in him—to say, 'I like this man' would be ridiculous. But one could love him, not dwell in aversion, not be caught up in reactions to his unpleasantness. That's what we mean by *mettā*. (Ajahn Sumedho, Vol. 2, p. 33)

The phrase "radical acceptance" is an effective way of describing this nonjudgmental attitude. It should immediately be noted, however, that such *acceptance* does not imply *approval*—there is no pretense that we should approve of murder, rape, cruelty, fraud, or theft—rather it means that it is acknowledged that such actions are part of the human world, whether we like it or not.

On an internal level, such a radical acceptance can also be applied to our own being. We can be unhypocritically accepting of our own foibles and shortcomings, without approving them or excusing them or generating self-hatred on account of them; rather, we can refrain from dwelling in aversion toward them and, not taking them personally, acknowledge them as part of the natural order.

In order to facilitate such a radical acceptance, there is another useful meditation exercise that can be employed. Say that your own real name is Jane Q. Person. If you feel self-critical—feel you've never tried hard enough or never been good enough for example—step out of yourself and re-vision things for a moment. Imagine that you are Jane's best friend and that she comes to you saying: "I'm a really awful person. I'm not as good as I pretend to be. I've never tried hard enough or been good enough. I feel dreadful about myself." What would be your immediate response to your dear friend Jane?

The experience of having employed this for about 20 years and with hundreds of students is that when people have been asked to use this method of substitution, they've said that instantaneously their attitude was one of forgiveness, kindness, and compassion—individuals often being deeply surprised by how automatic the self-benevolence was: "You're a lovely person, you're fine! Don't be so hard on yourself." This meditation method was derived from the Gestalt "empty chair" technique (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1994).

The Sharing of Blessings

In contrast to habits of self-criticism, for some the habit of negative attitudes toward others is what predominates. This can be equally hard to gain perspective on. Those tending toward such thoughts will in their turn say: "I don't have any problem sending loving-kindness towards all beings … except for one – my ex-" or some such.

Along with the abovementioned method of making the afflictive thoughts and attitudes conscious, one can also use the "substitution" exercise, although in this instance, the method is to mindfully put oneself in the position of the hated or feared or otherwise blameworthy person. To develop this practice, one deliberately brings

to mind the idea of being the other person, as well as investigating what their motivations might be: "I am Jack Z. Human and I relate to Jane the way I do because…." This is a reflective exercise; one is not doing it to enumerate the wrongdoings or perceived toxic views of the other but rather, by using the imagination to entertain a different point of view, to be ready to be surprised. We can be startled to find we empathize, even if just for a moment, with the good intentions of another, even when we've been on the receiving end of unfair, abusive, or otherwise painful effects of their actions.

The quality of mindfulness, wakeful awareness, is the key element in this process. Mindfulness of the reactive patterns, and then using the imaginative exercise to gain perspective on them, opens the door to a broader, nonself-centered perspective. When we encounter afflictive behavior and unwholesomeness in this way, we don't let it be seen as an otherness, which then needs to be feared, hated, attacked, or destroyed. Instead we learn to *respond* to it rather than to *react*.

There is a traditional set of Buddhist verses that are recited and reflected upon, on an almost daily basis, in the countries of the Southern Buddhist world (e.g., Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia). These are called *The Verses of Sharing and Aspiration*. In these passages, rather than vilifying selfish, destructive beings or merely tolerating them by observing them from a would-be supramundane vantage point, the Buddha advocates sharing our good wishes, as well as whatever blessings arise from our skillful actions, with those who have been harmful and unwholesome as well as with the benevolent and good:

> May those who are friendly, indifferent or hostile,
> May all beings receive the blessings of my life,
> May they soon attain the threefold bliss …
> (Amaravati Chanting Book, Vol. 1, p. 33)

This list accordingly includes abhorred world leaders and public figures, as well as any ex-partners or others by whom we might have been hurt. It is noteworthy that, in this practice, one is not condoning those harmful actions, but instead one is recognizing that piling so-called reasonable hatred upon their perpetrators only multiplies the causes of pain and confusion.

The attitude that is aspired to with this practice is a grateful, unselfish, and open perspective, including the development of a complete forgiveness of and noncontention with all perceived wrongdoing. It is an unbiased attunement of the mind to the time, the place, the situation, and the people involved. Any action that springs forth from such attunement is understood to embody the best that can be done to help the situation evolve toward the fullest quality of well-being for self and others.

Inherent Fallibility: Acknowledgment and Endeavor

Another teaching that the Buddha gave is to do with having made genuine mistakes and how we relate to guilt and shame and self-justification. We are all fallible, in that the way that we act and speak can have painful consequences for others and ourselves. The way we relate to such fallibility can vary over a wide range. The two

extremes would be: "I'm an awful person, I'm incurable, my sins are so ghastly they can never be absolved, I'm unforgivable"; and at the other end of the spectrum, the attitude is: "If you don't like what I do, it's your problem; I'm fine with everything about me." From the Buddhist perspective, both of these attitudes would be classed as attachment to afflictive, unwholesome thoughts. What the Buddha recommends instead is a Middle Way, based on a mindful, nonself-centered awareness, a meta-attention that overlooks both those extreme positions and judges situations impartially:

> For it is growth in spiritual development when one sees one's transgression as such, makes amends in accordance with what is true, and undertakes restraint in the future (M 140.33)

The Buddha's encouragement is for us to see our mistakes as such and to acknowledge: "Yes, that was a missed shot; I spoke poorly and I was unkind when I acted in that way," or "I was dishonest; I helped myself when it wasn't really mine to take"—in essence to see that the act was unwholesome and not noble and to use the painfulness of the recognition of that to encourage the individual to be more mindful in the future.

When we make a mistake and we acknowledge that as a shortcoming, it is emotionally painful. If I remember having told a lie, or having been unkind or selfish, if I let myself feel that, it hurts. But I'd suggest that that's a good pain, an informative pain—rather like being in the dark, walking into the wall, and realizing that it's not the door. This "informative" aspect of emotional pain is something that will be looked at more closely below, in the consideration of the role of ethics in the development of well-being.

The process of seeing our mistakes as such, and endeavoring to do better in the future, is another aspect of the Buddhist concept of the Middle Way. It is a helpful principle, informing the effort to be mindful of emotional states, in particular how failure is dealt with—the experience of making mistakes and "not being perfect." The mindful awareness of such wrongdoing means we recognize that: "Yes, that was poorly done; yes, I just told a lie"; however, it more importantly includes such reflections as "I recognize that I lied and now I feel regret. I will acknowledge that untruth as soon as possible, apologize and endeavor not to fall into that trap again." That is to say: "I see it, but I don't need to create self-hatred on account of it; I can let go of that and aim do better in the future." One recognizes that the action was unskillful and unwholesome, and then one uses the painfulness that comes from the recognition to galvanize the capacity that we have to be more mindful.

We use that emotional painfulness particularly in respect to informing our actions and speech, but it can be employed in a similar way toward our destructively critical attitudes too, as in the "making thoughts conscious" and "substitution" exercises already mentioned. When the sheer painfulness of harboring harshly critical attitudes toward others and ourselves is apprehended, that on its own can be enough to encourage a letting go. When we see such as: "I'm being really hard on myself, why do I carry this around? I would never treat anyone else like this," then a letting go can happen.

As Ajahn Sumedho ([2014](#)) has put it, when speaking about this aspect of mind:

> I used to have what I call an 'inner tyrant', a bad habit that I picked up of always criticizing myself. It's a real tyrant – there is nobody in this world that has been more tyrannical, critical or nasty to me than I have. Even the most critical person, however much they have harmed and made me miserable, has never made me relentlessly miserable as much as I have myself, as a result of this inner tyrant. It's a real wet blanket of a tyrant, no matter what I do it's never good enough. Even if everybody says, "Ajahn Sumedho, you gave such a wonderful talk", the inner tyrant says "You shouldn't have said this, you didn't say that right." It goes on, in an endless perpetual tirade of criticism and fault-finding. Yet it's just habit, I freed my mind from this habit, it does not have any footing anymore. I know exactly what it is, I no longer believe in it, or even try to get rid of it, I just know not to pursue it and just to let it dissolve into the silence. (Vol. 4, pp. 135–136)

"Asking for Forgiveness": Ritual and Practical

In the monastic tradition in the Southern Buddhist countries, there is a set of customs that are followed to facilitate the processes of letting go, forgiveness, and ethical reform. For example, at the end of the 3-month Rains Retreat, on the full moon of October each year, there is a *khamati* ceremony to mark the completion of that period of communal seclusion. Everyone in the monastic community has been living together for the previous 3 months, and, after the formal ending of the Retreat, members of the monastic community customarily start to travel and go their own separate ways. When one has been together with a number of people for a period of time, whether monastic or not, it is highly likely that there has been some abrasion between members of the group. Friction happens between people.

"Asking for Forgiveness"

The Buddha accordingly established a ceremony to expedite the acknowledgment of such abrasions and the letting go of any negative feelings arising from them. It is a way of wiping the slate clean—at least in a ritual fashion—so that all members of the community have the opportunity to go on their way without harboring regrets, grudges, hurts, or hard feelings of any kind.

The formal ceremony is centered upon the senior person of the group. All the other members of the community pay their respects and recite:

> Forgive us … for all offence done carelessly to [you], by body, speech or mind.

It is significant that this process includes recognizing that you might have done or said things that were harmful to others that you didn't even know about. In this you are formally acknowledging that (a) your actions affect others, (b) you are fallible, (c) you can't control how all your actions are interpreted, and (d) you are humbly asking to be forgiven for having been responsible for any hurt caused.

The senior person then—regardless of how high-ranking they might be or whether they are of such spiritual reputation as to be beyond reproach—always responds:

I forgive you; please forgive me also.

The ceremony concludes with the other participants all saying together:

We forgive you.

In this way, even someone who's regarded as a fully enlightened being would acknowledge the fact that they can still be upsetting; they can still offend and hurt people's feelings. Even if possessed of great wisdom, benevolence, and purity of intention, they can still talk in ways that people find irritating or upsetting, just as the Buddha did—the Buddha did not please everybody. If you read the discourses of the Pali Canon, you will find that he annoyed quite a few people along the way.

This is a ritual of forgiveness. However, for such practices to be meaningful and to conduce to genuine well-being, it's important that life is breathed into them—one's mouth can make the words: "Whatever I have done, by body, speech or mind…" yet one's thoughts can be off somewhere else altogether. So for any cere-mony or any ritual to be meaningful, it is necessary to make it something that is valid through your own active mindful attention and interest, for the way we pay attention is part of what brings things to life. One can say: "It's just an empty cere-mony; I don't need to know anything about these ancient Buddhist customs…." but if that's the attitude then such a process is unlikely to be of much benefit. If instead one reflects—"This is a good opportunity to look at what I might have said or done that was hurtful, and then to make amends, and also to see if I'm carrying any grudges, so let's pay close attention here…"—then it can be a reflective practice that brings great benefit to yourself and others.

In addition, if your attitude is one of interest and sincerity, this kind of ceremo-nial exchange will be meaningful even if your thoughts are along the lines of: "Although I say 'I forgive you,' there's *actually* something that I really don't want to forgive you for. I've got this resentment for you that I've been nursing and I won't let go of it yet." Sometimes you can't let go; you can see that it's really stupid, and you shouldn't be hanging on to that umbrage; it's not doing any good, but… In such instances, it's important to recognize that—even if there is a hardness of heart and you say to yourself "No! I can't forgive"—you can at least be mindful that there's something in you that doesn't want to forgive. Right there that is "mindfulness of an unwholesome attitude," and the presence of that mindfulness is exactly what enables us to respond to that pattern of thought, to know it simply as it is, rather than to react to it by believing it or suppressing it.

One of the most useful statements on this area made by Ajahn Chah (2011), a contemporary Buddhist monk and meditation teacher, is that:

If we have constancy just to the extent of knowing our moods, and knowing we're clinging to them, this is better already. That is, we have awareness, we know what's going on, but we

> still can't let go. We see ourselves clinging to good and bad, and we know it. We cling to good and know it's not right practice, but we still can't let go. This is fifty to seventy per cent of the practice already. There still isn't release but we know that if we could let go, that would be the way to peace. We keep seeing the equally harmful consequences of all our likes and dislikes, of praise and blame, continuously. Whatever the conditions may be, the mind is constant in this way (p. 30).

You know that you're not going to drop it, and that it's really foolish not to do so, but mindfulness is being able to see that we're not able to let go at this moment.

The "Give" in "Forgiveness: *Abhayadana*

It is noteworthy that in this ritualized exchange, along with humility, there is also a generosity. The humility is embodied in the recognition that: "I'm not perfect, and I might have missed my shot from time to time; mostly by accident, sometimes maybe even on purpose, I said or did something that was harmful but whatever the cause might have been, I ask for forgiveness." The generosity is in the benefit that comes for oneself and others as a result of that humility and letting go.

The word "give" is not there in "forgiveness" by coincidence; the two words are related. There is a generosity there since, in being ready to let go of the hurt that others have done to us as well as our own shortcomings (whether merely perceived or actual), we are offering the gift of psychological space. We are not carrying around criticisms of self or others, fostering resentments or self-hatred; this relinquishment of negativity is seen to lead to a greater ease for ourselves and for those around us. The Buddha called this effect *abhayadana*—literally, "the giving of fearlessness," and he described its effects as: "[The practitioner] gives to an immeasurable number of beings freedom from fear, enmity, and affliction. [The practitioner] in turn enjoys immeasurable freedom from fear, enmity, and affliction" (A 8.39). The "giving" here is thus giving ourselves and others room to manoeuvre, both psychologically and socially.

Up to this point, the "asking for forgiveness" ceremony has only been described as part of the formal ending of the Buddhist monastic Rains Retreat. It is, in addition, carried out frequently throughout the year, whenever a nun or a monk is departing from a residence to live in another place. It has the same format and spirit in that it is a way of formally wiping the slate clean and to tie up any loose ends prior to parting company.

The ceremony should not be taken to be confined solely to a monastic environment. If a retreat has been held at a venue where a group of non-monastic meditators have resided together for, say, a 10-day retreat, they might carry out this ceremony with the retreat leader as a way of closing their time together. The leader of the retreat might be a monastic teacher, or they might be a lay teacher; the ceremony would be similar.

In addition, adaptations of this ceremony have been used between parents and their children (e.g., in the family retreat at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, CA), with each participant asking the other for and offering forgiveness, however, in this

instance without either adopting a superior role. Similarly the ceremony has been used as a beneficial practice for couples, either at their wedding blessing or at a marriage reaffirmation ceremony after a number of years in relationship. In all these situations, there is the same basic methodology and purpose—the humble acknowledgment of shortcomings, wiping the slate clean, and the psychological space imparted by those benevolent acts and intentions.

Inviting Critical Feedback: The *Pavāranā* Ceremony

Part of the annual ritual at the end of the Rains Retreat is the making, by each monastic in turn, of a public "invitation" to offer feedback; this invitation is called *pavarana*. In contrast to the "asking for forgiveness," the structure of the "invitation" ceremony is not based around addressing the elder of the community; instead each member of the monastic community invites critical feedback from everybody else. The wording of the ceremony runs as follows:

> I invite feedback from the Community. According to what has been seen, heard or suspected, please advise me, out of compassion.

One might think, having made such a *carte blanche* offer, that this might turn the ceremony into a very long event. In common practice, this is not so since the actual offering of comment to individuals does not all happen then and there. Rather than having all the feedback sessions at once, often over the next few days, if there is some anxiety, grudge, or hurt that is being carried around, the opportunity to address it with that person in private is sought out, so that the air can be cleared.

As with the "asking for forgiveness" ceremony, this "invitation" is understood to be a potent psychological tool, facilitating individuals with the development of mindfulness and informing beneficial judgments in relation to their attitudes, actions, and social interactions. As part of this, just as with "asking for forgiveness," it might be that there is great resistance to genuinely inviting comment from others. While you are reciting: "Please give me your feedback," the thought accompanying it might be along the lines of: "Don't you *dare* criticize me…." Since this is a deliberate act of invitation, it supports a watchfulness of what is going on. Mindful attention can be put on to the gritting of the teeth and the tensing of the belly, so you're being mindful that you don't want to be open to critical feedback. And, once again such mindfulness of an unwholesome attitude is exactly what enables us to respond to that pattern of thought rather than compulsively attaching to it, which will lead to afflictive results.

It is rare for a person to automatically appreciate critical feedback (even when based on ostensible fact and offered with a kindly attitude), but the cultivation of an appreciation for it is encouraged in Buddhist teachings. In a striking statement, Sariputta, the leading disciple of the Buddha, once commented that if one was offered critical feedback by a friend, one should stick as close to them as if they were revealing some hidden treasure.

When you see someone who sees your faults,
A wise person who rebukes you,
You should stick close to such an intelligent person,
As if they were revealing some hidden treasure.
Sticking close to such a person,
Things get better, not worse. (Thag 993)

He also offers advice as to how such feedback might be most beneficially pre-sented. After having checked to see if one is free of comparable faults and is well informed as to the situation and acquainted with any pertinent laws, "[One should consider]: (a) I will speak at time appropriate [to both parties], not when it's incon-venient; (b) I will speak in accordance with verifiable fact, not falsely; (c) I will speak gently, not harshly; (d) I will speak in a way that conduces to benefit, not harm; (e) I will speak with an attitude of loving-kindness, not harboring hatred" (A 10.44).

In the same way that "asking for forgiveness" can easily be translated from the milieu of a traditional monastic practice into current everyday life, the practice offering such "invitation" can be effectively translated too. These practices both involve the mindful recognition of the effects we have upon each other and how, through the skillful management of thought and attitude, the quality of well-being can be improved both for ourselves and for others with whom we interact.

The Effects of Behavior: Ethics and Well-Being

The issue of interaction of the individual with others, and the effects of such interac-tions on well-being, brings us to a final consideration which is also the overarching theme of this book—the role of ethics in mindfulness practices and its significance in human flourishing.

We affect each other. What we do and say has an impact on those with whom we live and work and with whom we communicate. Out of respect for the way we affect each other, in Buddhist practice, there are clear guidelines for behavior so that our actions and speech will conduce to the well-being of others as well as ourselves. These ethical guidelines are called *sila*, also translated as virtue or morality.

In today's world, such words as ethics, let alone virtue or morality, can carry an almost pejorative tone. They can seem to be antiquated concepts; however, before rushing to a negative judgment, it might be useful to consider how such guidelines could be powerful psychological tools to bring benefit and freedom from stress for us, as well as improve our relations with others.

Ethical Sensitivity and the Appreciation of Consequences

Even if we are not the so-called immoral people (e.g., those who are prone to engag-ing in murder, rape, fraud, or theft), that does not necessarily mean that ethical sensitivity is irrelevant in our lives. There's a pair of qualities that are mentioned in

the Buddha's teachings called *hiri* and *ottappa* that relate to this domain. *Hiri* can best be translated as conscience or as intelligent appreciation of consequences; just as when you come to the edge of the road, you check for cars before crossing—the wish for continued well-being for you and for the drivers on the road initiates a healthy sense of caution. If you recently stepped out heedlessly and caused a car to screech to a halt, receiving the anger of that driver and feeling your own pounding heart will make you more cautious as you approach the next curb. That extra caution comes from *hiri*.

Accordingly, when you have told a lie or acted in a harmful way, *hiri* is the mental pain you feel when you remember that. *Ottappa* is a little bit different—it's interpreted in different ways in different texts, but the most helpful interpretation of it is the painfulness of witnessing the harmful acts and attitudes of others. When you see somebody acting in an unwholesome or harmful way, *ottappa* is that in the mind which recoils and that feels pain at the unskillfulness and hurtfulness of others: our moral sensitivity.

These two qualities, *hiri* and *ottappa*, are called, in the Buddha's words, "Guardians of the World"—*lokapala*. They are considered guardians of our individual worlds because they are the kind of qualities that help us to recognize what's afflictive and unbeneficial, and what is wholesome and beneficial, and accordingly help us to direct our lives toward enhanced well-being. They are sturdy supports for mindfulness. They are seen to be guardians of the world at large in that, the more each person chooses to follow such responsive and responsible motivations, the more that differences of opinion and personal preferences can be served and resolved in peaceful ways instead of through conflict.

All that said, it might be that we don't want to have that kind of sensitivity—that we don't ever want to feel regret, for any reason—but mindful appreciation of the painful consequences of our actions does not need to lead to self-hatred. *Hiri* is what tells us we missed our shot and provides the encouragement to do better in the future. It is a quality that does not need to involve self-centered thinking; it is more of a natural part of a cause and effect relationship. As the Buddha puts it in the opening verse of the *Dhammapada*, one of the most well-respected compendia of his wisdom:

> Mind is the forerunner of all actions.
> All deeds are led by mind, created by mind.
> If one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, suffering follows,
> As the wheel follows the hoof of an ox pulling a cart.
> Mind is the forerunner of all actions.
> All deeds are led by mind, created by mind.
> If one speaks or acts with a serene mind, happiness follows,
> As surely as one's shadow. (Dhp 1-2)

If self-centered habits arise and take over that appreciation, it can rapidly be turned into a toxic and destructive guilt. It does not need to be that way; however, since the more mindfulness there is of the thought process, the more it is possible to rejig the way that we look at the issue. We find we are ready to acknowledge our

shortcomings, period. We are not denying them, justifying them, or ruminatively wallowing in them. The "intelligent appreciation of consequences" is not being negative or destructively judgmental. It is a practical recognition of the way our minds are configured, realizing that we could steer things in a more skillful way and that it would be for our own benefit and the benefit of others. Being mindful of grudges or regrets should not imply that nothing is to be done about them. We can instead mindfully choose to act in ways that resolve conflicts and create less cause for regret in us.

Harmful Action, Ethical Sensitivity, and Forgiveness

The more that we generate the quality of forgiveness—the more that we're mindful of our emotional states and bring our attention to that without feeling overburdened or reactive—the more it gives the mind space in which to respond to life's situations, both positive and negative, and beneficial and afflictive.

Solzhenitsyn (1973) once mused that it would be so easy if evil was an absolute and we could just isolate it and wipe it out: "If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

The Buddha's teachings also indicate that there is no such thing as an absolute evil. According to Buddhist myth, one of his chief disciples, Maha-Moggallana, was Mara in at least one of his previous lives (M 50.8); that great saint, a fully enlightened being, had at one point been Satan, the Lord of Lies. Or there is the example of Angulimala, a mass murderer who became a disciple of the Buddha and eventually an enlightened being.

All this indicates that we can never be irremediably lost. Even if we think these examples are just fairy stories, their symbolism is powerful. It suggests that, no matter how intense our concerns might be about "my mind with its fears, insecurities and lusts, the depth of my depression," no psychological entanglement is completely inescapable.

The key to such emancipation, the fulfillment of the potentialities of our well-being, is to use mindfulness to bring attention to that dividing line so astutely described by Solzhenitsyn. In respect to ethics, this means to recognize when thoughts and attitudes, words, and acts are on that unwholesome side of the line; to acknowledge the painful, detrimental effects of following them and then to use that pain as a spur to encourage wakefulness and more wholesome action in the future. We forgive the shortcomings of others and ourselves, but it doesn't mean we condone them. The aim is to learn from them and use that learning to guide more beneficial attitudes and actions in the future.

Ethics as a Foundation of Well-Being

One of the psychological mechanisms described in the Buddhist scriptures outlines a natural and causal process through which a person can develop, upon the basis of *sila*, to the comprehensive well-being of spiritual emancipation, known as liberation or enlightenment. The text describes the pattern thus:

> It is natural that in a virtuous person, one who follows the ethical norms, freedom from remorse will arise ... It is natural that in a person who is free from remorse… the body will become relaxed ... It is natural that a person with a relaxed body will feel contentment ... It is natural that the mind of a contented person will easily become concentrated ... It is natural that a person whose mind is concentrated will see things as they actually are ... It is natural that a person seeing things as they actually are will grow disenchanted and dispassionate ... It is natural that a disenchanted and dispassionate person will realize the knowledge and vision of liberation. (A 10.2).

Through living ethically and responsibly, freedom from remorse arises—if we are not doing regrettable things, we don't have to remember having done them; based on that freedom from remorse, self-respect and joy arise, leading to physical ease, the relaxation of the body; that physical ease then conditions profound contentment, which in turn leads to mental focus, concentration *(samādhi);* that mental focus leads naturally to insight, wisdom, which in turn conditions a letting go, an unentangled participation in the field of all experience; this in turn leads to liberation, meaning complete psychological well-being.

The development of a mindful ethical sensitivity is seen to be the basis upon which this causal process is founded. This is the firm footing upon which this sequence of developmental rungs is planted.

The description here of the process is somewhat linear; however, it does not refer to a unique event, with a grand enlightenment experience at the end; more, it outlines the pathway of an individual's mind states, moment by moment. In addition, the various elements of the process mutually reinforce each other along the way, for example: better concentration helps one to be more mindful; more mindfulness improves one's ethical standards; and more careful standards lead to a greater freedom from remorse which leads to better concentration and so forth.

The Five Precepts as the "Five Great Gifts"

The presence of laws, rules, or ethical or moral codes and suchlike is often considered to be inhibitions to our natural freedom. From a self-centered perspective they are easily read as an intrusion or something that diminishes our liberty and thereby our well-being. From the Buddhist perspective, they don't have to be seen this way but rather the opposite, as a source of great happiness and freedom for others and ourselves.

This is best illustrated in the source of a passage cited above (A 8.39). Those words come from a longer description of what the Buddha called:

> The eight streams of blessings, the wholesome, nutriments of happiness ... that lead to what is wished for, desired and agreeable, to one's welfare and happiness.

He stated:

> There are these five gifts, great gifts, primal, of long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated … and not repudiated by wise spiritual practitioners. What five?
>
> (1) … By abstaining from taking life [the practitioner] gives to an immeasurable number of beings freedom from fear, enmity, and affliction. [The practitioner] in turn enjoys immeasurable freedom from fear, enmity and affliction. This is the first gift, great gift, primal, of long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated … and not repudiated by wise spiritual practitioners.
>
> (2) By abstaining from theft … This is the second gift …
>
> (3) By abstaining from sexual misconduct … This is the third gift …
>
> (4) By abstaining from lying … This is the fourth gift …
>
> (5) By abstaining from intoxicating drink and drugs, which lead to carelessness [the practitioner] gives to an immeasurable number of beings freedom from fear, enmity and affliction. [The practitioner] in turn enjoys immeasurable freedom from fear, enmity, and affliction. This is the fifth gift, great gift, primal, of long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated … and not repudiated by wise spiritual practitioners (A 8.39).

The principles listed here constitute what are known as the "Five Precepts" in Buddhist parlance; they describe the basic code of conduct advised by the Buddha for a way of life that will lead to the optimum well-being for the individual and that will support them in the endeavor to live harmoniously with others. Those who take on a monastic way of life adopt a number of refinements of this code, but these Five Precepts embody the fundamental ethical framework.

When these Precepts are regarded in this way, as great gifts imparting freedom, the part that ethics play in one's life is recognized as one of aiding fulfillment rather than inhibiting it. Just as having reliable brakes on a car is an essential element of enabling us to get to where we want to go, the framework for beneficial conduct that these Five Precepts provides gives us the freedom to travel at ease on life's infinite variety of highways.

And where can we expect those journeys to take us?

When a group of people ask for the opportunity to redetermine the Five Precepts as a personal commitment—which many practicing Buddhists will do weekly, if not more often—there is a short verse which is recited at the end of the ceremony:

> These are the Five Precepts;
> virtue is the source of happiness,
> virtue is the source of richness of being,
> virtue is the source of peacefulness.
> Therefore let virtue be purified.
> (Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Amaravati Chanting Book 2015, Vol. 1, p. 130)

Abbreviations

A   Anguttara Nikaya (Numerical Discourses)
Dhp   Dhammapada (The Path of Reality)
M   Majjhima Nikaya (Middle Length Discourses)
Thag   Theragatha (Verses of the Elder Monks)

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Mindfulness, Heedfulness, and Ethics

Christian U. Krägeloh

Introduction

The systematic introduction of mindfulness as a modern-day health intervention relates back to the work by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. In 1979, Kabat-Zinn started a program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This structured program was based on and inspired by Buddhist meditation and mindfulness practices and was originally intended to help people who did not respond well to traditional medical and psychological treatments (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Since then, mindfulness has been integrated into many other types of therapies (Hayes, 2004) and found a firm place in mainstream psychology. Especially the last 10 years have witnessed a rapid increase in the number of academic publications on mindfulness (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011), and since 2010 an entire academic journal is dedicated to the topic (Singh, 2010).

The effective application of mindfulness in psychological interventions has inevitably attracted substantial theoretical debate. The present discussion will commence with a brief outline of the way in which mindfulness has typically been defined, measured, and applied in psychological interventions, followed by recent theoretical arguments from Buddhist scholarship and from within the psychological literature itself that criticized particularly the lack of ethical aspects in the conceptualization of mindfulness in psychology. Some of the conceptual confusion may be related to unsystematic adaptation and integration of teachings about mindfulness from diverse Buddhist traditions. Additionally, only one single term is used in the English-language psychological literature, in contrast to the rich vocabulary available in Buddhist traditions to express the subtleties of Buddhist practice (Shonin, Van Gordon, & Singh, 2015). The present discussion will continue by proposing a way to resolve the theoretical confusion of mindfulness, namely, through

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exploration of the related Buddhist concept of *heedfulness* (Sanskrit: *apramāda*, Pali: *appamāda*) (Cullen, 2011; Shonin et al., 2015). Heedfulness expresses aspects of attention regulation, ethics, and purposefulness that are currently missing from common definitions of mindfulness. The discussion will conclude that mindfulness research is likely to benefit from adopting terms like heedfulness instead of using the generic term mindfulness in the unsystematic and broad manner in which it is currently used.

Mindfulness in Psychological Interventions and Research

MBSR courses are now offered in many places around the world (Cullen, 2011). Here, participants are systematically taught to develop sustained awareness of the present moment and stop spending too much time ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. MBSR participants usually meet in evening groups for at least 8 weeks as well as one full-day workshop about halfway through the program (Carmody & Baer, 2009). Program facilitators teach a variety of meditation and mindfulness techniques, such as insight meditation, yoga and breathing exercises, body scan exercises, or mindful walking and mindful eating. Participants apply these techniques to their everyday life, reinforced through daily homework tasks and practice as well as keeping of a diary. Kabat-Zinn (2003) emphasizes that the effectiveness of MBSR is due to the development of metacognitive skills and not just relaxation. Recent work by Lancaster, Klein, & Knightly (2016) confirms the difference between MBSR and relaxation training, although there is certainly much overlap. MBSR has been linked to clinically significant positive results for a range of psychological and health problems, including anxiety disorders (Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1995), or patients with a variety of chronic conditions as it helps them cope with distress and disability related to illness symptoms (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). As the popularity of MBSR grew, a number of similar programs were developed, each with a slightly different focus or aim. Collectively, these interventions, including MBSR, are commonly referred to as mindfulness-based interventions (MBI; Cullen, 2011).

Given the success of mindfulness in therapy, research is increasingly focused on exploring the mechanism by which mindfulness may exert its beneficial health effects. Such studies often take the approach of investigating how mindfulness is related to other psychological constructs, especially those known to be beneficial for psychological well-being. Evans and Segerstrom (2011), for example, conducted a cross-sectional study with university students and found that higher levels of mindfulness were associated with less worry and repetitive thinking. Peters, Erisman, Upton, Baer, and Roemer (2012) explored the link between mindfulness and self-control and found that university students with higher scores on a mindfulness questionnaire were also generally less impulsive. Another study with university students reported that mindfulness was associated with increased self-determination, or motives underpinning personal goals, which in turn enhanced their well-being (Grégoire, Bouffard, & Vezeau, 2012). Other studies used path analysis to explore the relationship between mindfulness and other psychological

variables. Coffey, Hartman, and Fredrickson (2010), for example, showed how mindfulness helped university students understand their experiences better, which in turn enabled them to manage their negative emotions better. Two very recent studies with very large student samples found evidence for a mediating role of the variable *decentering* in the relationship between mindfulness and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Brown, Bravo, Roos, & Pearson, 2015; Pearson, Brown, Bravo, & Witkiewitz, 2015). Decentering, which is often explicitly taught in MBIs, refers to a person's ability to regard thoughts as transient and impermanent and observe them in a nonjudgmental and nonattached manner. Such models of the mechanism of the health benefits of mindfulness tested out with university samples are consistent with findings reported in clinical situations (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011).

Given the clinical roots of mindfulness research and theory in psychology, it is perhaps of no surprise that operational definitions of mindfulness relate to the techniques typically taught in MBIs. One of the most commonly cited definitions of mindfulness in the psychological literature has been provided by Kabat-Zinn (1994): "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (p. 4). Especially the last part of nonjudgmental awareness is an aspect that is explicitly taught when mindfulness is used in psychotherapy (Mace, 2007). A nonjudgmental outlook is also required when learning to develop self-compassion (Neff & Germer, 2013), such as when clients in psychotherapy learn to stop negative self-talk such as blaming themselves for previous mistakes and instead learn to accept their thoughts and feelings before trying to change them. It is for that reason that mindfulness in clinical situations is even sometimes taken as synonymous with acceptance (Block-Lerner, Salters-Pedneault, & Tull, 2005).

Acceptance is also an aspect that is emphasized in a more detailed definition provided by Bishop et al. (2004): "[W]e see mindfulness as a process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of nonelaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one's experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance. We further see mindfulness as a process of gaining *insight* into the nature of one's mind and the adoption of a de-centered perspective…on thoughts and feelings so that they can be experienced in terms of their subjectivity (versus their necessary validity) and transient nature (versus their permanence)" (p. 234). The focus on awareness of present-moment events is also a distinguishing feature of MBIs as it helps clients stop engaging in excessive rumination and repetitive thinking that is usually associated with depression and anxiety (Mace, 2007). Questionnaire studies such as by Tran et al. (2014) provide some support for the proposal by Bishop et al. (2004) that mindfulness should be seen as a two-facet concept (present-centered awareness and acceptance of experience), although there is other evidence to suggest that these two facets are not necessarily naturally correlated and may each represent slightly different concepts (Coffey et al., 2010).

Many definitions of mindfulness have been proposed, and similar to the two abovementioned definitions by Bishop et al. (2004) and Kabat-Zinn (1994), other commonly cited definitions generally refer to nonjudgmental or nonevaluative awareness as well as being open to experience of the present moment (Baer, 2003;

Brown & Ryan, 2003). There is still substantial ongoing debate around the question whether certain characteristics should be part of a definition of mindfulness or whether these aspects are the outcome of mindfulness rather than part of it (Coffey et al., 2010). For example, Brown and Ryan (2004) argue that a definition of mindfulness does not need to contain explicit references to acceptance, since acceptance follows directly from giving full attention to the present moment, unlike when redirecting one's attention to alter, avoid, or escape a certain situation.

In psychology, mindfulness is most commonly regarded as a fairly stable characteristic of an individual and even an inherent capacity (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Individuals with high levels of mindfulness are able to have direct contact with events as they occur and thus have their perception of the world not contaminated by habitual thinking. At the same time, it is understood that a person's mindfulness capacity can improve with training, which is when mindfulness tends to be described as a skill rather than a trait. In dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), for example, mindfulness is seen as the skill that enables one to observe, notice, describe, and participate in the world in a nonjudgmental, accepting, and present-focused manner (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). At other times, mindfulness is seen as a state (Lau et al., 2006). Here, researchers are interested in the actual experience of individuals at a particular point in time as opposed to their general tendency to respond mindfully.

While there are some methods that assess attention and mindfulness by asking participants to count the number of breaths (Frewen, Unholzer, Logie-Hagan, & MacKinley, 2014; Levinson, Stoll, Kindy, Merry, & Davidson, 2014), mindfulness is most commonly assessed through self-report questionnaires. Here, the diversity of questionnaires matches the diversity of mindfulness definitions that is available. With a few exceptions such as the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (Lau et al., 2006) that assesses mindfulness as a state, the majority of self-report mindfulness inventories are trait measures. Judged on article citation count (Medvedev, Siegert, Feng, et al., 2016), the most widely used trait mindfulness inventory is currently the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003). All questions are negatively worded, which means that they assess a person's general lack of mindfulness rather than of mindfulness. It has been argued that this is advantageous as the questionnaire is mostly used with participants from the general population who are more likely to experience absentmindedness rather than presentmindedness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The MAAS is unidimensional and thus assesses one single psychological construct, which may be described as acting with awareness. A recent study (Medvedev, Siegert, Feng, et al., 2016) testing the MAAS in detail using Rasch analysis confirmed previous findings that the psychometric properties of the instrument are strong (Park, Reilly-Spong, & Gross, 2013), although 2 of the 15 items are best to be discarded.

In contrast to the unidimensional MAAS, the 39-item Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skill (KIMS; Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004) provides scores on 4 separate subscales. *Observe* assesses to what extent individuals tend to pay attention to external events and internal emotions, *describe* is about being able to put your experiences into words, *act with awareness* captures the extent to which a person is

attentive to the present moment, and *accept without judgment* measures the extent to which a person judges their behavior and emotions. These subscales are intended to reflect skills that are typically taught in DBT (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). While the utility of the KIMS is clearly in its ability to evaluate progress in DBT, its use in other contexts can reveal some inconsistencies with common findings about the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being (Christopher & Gilbert, 2010) as well as inability to replicate the factor structure across cultures (Christopher, Charoensuk, Gilbert, Neary, & Pearce, 2009). Additionally, correlations between the KIMS subscales are not high (Baer et al., 2004), raising questions whether the KIMS really captures a single underlying construct.

The research field of measuring mindfulness using self-report questionnaire is clearly still evolving. The KIMS (Baer et al., 2004) is certainly not the only commonly used questionnaire, with the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006) now rivaling the popularity of the MAAS (Medvedev, Siegert, Feng, et al., 2016). The FFMQ was developed by pooling items from five existing mindfulness questionnaires and subsequently conducting a factor analysis that extracted the most suitable items and established the most suitable factor structure. The subscales *observing*, *describing*, *acting with awareness*, and *nonjudging* are similar to the KIMS. An additional fifth factor called *nonreactivity* assesses a person's tendency to be able to let thoughts and feelings come and go without getting caught up in them. In contrast to the factor analysis approach by Baer et al. (2006), Bergomi, Tschacher, and Kupper (2013a) extracted nine themes from various questionnaires conceptually: (1) observing, attending to experiences, (2) acting with awareness, (3) nonjudgment/acceptance of experiences, (4) self-acceptance, (5) willingness and readiness to expose oneself to experiences/non-avoidance, (6) nonreactivity to experience, (7) non-identification with own experiences, (8) insightful understanding, and (9) labeling/describing. It is now debatable whether these themes necessarily all need to be assessed with questionnaire subscales. As mentioned earlier, some of these aspects may be outcomes of mindfulness rather than mindfulness itself (Brown & Ryan, 2004; Coffey et al., 2010). However, while unidimensional measures such as the MAAS perform better psychometrically (Medvedev, Siegert, Feng, et al., 2016) than multidimensional ones such as the KIMS (Medvedev, Siegert, Kersten, & Krägeloh, 2016), this does not imply that unidimensional measures are necessarily preferable. In order to arrive at a well-functioning measure, one may be tempted to reduce the diversity of questions to such an extent that it denaturizes the concept and thus misses many of the aspects that are considered part of mindfulness (Bergomi, Tschacher, & Kupper, 2013b).

Ethics and Mindfulness

While MBIs are typically delivered in a secular and thus nonreligious manner, such programs are still originally based on Buddhist traditions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Comparisons between mindfulness in psychology and mindfulness in Buddhist

philosophies are therefore justified and have increasingly occurred in recent years (Shonin et al., 2015). Much of the criticism from Buddhist scholars of the modern Western use of the term mindfulness relates to its conceptualization as nonjudgmental awareness, which appears to preclude any application of ethical considerations. In Buddhism, mindfulness is taught in conjunction with precepts, much in contrast to MBIs where ethics and morality is either not mentioned or only plays a very peripheral role (Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015). The reasons for not explicitly teaching ethics is to avoid contradictions of course content with the belief systems of participants, who may have very diverse cultural and religious backgrounds (Cullen, 2011). The present discussion does not focus on the question whether mindfulness should be taught in ethically controversial situations such as training soldiers (Stanley, 2013) but instead on the question whether the lack of explicit ethical content in MBIs has changed the concept of mindfulness in comparison to the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness.

In the Buddhist Pali Canon, mindfulness is listed as *sammāsati* (right/wholesome/complete mindfulness) and thus one of the eight elements of the noble eightfold path to overcoming suffering. The complete list contains *right understanding*, *right thought*, *right speech*, *right action*, *right livelihood*, *right effort*, *right mindfulness*, and *right concentration* (Rahula, 1974), where the first two elements form the practice of *prajñā* (wisdom), the subsequent three *śīla* (ethical conduct), and the last three are part of *samādhi* (concentration). All path factors dynamically affect each other in Buddhist practice. For example, ethical conduct is necessary to have a nondistressed mind and thus be able to practice mindfulness well, but ethical conduct in turn relies on mindfulness to keep remembering which wholesome behaviors one should engage in (Kang & Whittingham, 2010).

Since mindfulness is seen to play a significant role in helping the Buddhist practitioner behave in an ethically sound manner, it seems difficult to conceptualize mindfulness as nonjudgmental awareness. On the contrary, Buddhist practitioners must actively discriminate and evaluate their mental states in order to foster wholesome states and discard unwholesome states (Bodhi, 2011), and such instructions are clearly found in Buddhist scriptures (Dreyfus, 2011). Dreyfus (2011) argues that teaching mindfulness to develop self-acceptance and a nonjudgmental attitude may have its place in psychological interventions, where clients present with ruminative and depressive thought patterns. In Buddhism, however, this constitutes only a relatively small part of everyday practice, and the emphasis is on cognitive transformation rather than self-acceptance.

However, the reasons for the focus on nonjudgmental awareness in MBIs are not only due to their purpose as psychological interventions but are also to be found in their origins. The developers of MBIs were substantially influenced by modern forms of Buddhism, particularly the *vipassanā* movement (Samuel, 2015). The most influential *vipassanā* or insight meditation school is linked to the teachings of the Burmese monk Mahāsi Sayādaw and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Mahāsi Sayādaw, 1990). Particularly the beginner's exercises of this approach focus on present-moment awareness (Gilpin, 2008; Mahāsi Sayādaw, 1990). According to this insight approach, the goal is to learn to perceive things as they really are, unaffected by preconceived ideas based on experience and expectations (Nyanaponika, 1989).

Much of these teachings on bare attention entered the West through the German-born Theravāda monk Nyanaponika Thera (Bodhi, 2011) who spent a period of time training under Mahāsi Sayādaw. Other scholars and teachers continued the dissemination of Buddhist teachings to the West by introducing mindfulness in the context of bare attention and nonjudgmental awareness (Gethin, 2011). However, as Bodhi (2011) argued, bare attention is only one of many ways in which mindfulness is taught in Buddhism, and teaching method should not be mixed up with theoretical definition of the concept.

Certainly the adaptation of Buddhist teachings into the West occurred in a complex and dynamic fashion. In addition to insight meditation, East Asian Buddhism also appeared to have played a significant role, as Kabat-Zinn, for example, was trained by a Korean Zen (Korean: *Seon*) master (Harrington & Dunne, 2015). At that time, Zen had already become well known in the West, largely due to the popular work of Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki (Kitagawa, 1967), who typically emphasized the non-conceptual and experiential aspects of Zen practice. Many of these modern interpretations of Buddhist traditions can be seen as quite radical in the sense that they de-emphasize the study of religious texts and appeal directly to the lifestyles of laypersons (Sharf, 2015). The shift from practice of salvation to a perception of Buddhism as a kind of science of happiness (Sharf, 2015) may have provided the stimulus to spread mindfulness rather widely – from therapy to well-being in general and now even to areas such as performance at the workplace (Hyland, Lee, & Mills, 2015). The downside of such broad application is the negative side effects of commercialization – a trend that Purser and Loy (2013) described as *McMindfulness*. On one hand, bringing mindfulness to the general public in different packages can be seen as skillful means and thus a roundabout way to get people to engage in practices that they would not have done otherwise (Farb, 2014). But on the other hand, profit-oriented programs do not seem compatible with the original Buddhist ethical intentions. Additionally, there is also the danger that such catering for the mainstream public may lead to program developers focusing on what is currently popular and fashionable as opposed to what is robust and thorough and stood the test of time.

A parallel development to the spread of mindfulness into the mainstream has been the rise of positive psychology (Rusk & Waters, 2013), which also had a particularly successful entry into corporate arenas (Froman, 2010). One of the concepts often studied in positive psychology is *savoring* or how to maintain or enhance one's positive emotional experience. Mindfulness is seen to play a role in fostering savoring, by allowing a person to focus attention on the present moment and to suppress thoughts unrelated to this experience (Evans & Segerstrom, 2011; Quoidbach, Berry, Hansenne, & Mikolajczak, 2010). By pairing mindfulness with concepts such as savoring, mindfulness might become perceived primarily as a tool for health, well-being, and even hedonism instead of a concept that is closely related to ethics, equanimity, insight, and wisdom (Brazier, 2013b; Chiesa, 2013). As Brazier (2013a) and Purser (2015) point out, Buddhism is predominantly a spiritual practice and does not have relaxation and enjoyment of experiences as its primary focus. The tendency of the contemporary Western mindfulness movement to portray mindfulness as more or less synonymous with present-moment awareness has been labeled

here-and-now-ism (Brazier, 2013b; Purser, 2015). However, as the importance of life purpose, vision, and context of practice is diminished, no insight is developed into the fundamental causes of suffering (Purser, 2015). Not only is the concept of being in the present moment ephemeral and difficult to defend philosophically, but there are also reports from within Buddhism about unhealthy consequences of practices that focus exclusively on the present-moment awareness (Purser, 2015).

While drawing on a variety of Buddhist teachings may have helped disseminate mindfulness in the West, it can be the source of considerable theoretical confusion if such a *blend* is seen as a monolithic body of knowledge that informs our scientific understanding of the concept. As Dunne (2015) has shown rather eloquently, nonjudgmental awareness is not necessarily incongruent with Buddhist mindfulness, especially when seen in the context of non-dual traditions found in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Similar states are verbalized in the *Mahāmudrā* literature about Buddha nature, according to which the qualities of a Buddha are not acquired through learning, but by discarding cognitions that discriminate between space, time, and identity (Dunne, 2015). Such philosophy is characteristic of *Mahāyāna* traditions in general, where the original and nondiscriminating mind is thought to function naturally without cognitive effort, attachment, and distortions (Allen, 2010), something psychology may perhaps describe as a *state* of mindfulness.

When adapting a body of knowledge from one culture to another such as in the case of mindfulness, there is the tendency to use terms that are already available to the new audience (Brazier, 2013b). Daisetz Suzuki chose to use the term *pure experience* borrowed from William James (Feenberg, 1999; Kozyra, 2007) to refer to an enlightened consciousness that precedes all kind of reflection and conceptualization. Suzuki's close friend Kitarō Nishida, the founder of the influential philosophical movement called Kyoto School, developed the concept further and made it the central aspect of his East Asian philosophy that he communicated using Western philosophical thinking (Feenberg & Arisaka, 1990). Nishida defined pure experience as "the state of experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination. The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified" (Nishida, 1990, p. 3). While superficially this might resemble nonjudgmental awareness or bare attention as taught in beginning meditation courses, this philosophical concept is used more as a verbal device to refer to an experiential and even ultimately ontological principle (Feenberg & Arisaka, 1990). In Nishida's philosophy grounded in the Buddhist principle of absolute emptiness, pure experience precedes the distinction between subject and object and is the fundamental source that underlies and unifies both being and nonbeing. Discussing pure experience in the context of an individual's mindfulness practice as done in psychology would thus make the mistake of applying this concept to the world of conventional truths where the distinction of subject and object has already occurred.

Ethics and Heedfulness

As the preceding section has illustrated, the term mindfulness is used in very diverse ways in the psychological literature. At times, it is seen as a person's relatively stable trait, sometimes a set of skills one has acquired, and at other times it is seen and measured as a state of mind. The multitude of definitions of mindfulness also contributes to theoretical confusion and is thus likely to hinder progress of research that aims to pinpoint how exactly mindfulness is related to psychological health benefits and even how it might be related to ethics. Unlike Buddhist scholarship, where a variety of terms is used to express subtleties and nuances in meaning around mindfulness and meditation practices (Shonin et al., 2015), the same term *mindfulness* is used in the psychological literature to cover a whole range of facets.

The origin of the English term *mindfulness* is typically linked to the translation work of Rhys Davids during the late nineteenth century (Gethin, 2011). The Pali word *sati* was originally understood as *memory*, but the word gradually acquired additional meanings in Buddhist scriptures (Bodhi, 2011), and this eventually led to the decision to translate the word into English as *mindfulness*. Considerable discussion has taken place whether *sati* and the modern use of the term mindfulness are equivalent or at least similar. In Buddhism, *sati* can be understood as remembering one's practice (Brazier, 2013a), which implies a regular recalling of one's life goals and purpose and can therefore not be the pure nonjudgmental and present-moment awareness of mindfulness often communicated in psychology. The noble eightfold path lists *sammāsati* or wholesome mindfulness, and ethical judgment is thus required (Kang & Whittingham, 2010).

Even in Buddhist teachings that emphasize nonjudgmental and a nondiscriminating mind, ethics is no less important than in other schools. During the 1967 World Buddhist Sangha Council, various Buddhist traditions agreed on fundamental teachings that they have in common, which included compassion as a purpose in life as well as the noble eightfold path with its ethical components (Kim, 2003). Many of the statements in early East Asian Buddhism must not be taken at face value and interpreted outside their context as they were often used as antithetical statements (Sharf, 2014). Also, references to emptiness can easily be misinterpreted as nihilism (Cooper, 2002), which can happen when not appreciating the distinction between *emptiness as contrasted with form* as opposed to *true emptiness*, which transcends these distinctions (Abe, 1975). From the position of true emptiness, ignoring the relevance of ethics based on the presumption that prescriptive statements contradict non-conceptual awareness would be a category mistake (Lin, 2014). Buddhist practitioners are thus frequently admonished not to mistake insight into the ontological nondiscriminating self-nature (Buddha nature) as an excuse for unconstrained action (Chung, 2003).

In order to find a solution to the conceptual confusion in psychology, one may try to redefine mindfulness, although realistically speaking the most likely outcome of such an enterprise would really only be a further addition to the current diversity of definitions. In fact, Bishop et al. (2004) followed some kind of consensus approach to develop an operational definition, but the definition they arrived at is not fully

supported (Chiesa, 2013). Given the established use of term mindfulness in the context of nonjudgmental and present-moment awareness, it may therefore be best to retain the current common understanding of the term, especially since such conceptualization is not completely inappropriate (Gäng, 2003). Note that Gäng's (2003) argument was about the German term *Achtsamkeit*, which similarly to the English term mindfulness connotes caution and care. Instead of redefining mindfulness, therefore, it may be useful to explore to what extent other aspects of mindfulness such as ethical behavior could be expressed more appropriately by related terms.

One term in Buddhism that expresses certain specific aspects of mindfulness is *appamāda*. Occasionally translated as *vigilance* (Kudesia & Nyima, 2015), *heedfulness* (Cullen, 2011), and other times as *earnestness* (Murphy & Easwaran, 2001), this concept expresses a sense of monitoring of cognitions to ensure one does not deviate from one's goal or instructions. In the context of Buddhist practice, this goal is following a spiritual path and adhering to the Buddhist teachings and ethical guidelines. Lomas and Jnanavaca (2015) are offering a broad definition of *appamāda* as "being aware of one's actions in the light of…ethical guidelines, i.e. reflecting on the extent to which one's actions are in accordance or otherwise with these recommendation" (p. 302). *Sati* and *appamāda* are closely linked and practiced together, although *sati* may be more relevant during the early phases of one's spiritual practice, then followed by *appamāda*, and finally by *sampajañña*, which expresses aspects of sense of purpose based on insight and clear comprehension (Lomas & Jnanavaca, 2015).

As argued elsewhere (Krägeloh, 2016), ethical considerations are still relevant in MBIs even though they may not always be given formal and explicit emphasis. The understanding of *appamāda* in the context of moral watchfulness (Lomas & Jnanavaca, 2015) may thus not immediately rule out its relevance to modern psychological interventions. ACT, in particular, encourages clients to formalize long-term values, from which certain specific goals are derived (Hayes, 2004). Rather than saying that clients use mindfulness to monitor to what extent their behavior matches these goals, we may now perhaps start using the term heedfulness instead. This kind of monitoring or scanning for thoughts that are misaligned with personal goals (which are stored in working memory) may be regulated by executive functioning processes in the anterior cingulate cortex (Kudesia & Nyima, 2015). Psychology research may thus be able to explore the function of heedfulness with very specific hypotheses about processes occurring in the brain. Future research in psychology might also explore heedfulness in the context of personality variables and thus reframe the associations between higher levels of self-control and mindfulness (Black, Semple, Pokhrel, & Grenard, 2011) or higher levels of conscientiousness and mindfulness (de Vibe et al., 2015; Heinz, Heidenreich, Wenhold, & Brand, 2011) as links with heedfulness instead.

Even though the fact that the foundation of MBIs goes back to Buddhist philosophy justifies comparative work between Buddhist and Western conceptualizations of mindfulness, this does not necessarily imply that equivalence in terms has to be

achieved at all costs. Given the diversity of Buddhist schools and the variety of ways and contexts in which these schools present and discuss mindfulness, this is unlikely going to be an achievable goal anyway. Additionally, translations of terms from other languages often rely on terms that are overly specific and rely on the context for their meaning to be conveyed accurately (Murphy & Easwaran, 2001). The term mindfulness itself connotes aspects of heedfulness (as it is used in everyday speech in general), and this was likely the intention of Rhys Davids when he chose the term (Gethin, 2014). Only when mindfulness gradually became a specialist psychological term did it start to take on the additional meanings of nonjudgmental and present-moment awareness that make it now deviate from its original usage.

Another reason why it is not advantageous to establish one-to-one equivalent psychological terms for Buddhist ones is that this would make the field of psychology less open to drawing on knowledge about similar concepts expressed in other cultures and traditions. The Christian Greek Orthodox concept of *nepsis* would be one example. Often translated as *watchfulness* or *vigilance* (Paloşan, 2012; Pieris, 2010), this concept has some interesting similarities with *appamāda.* According to Greek Orthodox spirituality, a discerning person is "perpetually mindful and watchful of God working in all things and at all times" (Pieris, 2010, p. 39). *Nepsis* also includes an ethical dimension in its conceptualization as a guardian of the mind that does not let any evil thoughts through (Paloşan, 2012).

Using concepts such as *appamāda* and *nepsis* in addition to mindfulness may also be an avenue to find ways to distinguish between different aspects of mindfulness that are currently expressed with one single term in the psychological literature. In the context of mindfulness, Buddhism does not clearly distinguish between mindfulness as a state, trait, skill, practice, or characteristic (Gethin, 2014), and neither does the literature on *nepsis* make a clear distinction (Paloşan, 2012). For psychology, in contrast, such distinctions are crucial to make, both in order to advance theory and to be able to operationalize what is to be measured or manipulated in experimental interventions. If the term heedfulness is adopted, mindfulness could, for example, be used to refer to a state of nonjudgmental and present-moment awareness (as it is currently often done). However, heedfulness may then perhaps be used to express the evaluative, self-regulating, goal-directed, and ethical aspects that are more accurately described as a trait or a skill. Mindfulness and heedfulness will thus operate in parallel, although the two may not correlate to a high degree. For beginning practitioners, heedfulness will be very effortful. As the teachings of *Won* Buddhism put it, for example, heedfulness (Korean주의, Chinese 注意) is "the state of mind in which we never forget what we must and must not do in any situation, and in which we develop a sense of caution, as though we were treading on thin ice" (Chwasan, 2012, p. 277). As Buddhist practice continues, however, mindfulness may be brought about with less effort (Lomas & Jnanavaca, 2015). Brain imaging studies also appear to support the notion that experienced meditators are increasingly less required to engage in vigilance (Claxton, 2006).

Conclusion

Mindfulness in psychology has enjoyed a surge in popularity since its introduction as a psychological intervention in the 1970s. However, to date no clear consensus has been reached about suitable definitions of the concept and what specific elements need to be captured by questionnaires that are designed to assess mindfulness. As MBIs are originally based on Buddhist practices and philosophy, Buddhist scholarship has taken an interest in the matter and criticized how mindfulness has gradually started to deviate from its original meaning. Unlike in Buddhism, where ethical evaluations play an important role in mindfulness, no such emphasis is given in common Western conceptualizations where mindfulness is often described as nonjudgmental awareness. Some of the criticism of popular mainstream mindfulness has come from the field of psychology itself, including the view that mindfulness in psychology places too much emphasis on present-moment awareness.

Some of the theoretical confusion around the Western conceptualization of mindfulness is no doubt related to the fact that only a single term is used to describe a diverse set of nuances. Mindfulness has thus been expressed as a particular state of mind, other times a trait or skill, and sometimes as a practice. The present discussion identified how the field of psychology would benefit from borrowing additional concepts such as heedfulness to be able to distinguish between various aspects of mindfulness. Unlike mindfulness, which has now started to find an established meaning as a state of nonjudgmental and present-moment awareness, heedfulness may instead refer to trait-like self-regulatory aspects such as monitoring of behavior that is not congruent with the goals and purposes of a person's mindfulness practice. The use of a more sophisticated jargon to express the various different nuances is certainly necessary for future progress in mindfulness research.

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Buddhist Ethics, Spiritual Practice, and the Three Yanas

6

William L. Mikulas

Introduction

I begin by suggesting that the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, when put into Western categories, are psychology, not religion or philosophy. From this perspective, ethical principles are guidelines for personal/spiritual practices across the three main branches of Buddhism, the three yanas (vehicles): Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. To put the development of the yanas in a broader context, I use the metaphor of the awakening of Gaia, Mother Earth.

Essential Buddhism

I use the expression "essential Buddhism" to mean the fundamental principles of Buddhist thought that are traditionally attributed to the historical Buddha and are recognized as basic to all three yanas (Mikulas, 2007). Some of the essential Buddhism was drawn from the yoga Siddhartha Gautama learned and practiced before he became the Buddha. Some is probably original to the Buddha, such as dependent origination and the emphasis on mindfulness as the path to awakening. The primary source in English of essential Buddhism is the Pali Canon (e.g., Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005).

Many Buddhists, including me, would suggest that the basic principles of essential Buddhism are universal and omnipresent and thus applicable to everyone; however, the principles are conceptualized. Insightful understanding of essential Buddhism has been continually stressed from the Buddha through to the current Dalai Lama.

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Not Religion or Philosophy

Essential Buddhism is not religion. The Buddha did not claim to be other than a human being; he did not suggest he was a god or a god manifested in human form; he did not claim inspiration from any god or external power (Rahula, 1974). The Buddha is one of the "jewels" of Buddhism because he was just a man; what he achieved in terms of awakening is available to everyone. Essential Buddhism has no personal deity or impersonal godhead, no creeds or dogmas, no rituals or worship, no savior, and nothing to take on faith. Rather, it is a set of practices and free inquiry by which one sees for oneself the truth and usefulness of the teachings. The Buddha clearly did not want to establish a religion. And Buddha's community was educational, not religious; the members were prohibited from involvement in religious practices and were not to compete with the Brahmin priests. On the other hand, a family of Buddhist religions came into being, based on essential Buddhism and later Buddhist teachings. The vast majority of Buddhists in the world approach Buddhism as a religion. Like most major religions, Buddhism does not claim that it is right and other religions are wrong.

Essential Buddhism is not philosophy. The Buddha avoided philosophizing and debates with philosophers. He particularly avoided speculative metaphysical questions (Rahula, 1974). For example, he would not discuss whether the world is eternal, whether the soul is the same as the body, or whether a Buddha exists after death. He did not consider such philosophizing as useful to the path; rather it is more important to clean up one's life and train one's mind. Practice is more important than philosophy. On the other hand, there is now a rich field of Buddhist philosophy evolved from essential Buddhism. This includes some very influential world-class philosophers, such as Nagarjuna and Dogen.

Thus, I would suggest that, in Western conceptualizations, essential Buddhism is psychology, not religion or philosophy. Essential Buddhism deals with psychological topics such as sensation, perception, emotion, motivation, cognition, mind, self, and consciousness. I have found it very important to make this distinction (not religion, not philosophy) when talking about or teaching Buddhism in general or mindfulness in specific (Mikulas, 2014, 2015). It allows me to directly confront basic dynamics of the mind, unimpaired by possible obstacles or distortions caused by religious beliefs. The Buddha warned about becoming attached to views, opinions, rites, and rituals. The Buddha said his primary work was to reduce suffering, and the Dalai Lama continually stresses that his approach to Buddhism is about increasing happiness.

In mainstream academia in the United States, Buddhism is perceived as being religion and/or philosophy and is generally taught in those departments. Hence, academic psychologists often perceive Buddhism as being irrelevant or inappropriate and thus miss out on a powerful psychology. Essential Buddhism has much to contribute to integration with Western psychology (cf. Mikulas, 2007).

Note that the above distinctions apply to Western thinking, as found in North America and Western Europe. The distinctions are less true in Asian thinking, which is less fractionated and less overspecialized. For example, in India and China,

psychology and philosophy are more integrated. You can't have a sound psychology without giving adequate attention to its philosophical bases. And philosophy without psychological implications is limited and somewhat impotent.

Spiritual Practice

Worldwide, institutionalized religion is a major force in defining and promoting ethical behavior, intertwined with support for the institutions. This is primarily done by promises of a good afterlife for good behavior (e.g., heaven, favorable incarnation) and threats of a bad afterlife for bad behavior (e.g., hell, unfavorable incarnation). I have no knowledge or opinion on the validity of any of this, but I do support an additional understanding of the effects of ethical and unethical behavior.

If essential Buddhism is psychology, not religion, then ethics can be understood as a major factor influencing personal/spiritual growth. Ethical behavior is part of an overall spiritual practice that affects body/mind/spirit. Ethically good behavior improves biological health, psychological well-being and functioning, and awakening. By "awakening," I am using a popular metaphor for the process of personal/spiritual growth in which one disidentifies with the personal level self and with the contents of the mind and thus moves into a broader conscious domain (Mikulas, 2014). It is similar to waking up from the sleep dream state and realizing that what one took for reality in the dream was just the construction of the mind.

Many would argue that awakening is the primary goal of Buddhist practices. And it is generally understood that the cultivation of mindfulness is the primary Buddhist practice, heavily influenced by ethical behavior. A common critique of the way mindfulness is currently taught in the United States is the inadequate attention given to ethics.

When discussing Buddhism and/or mindfulness, I have found it very useful to emphasize the distinction made above! Many people, particularly in the Bible belt where I live, mentally turn off when ethics are mentioned. This is due to unpleasant religious associations, such as threats of hell. These people are often relieved or freed to reconsider ethics from a psycho-spiritual orientation.

A similar approach can be taken related to karma, including the consequences of mental and physical actions. This is usually thought about across lifetimes but can also be understood within a lifetime. Western psychology has a variety of literatures, such as self-fulfilling prophecy, which deal with how karma sometimes works. I have found that many people respond very positively to the Buddhist understanding that karma is based on intention, not overt behavior. The same behavior can be done with wholesome or unwholesome intent and compassionately or not. Thus, in essential Buddhism mindfulness of intentions is basic to karma and ethical behavior.

A critical and often overlooked understanding of ethics in general, and Buddhist ethics, in particular, is the surprising breadth and depth of the ethical principles (e.g., Aitken, 1984). For example, stealing can be understood to include stealing ideas and wasting another person's time. Avoiding killing can be related to

developing respect for all life, as can be found with some Tibetan Buddhists, Native American Indians, and Native Hawaiians. And, avoiding killing needs to include working with aggression and hatred in the mind.

Good speech includes no lying, vanity, or gossip. It should be constructive and helpful. A provocative conversation topic is how this relates to texting and social media. A good exercise is to try to practice good speech for a week as follows: For everything said or about to be said, ask yourself "Is this true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" The "necessary" question is particularly subtle and revealing, often exposing self-based dynamics and attachments.

Good thought can be related to cognitive behavior therapy and when thoughts lead to other behaviors and when thoughts are the result of other behaviors. The *Dhammapada* begins: "All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, and made by mind. Speak or act with a corrupted mind and suffering follows… speak or act with a peaceful mind and happiness follows" (Fronsdal, 2008, p. 3).

Hinayana

In Asia, the first great awakening of Gaia (Mother Earth) was about 500 BCE, plus or minus 100 years. It was a time of moving beyond traditional spiritualties, exploring the depths of consciousness, and reaching for a transpersonal reality. Many of the discoveries of this time are still valid today.

In India it was the time of Mahavira, the reformer of Jainism. In China, it was the time of both Lao Tzu and Confucius, a powerful example of the yin and yang so basic to Chinese thought. This includes the social and moral teaching of Confucianism and the mystical perspective of Taoism. It was during this time period that Siddhartha Gautama was born in North India, in what is now Nepal. He would become a Buddha and the founder of what would centuries later be called "Buddhism." For many Hindus, the Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu and a reformer of Brahmanism.

Hinayana ("small vehicle") is the branch of Buddhism that is closest to the teaching and practices of the Buddha. Today, it is represented by Theravada ("teachings of the elders") as found in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. The two primary resources that have heavily influenced contemporary Theravadin thinking and practice are the Tipitaka ("three baskets") and the Visuddhimagga ("path of purification"). The Tipitaka is composed of three parts: (1) the basket of writing, discoveries of the Buddha and immediate disciples; (2) the basket of discipline, rules for monks and nuns; and (3) the basket of further teachings, developed over many years.

Morality

According to the Buddha, immoral behavior is often motivated by greed, hatred, or delusion. While moral behavior may be motivated by generosity, loving-kindness, and/or wisdom (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005, p. 146–147). He also stressed the importance of doing no harm.

The Visuddhimagga is an encyclopedia of yogic/Buddhist practices compiled by Buddhaghosa (1975) in the fifth century CE. It is divided into three parts: virtue, concentration, and understanding. It thus gives great emphasis to the importance of morality in Buddhist practice.

Related is the common Theravadin teaching about mutual interactions among sila, samadhi, and prajna; each one affects the others. Sila ("habit, behavior, nature, character") includes ethics, virtue, and morality. Samadhi ("establish, make firm") is the result of concentration training. And prajna ("wisdom, insight") is an immediately experienced intuitive wisdom, which involves mindful and penetrating seeing into the fundamental nature of things in a way that transforms one's being. Relative to this chapter, the point is that ethical behavior facilitates the development of concentration and opening to insight. And insight and the cultivation of concentration facilitate developing ethical behavior.

Prajna is the primary goal of essential Buddhist practice and the key to awakening. Mindfulness is seen as the primary way to open to prajna. The main Theravadin meditation practice is Vipassanā, which means clear seeing in new, varied, and extraordinary ways. Vipassanā leads to prajna and thus is often called "insight meditation." Mindfulness is the central feature of Vipassanā.

Thus, ethical behavior facilitates the development of mindfulness. Mindfulness leads to prajna. And prajna leads to awakening.

Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path is the fourth Noble Truth and the most fundamental description of Buddhist practice. It includes many ethical components. Each part of the Eightfold Path begins with the same word ("samma" in Pali, "samyak" in Sanskrit). This is usually translated as "right." Words that better capture the original sense include "perfect," "whole," and "complete." People new to Buddhism are sometimes put off by "right," thinking it is right versus wrong in some dogmatic sense. It is not.

My idiosyncratic approach is to consider the meaning of "right" to be very situational. Sometimes it means what best reduces suffering, sometimes what best facilitates mindfulness, sometimes what best leads to awakening, sometimes what best opens the heart, and many other possibilities. Batchelor (2015, p. 223) discussed how the Buddha's approach to ethics was situational: The Buddha did not have a fixed set of moral rules that were universally applied. Rather, what is "right" depends on the situation. "What is the most wise and loving thing to do in this specific instance?"

Although well known, for the sake of completeness, it is probably worth repeating the eight parts of the Eightfold Path. Remember the prior argument that these can be understood in much more depth and breadth than is usually described and considered.

1. *Right understanding*. Understanding how reality and suffering are intertwined as described in the Four Noble Truths. Understanding other basic principles, such as impermanence, nonself, and dependent origination. A practical identification with these teachings and a resolve to act on them.

2. *Right thought*. No lust, ill will, or cruelty. Right motives and right intentions. Mindfulness of thoughts, motives and intentions, and the desires that influence them.
3. *Right speech*. Avoiding lying, backbiting, harsh or abusive speech, and talking frivolously. Avoiding speech that incites others toward violence, sensation seeking, or mindlessness. Being constructive and helpful.
4. *Right action*. Following basic moral guidelines, such as the precepts discussed next. Not causing suffering. Acting with mindfulness and compassion.
5. *Right livelihood*. Pursue a life that is righteous and useful to self and others. Avoid occupations that cause suffering or injustice to others. Be honest and ethical in business dealings.
6. *Right effort*. Persistent dedication in following the path, including working with clinging and developing mindfulness. Understanding the middle way and eventually the subtleties of not doing.
7. *Right mindfulness*. Active maximizing of the clarity and breadth of awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental factors. Noticing whatever arises in consciousness while minimizing getting lost in related thoughts, reactions, and elaborations.
8. *Right concentration*. Developing the learned control of the focus of one's attention. Keeping one's awareness, with varying degrees of one-pointedness, on a particular set of contents of the mind.

Precepts

In the Theravadin tradition, there are various collections of precepts, guidelines for appropriate and ethical behavior. These include the five precepts listed below, which the Buddha recommended for everyone, and other precepts a person may follow on special religious occasions or when on retreat.

As part of a spiritual practice, following the precepts reduces suffering and facilitates awakening. An awakened person or advanced practitioner does not become so "good" that he or she resists unethical behavior. Rather, for such a person, ethical behavior is obvious, effortless, and spontaneous.

1. *Avoid killing*. Avoid unnecessary and unmindful killing of living beings. Cultivate reverence for all life. Become more mindful of thoughts and feelings related to killing. Some Thai Buddhists, lay and monastic, will not kill insects or eat the flesh of animals. Some monks will not destroy plant life and will not drink unfiltered water (to avoid killing living beings in the water).

But things are much more complex now than at the time of the Buddha. For human health, we readily kill many living creatures, such as bacteria and mosquitoes. We have terrorists, many of whom kill innocent people for religious reasons. In the United States, we have an obsession with guns and a politically very powerful National Rifle Association. The role and training of police and military raise very complex issues.

A critical factor is the intent and state of mind before and during killing and the related mindfulness. Consider a Native American Indian who kills an animal for food and does it with great respect and thankfulness to the animal. Contrast this with someone who aggressively kills an animal for "sport" and hangs a part of the animal on a wall as an ego-based trophy.

2. *Avoid stealing*. Avoid taking what is not yours, including objects, ideas, and others' time. This includes careless borrowing, fraudulent business dealings, and underpayment of employees. Cultivate generosity, giving objects, money, and time. Cultivate mindfulness of attachments that impair generosity.

3. *Avoid sexual misconduct*. This includes inappropriate person or situation (e.g., incest, adultery) and inappropriate approach (e.g., rape, gratification of lust). It includes sexual innuendoes and the role of pornography. As a spiritual practice, it involves mindful working with the very powerful desires and attachments related to sexual cravings, thoughts, and behaviors.

   In the last few decades in the United States, there has consistently been an extraordinary amount of grossly inappropriate sexual behavior among many very prominent and revered spiritual teachers, Buddhist, Hindu, Yogic, and Christian! This includes inappropriate sex with underage girls and boys, disciples, and prostitutes. In one case, a Buddhist teacher with HIV had unprotected sex with students without revealing he had the disease. Lives have been destroyed, and communities have been torn apart. The power of lust cannot be underestimated, even among those who claim to be spiritually advanced!

4. *Avoid lying*. Avoid speaking falsely, even if it seems justified or harmless. Don't give the impression you are listening or agreeing if you are not. Practice right speech. Recognize the importance of the timing of what you say and the other person's readiness to hear.

5. *Avoid drugs that impair the mind*. Avoid substances that intoxicate and confuse the mind. Avoid substances that decrease mindfulness and cause unmindful behavior. This precept is often interpreted as meaning abstention from alcohol, currently the most harmful drug in the United States. But for some people, a moderate amount of alcohol can have health benefits. The middle way.

All around the world, and for many centuries, mind altering plants have played a significant role in spiritual practices (cf. Smith, 2000). This is never a sufficient path in itself. But for some people, these entheogens ("God enabling") can help break through barriers, get glimpses of further down the path, or visit a broader "reality." The key, of course, is that the use of the entheogen must be part of a comprehensive spiritual practice that is geared for awakening, not sensation seeking or escape.

Mahayana

Gaia's second great awakening in Asia involved the opening of her heart. This took place from about 500–0 BCE, a time I call the bhakti period. Bhakti refers to love, devotion, and selfless service. Influenced by bhakti during this period were bhakti

yoga, Christianity, and Mahayana Buddhism. Bhakti yoga emphasizes love of God and love of the guru as a way to develop love of God. Christianity includes love of God and love of one's enemies.

The bhakti period had a major impact on Buddhism, with the effects peaking about 100–100 CE. This resulted in Mahayana Buddhism in which compassion (karuna) is a major feature. In Hinayana, insight (prajna) is more important than compassion or faith. In Mahayana, all three are equally important.

Powerful examples are the divine states of being, promoted by the Buddha as fundamental to ethical living (Salzberg, 1995). The four states are loving-kindness (metta), compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Working with these can be part of individual practice and couples counseling. Cultivation of these states will increase social harmony and decrease egotism. They are some of the highest virtues in Mahayana.

However, the above distinctions between Hinayana and Mahayana are not so clean. Consider, for example, the currently very popular loving-kindness meditations. These are based on the Metta Sutta, which is one of the most popular Hinayana texts in Theravada Buddhism. Monks and lay people recite this text daily. Metta meditation is held to help overcome aggression, ill will, and gloating and to develop a serene mind and better sleep.

Also, the Buddha regularly included many various examples of opening the heart in his instructions. Components of opening the heart should be incorporated into the way one approaches the Eightfold Path and five precepts (e.g., compassion, loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, openness, unconditional acceptance, forgiveness, generosity). Also, right understanding will help open the heart. For example, greater understanding of the suffering of self and others (first Noble Truth) leads to compassion.

The Hinayana path is sufficient, but it is not necessary or the only way. It is also too difficult for many, such as the practice of meditation. Enter Mahayana, which speaks to needs for devotion and faith. And for many, faith is preferable to meditation. Mahayana has looser rules and more spiritual opportunities for lay people, women, and the less gifted. "Mahayana" means "large vehicle," which accommodates more people than Hinayana ("small vehicle").

For many Mahayanists, the term "Hinayana" is a derogatory term, meaning the smaller inferior vehicle. Hence, it is usually better to use the term Theravada, when appropriate. But for many Hinayanists, it is a perfectly fine term: "Hinayana," the approach closest to what the Buddha practiced and taught. I agree with contemporary poet Tom Savage: "Greater vehicle, lesser vehicle. All vehicles will be towed at owner's expense."

Morality of Yana

For many Mahayanists, the Hinayana path is an unethical path! The argument is that in Hinayana a person selfishly works for his or her own enlightenment, rather than

working to help others. For example, a monk leaves the world for a monastery, lives off donations from others, and pursues what appears to be a selfish path. In Hinayana, the ideal is the arahat (enlightened individual), while in Mahayana, the ideal is the bodhisattva, an advanced practitioner who is dedicated to help awaken others, perhaps delaying her or his individual enlightenment.

But very often, it is better for someone to clean up his or her own life to some extent before trying to help others. In my field of psychology, I see people headed for or in fields of counseling or clinical psychology. Many of these people have significant psychological issues that will impair, limit, or bias their ability to help others. It would be better if they worked more on themselves first.

Today, a major concern relative to the great popularity of mindfulness is that many people teaching mindfulness have not adequately, or at all, developed their own mindfulness. They just repeat things others have done. There are many problems here. First is that if people knew mindfulness from their own practice, they could better individualize their teachings to the people and/or situations. This would significantly improve most of the reported research, therapies, and business applications!! Second, many unqualified teachers create errors that greatly impair the students' learning. A very common example in the United States is the assertion that mindfulness requires acceptance. This is simply false and impairs the students' development of mindfulness and the ability to mindfully see when they are accepting or not (Mikulas, 2011)! I would say it is unethical to teach mindfulness if you don't know what you are doing, which requires considerable personal development of mindfulness.

Note that Gautama spent many years of practice before he awoke as the Buddha. And it was only then that he became a teacher. At the end of my book on individual mental training (Mikulas, 2014), I strongly encourage the readers to help others learn what they have learned, including bringing the practices into child-rearing, education, sports, and art.

Often change at the level of individuals is the best way to produce social change. In the United States, two dramatic examples are the profound political changes relative to the war in Vietnam and the Chinese invasion of Tibet. In both cases, the political changes were not due to enlightened leadership. Rather, the major force was change of individuals' awareness and concerns that then drove political values.

Finally, things are more interconnected than it superficially seems. Thus, individual change may have a broader effect on others than might be assumed. This is clear from a broad understanding of Buddhist dependent origination. It is also supported by theories of physics, such as chaos theory and quantum theory.

So, of course we want to do many things to help others. But to do this best often requires we also attend to our own personal/spiritual growth. Ethically, we must avoid either extreme. The middle way.

Vajrayana

Gaia's third great awakening in Asia was the discovery that everything is sacred; the distinction between sacred and profane is a false dichotomy. This means that a much wider range of activities can be approached as spiritual practice and a means to awaken. Particularly appealing was the idea that one could be spiritual and also successful in the world.

Gaia's third awakening happened during the Tantra period that developed in North India, beginning about 0 CE and peaking somewhere between the eighth and eleventh centuries. This resulted in tantric sects in Hinduism, Taoism, Jainism, and Buddhism. In Buddhism, Mahayana became infused with Tantra for about 500–600 years, leading to the third vehicle, Vajrayana, which today is represented by Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese Shingon. "Vajra" means "diamond-like," clear, and hard.

Tantra

In Buddhism, "Tantra" means "continuum" and "extend," such as the "woof" which is the thread that runs continuously through the fabric in tradition weaving. ("Tantra" also refers to specific texts and practices.)

Tantra recognizes that one can use all aspects of experience for awakening. Consider sex. In Hinayana and Mahayana, one might choose to be celibate. This would simplify life and perhaps facilitate one's spiritual practices. In Tantra, this would be seen to be at the expense of experiential opportunities, with all of their complications.

In Tantra, one does not turn away from experiences, and one embraces them. Life's obstacles become opportunities for personal/spiritual growth, such as a time to work on clinging and resulting attachments. One learns how to take energy from emotions and transform it into energy for awakening. One practices at knowing experience directly, unmediated and unaffected by cognitions and emotions.

It is often argued that the tantric path is a shorter path, enlightenment in one lifetime versus many. And some Tibetan Buddhist teachers, such as Chögyam Trungpa, suggest that the three yanas are also a model for individual spiritual practice. One starts with Hinayana practices (e.g., concentration, mindfulness, discipline), then one adds in Mahayana components (e.g., compassion, emptiness), and then one comes full spiral back into the world with Vajrayana.

Ethical Concerns

Tantra opened the door for a lot of questionable and/or unethical behavior being passed off as spiritual practice. In Hinduism, there was the left-handed path which included licentious rites and sexual debauchery. A contemporary Indian teacher, who for a while was very popular in the United States, offered a

program once described as "tantric Freudianism." This included the acting out of prohibited, immoral, or repressed desires, impulses, and sexual aggression. What is misunderstood here is that Tantra as a true spiritual practice involves removing the prohibitions of awareness of such desires, not removing the prohibitions of acting on such desires. Tantric practice is increased mindfulness, not increased unmindful behavior.

Of course, many people in the United States were drawn to the idea of sex as a spiritual practice. And for most people in the United States who have some association to the word "Tantra," it means sex. This has allowed some Buddhist teachers to have inappropriate sex with students under the guise of some advanced tantric practice. Although sexual behavior can certainly be a valid tantric spiritual practice, such as the merging of two individuals into one, this seems to be the exception.

Crazy Adepts

A further complication is the existence of the crazy adepts, found in many traditions. A crazy adept is an advanced spiritual person who chooses to appear and/or act in very unconventional, often shocking, ways. This might include bizarre dress or nakedness, use of intoxicants, vulgar language, or challenges to customary social behavior.

Crazy adepts might shock people into questioning the consensus reality. They might get people to reevaluate assumptions about how an awakened person must appear or act. They might force people to confront basic tantric teachings.

But the idea of a crazy adept can also be a cover for unethical behavior. Thus, among contemporary Buddhist teachers, we find inappropriate sex of many kinds, alcoholism, and keeping large groups of people waiting for hours. Students often excuse such behavior because the teacher is assumed to be an adept, and there must be a spiritual basis or reason for such behavior. To me it is unethical behavior, but maybe this is just my lack of spiritual understanding.

Universal Practices

In this chapter, I have interrelated mindfulness, spiritual practices, and Buddhist ethics across the three yanas. To put the historical development of the yanas in a broader perspective, I briefly discussed, in terms of the awakening of Gaia, the three major Asian spiritual developmental periods. Now I put the discussion into a much broader perspective, considering the spiritual practices of all the world's major spiritual/religious traditions. Note that my focus here is on behavioral practices. I recognize the importance and power of beliefs, faith, and devotion, but these are outside the current discussion.

When I survey the world's great spiritual/religious traditions, I find significant differences in terms of philosophy and cosmology. For example, some religions

have no god, some have one, and some have many. Some people believe that each person has one life, followed by some type of afterlife. Other people believe their souls will inhabit many different lives.

But I do find consensus among the traditions in terms of practice. This is if I ask what does one *do* as a spiritual practice, a universal set of practices emerges: order your life on moral and practical guidelines, quiet the mind, increase awareness, open the heart, and reduce attachments (Mikulas, 1987, 2014). By doing this set of practices, one is doing the central practices of all the major traditions. Of course, different traditions and subgroups of traditions stress different practices. But all the practices are found, in varying degrees, in all the major traditions.

Before elaborating on the specific practices, consider some meta-level dynamics. First, all the practices affect each other, and a change in one influences the others! For example, quieting the mind helps increase awareness, and opening the heart helps reduce attachments. Thus, the optimal program involves working with all practices simultaneously, even though one practice is emphasized at a particular time.

Second, these are the world's strongest and most applicable practices for improving the health of body/mind/spirit. Each of the practices can significantly improve biological health, psychological effectiveness, subjective well-being and peace, and personal/spiritual growth. Therefore, I call these practices "universal somato-psycho-spiritual practices."

And third, one can utilize these practices to have a happier, healthier, and more effective life, even if one has no interest in things such as spiritual growth and awakening. If one does the practices, then one will automatically gradually awaken. In such situations, awakening will often be smoother and simpler that if one is doing the practices with the *goal* of awakening.

The Western secular approach to mindfulness is an example of using a practice for psychotherapy, where the original/primary goal of the practice was awakening. What is not adequately understood or discussed is how to teach mindfulness for secular reasons in a way that also maximizes awakening, however, that is understood.

Moral and Practical

The first piece of the universal path is ordering one's life on moral and practical guidelines. All the major traditions have general guidelines for ethical and effective living. These include behaviors to avoid, such as killing, stealing, coveting, lying, and inappropriate sex. The guidelines also include behaviors to do, such as taking care of the body, studying spiritual works, honoring parents, and surrendering to God or ultimate truth. Buddhist ethics are discussed throughout this chapter.

A comprehensive program of personal/spiritual growth requires attending to cleaning up one's life. This might involve resolving difficulties with neighbors, learning anger control, or getting free from some drug. Of course, one does not wait until one's life is all straightened out before beginning the other practices. This would not work. Rather, you do all the practices at the same time.

A common misunderstanding and trap is the belief that one can have some type of spiritual experience that will somehow clear up the messes in one's life. That almost never happens. Rather, as one becomes more mindful or awake, one more clearly sees the messes (which will help in working with them).

Quieting the Mind

Quieting the mind has numerous psychological benefits, such as relaxing mind and body, finding peace of mind, and getting control of thoughts. Relative to awakening, quieting the mind creates the space for insight knowing (prajna). If the mind is always out of control and running around like a drunken monkey, then basically all one will know is the conceptual knowledge of the mind. One will readily get pulled into thoughts and will equate "reality" with constructions of the mind (like during sleep dreams).

One can help quiet the mind with lifestyle changes and altering the environment. In Buddhist practice, and meditation in general, the primary way to quiet the mind is through developing concentration.

Increasing Awareness

The power of becoming more aware as a vehicle for personal/spiritual growth has long been a significant part of Western philosophy, psychology, and spirituality. Examples include Socrates' "know thyself," Perls' Gestalt therapy, Gurdjieff's "self-remembering," and the consciousness movement of the 1960s.

From the East comes the Buddha's emphasis on mindfulness, which I later argue is ultimately maximizing awareness. Buddhism's major contribution to world psychology and spirituality is the understanding of awareness/mindfulness: what it is, how to cultivate it, and its effects on the body/mind/spirit.

The Buddhist path of insight includes developing awareness of body-mind interactions, conditionality, and the three marks of existence (unsatisfactoriness, impermanence, and nonself) (Buddhaghosa, 1975). Rather than just understanding these dynamics conceptually, one sees them experientially in a way that transforms one's being. Insightful seeing of impermanence reduces attachments. Insightful seeing of nonself helps one transcend an attached identification with the personal level self.

Mindfulness?

Concentration and awareness are very distinctively different behaviors of the mind. They differ dramatically in how they are developed, the results of development, and neurophysiological correlates. In Buddhism, concentration and mindfulness are clearly different! They are separate parts of the Eightfold Path and separate factors of the seven factors of enlightenment. The mindfulness path of insight is

distinctively different from the path of concentration and absorption. I suggest that mindfulness is ultimately the same as awareness. And I define the behavior of the mind of awareness/mindfulness as the active maximizing of the breadth and clarity of awareness.

The development of concentration and/or awareness is best done by working with them both simultaneously, as is usually done, often unintentionally. As mentioned earlier, the development of one facilitates the development of the other. Rapgay (2010) argued that Buddhist mindfulness is a practical blend of concentration and awareness, leading to the ability to achieve direct experience of the object of attention.

To summarize so far, concentration and awareness are clearly different. Ultimately "mindfulness" is the same as the behavior of the mind "awareness." But initial instruction in developing mindfulness, by the Buddha and others, is a blend of concentration and awareness. Although this blend is practical and powerful, it allows for some confusion about exactly what mindfulness is.

Currently the major problem in Western approaches to mindfulness is the confusing and confounding of concentration and awareness (see Mikulas, 2011, for elaboration). This confusion severely limits the effectiveness and validity of much of the Western mindfulness-based theories, therapies, and measures.

In addition, it is periodically pointed out, usually by people with some background in Tibetan Buddhism, that Buddhist mindfulness contains a component of "recollection" (e.g., Batchelor, 2015, p. 239). This involves remembering past instructions for cultivating mindfulness. I include this when I define the behavior of the mind of awareness as being the *active maximizing* of the breadth and clarity of awareness.

Opening the Heart

Opening the heart as a practice of personal/spiritual growth includes developing welcoming openness and unconditional acceptance. Cultivating welcoming openness means gradually allowing more and more stimuli to have access to one's consciousness, such as experiences, feelings, memories, and people. It is a matter of taking down barriers and increasing the breadth of awareness.

Unconditional acceptance means to unconditionally accept reality as it is, even when one is actively working to change that reality. It does not mean being passive or having no preferences! One still works to change behaviors, the environment, working conditions, political processes, or whatever one considers important. But one does not unnecessarily upset oneself when reality is currently not the way one prefers.

Unconditional acceptance of other people is particularly important. One learns to love other people unconditionally even if one does not like another person's behavior or prefers to stay away from this person. One can love a person and dislike the person's behavior. Everyone is one of us doing the best they can, given their biology, history, situation, and understanding. One learns to acknowledge the spiritual

component of everyone. "Namaste" is a Hindu greeting, common in India and Nepal, which means "I bow to the divine in you." A Tibetan Buddhist practice is to see everyone as having been one's mother in a previous life.

Opening the heart includes loving oneself unconditionally, even while one is working to change one's behavior and continue one's personal/spiritual growth. This is particularly difficult in the United States culture, as opposed, for example, to the Tibetan culture. Thus for everyone, especially people in the United States, the attitude of "make friends with yourself" is critical to optimal meditation practice and development of mindfulness.

As discussed earlier, Mahayana is the branch of Buddhism that gives special emphasis to opening the heart, with foundations clearly laid by the Buddha (e.g., the four divine states of being). Additional related practices include cultivating empathy, generosity, and forgiveness.

The Mahayana giving and receiving meditation practices, called "tonglen" in Tibetan, is very important in Vajrayana. In tonglen one breathes out good and breathes in bad. For example, one might breathe in the pain and suffering of a specific person and breathe out relief and happiness to this person. A good foundation in concentration and mindfulness allows the suffering taken in to pass through without getting stuck.

Reducing Attachments

Clinging is a third behavior of the mind, in addition to concentration and awareness. It refers to the tendency of the mind to grasp for and cling to certain contents of the mind, assumptions about self and reality, and personal frames of reference. This clinging may be to sensations, perceptions, beliefs, expectations, opinions, rituals, images of the self, and models of reality. The result of such clinging is called an "attachment" in yogic psychology. This meaning is similar to the term "addiction" but different than the psychodynamic use of "attachment," which refers to interpersonal bonding usually early in life.

Common possible results of attachments are resistance to change, distortion of perceptions and memories, impaired thinking, wasted energy, and undesired emotions and suffering (dukkha). Attachments are always a problem, even if what one is attached to is desirable in some way. Being mindful of the results of an attachment is often the easiest way to become aware of the existence of an attachment.

Working with reducing attachments is the daily grist for the mill in personal/spiritual growth (Mikulas, 2004). Mindfulness is critical to optimal attachment reduction. The key is to move mindfulness back earlier and earlier in the chain of events. Consider anger: If a person is only aware when fully caught up in anger, it is very difficult to extricate oneself. In addition, the mind is now justifying being angry. But if mindfulness is moved to earlier cues that precede full anger (e.g., increased racing of the mind, creating anger-related thoughts and memories, change in breathing), then it is much easier to prevent the anger. This strategy applies to all respondently elicited emotions, such as anger, anxiety, and jealousy, and to all

problematic operant behaviors, such an unconscious going for the drug, cigarette, or next piece of chocolate. Mindfulness brings freedom and choice! One can decide whether or not to have more chocolate.

But mindfulness alone is very rarely sufficient in itself. One needs a practical skill that can be applied, such as controlled breathing, muscle relaxation, altering cognitions, generating loving-kindness, or increasing and redirecting concentration (Mikulas, 2014). Here is a dramatic example where the combination of Buddhist psychology and Western psychology is much more powerful than either by itself. I suggest that the combination of mindfulness and behavioral self-control skills is the world's most powerful therapy for dealing with behavioral-level attachments, which are very common and very powerful!!

The Buddhist Four Noble Truths target craving as the way to reduce attachments. But, from a practical point of view, this is not always the best point of intervention. Sometimes it is better to begin later or earlier in the causal chain. An elaboration of the second and third Noble Truths about craving is dependent origination (Mahathera Narada, 1993), perhaps the most profound and least understood of the Buddha's teachings.

Dependent origination (paticca-samuppada), also translated as "codependent origination" and "causal interdependence," is based on the fact that everything experienced arises through dependence on something else. "Right understanding" includes mindfulness of dependent origination processes, which the Buddha equated with understanding of the dhamma.

Dependent origination is often depicted as a 12-link circular chain, with clockwise moving forward in time. Every link influences the following link. The Buddha says "When there is this, that is. With the arising of this, that arises." Although it is a causal chain, it is not totally determined; rather, it is sometimes more a matter of tendencies, predispositions, and probabilities. Mindfulness can provide the opportunity to break the chain at several different links.

Usually discussions about dependent origination are focused on processes of karma and rebirth across three lifetimes. But dependent origination can/should also be understood to apply to the many cycles that regularly occur during daily living (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 1992). The length of one cycle might be milliseconds, seconds, minutes, hours, days, or years. Cycles affect body sensations, feelings, thoughts, behaviors, contents of consciousness, the reality one constructs, and attachments. Relative to our attachment discussion, consider five successive links in the chain, with the traditional visual image given in parentheses:

Contact (kissing). The sense object and sense organ come together leading to conscious sensing, passion, and thinking. The world arises.

Intervention at this point might involve avoiding certain stimuli, perhaps for ethical reasons. Behavior modification strategies might include driving a different way home, getting liquor out of the house, or cutting off Internet access to pornography.

Feeling (arrow in the eye). The immediate quality of the sensation: positive, negative, or neutral. A possible point to break the chain. Mindfulness can be brought to this link in the chain, as is done in some Vipassanā meditations.

Craving (drinking milk). The tendency to approach or avoid. Experiences of desire, security, and soothing. The second Noble Truth focuses on this link.

Grasping (gathering fruit). Clinging or pushing away. Attachments. Intervention at the links of craving and grasping is a common place to work at reducing attachments.

Becoming (copulation). The dynamic results of attachments. Predisposition for certain behavior. The arising of the sense of "I am."

Finally, it needs to be stressed that many people are apprehensive/fearful about the idea of reducing attachments. It seems to them that this will make them apathetic or boring, perhaps reducing the zest for life. Some believe that without suffering there can be no happiness or creativity. But all of this is dramatically not true! Reducing attachments allows one to more fully and effectively engage in life's activities, while simultaneously increasing one's joy and energy. Also, tantric practices allow one to take "negative" energy from attachments and transform it into energy for personal/spiritual growth.

Mindfulness

In this chapter, I surveyed basic principles of Buddhist ethics and some contemporary issues. This discussion was put into the historical perspective of the awakenings that led to the three yanas. Buddhist spiritual practices, including ethics, were reviewed in the context of the world's practices of personal/spiritual growth. Throughout all of this, mindfulness continually came up in a wide variety of ways. Therefore, I think it is useful to finish by reviewing some of the points made about mindfulness.

Currently in the West, there is some discussion, considerable confusion, and too much politics relative to exactly what is "mindfulness." What do we know from the Buddhist literature? First, mindfulness is clearly different from "concentration." They are distinctly different parts of the Eightfold Path, mindfulness is number seven, and concentration is number eight. They are distinctively different factors of the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation, effort/energy, rapture/interest, concentration, calm/tranquility, and equanimity (Pandita, 1992). Mindfulness is the first and primary factor because it awakens and strengthens all the other factors and keeps them in balance.

In the classic Buddhist/yogic literature (e.g., Buddhaghosa, 1975), the path of concentration/absorption and the path of mindfulness/insight are distinctively different paths. Before he became enlightened, Siddhartha Gautama practiced the path of concentration/absorption, mastering all eight levels of absorption, called jhanas. He found that such absorption could suppress defilements and suffering, but not eliminate them. As the Buddha, he later emphasized the path of mindfulness/insight as the cure.

In my psychology, I suggest that pure Buddhist mindfulness is the same as my "behavior of the mind" awareness, which is defined as the active maximizing of the clarity and breadth of awareness. The "active" part of this definition includes recognizing that one is in a situation where awareness can be enhanced, using instructions that one remembers. This activity is similar to the "recollection" that some say is part of Buddhist "mindfulness."

The natures of awareness and concentration are very different in terms of how they are developed, their effects, and neurological correlates. Understanding these differences allows one to better devise a program of "mindfulness" for personal/spiritual growth, therapy, research, or theory building. One can better individualize the cultivation of awareness and concentration to best suit the individuals and/or situations. Teachers of mindfulness should have considerable personal experience developing awareness and concentration in themselves.

In practice, awareness and concentration are cultivated simultaneously, even though emphasis may be on just one. For example, when one practices a traditional Buddhist breath-based meditation, such as Vipassanā or Zazen, one should always be cultivating both awareness and concentration. But at any particular time, either awareness or concentration might be emphasized. A wise teacher can often suggest which and how. The Buddha's instructions in "mindfulness" combine awareness and concentration.

Some people argue that mindfulness should be taught in the context of the whole Buddhist path, including ethics. Ethical behavior facilitates the development of mindfulness, and the cultivation of mindfulness facilitates acting ethically and appropriately.

A fundamental strategy for change is moving mindfulness earlier and earlier in the sequence of events. If karma is based on intent, then mindfulness of intentions is critical. To reduce suffering and attachments, the earlier in the chain of dependent origination one can bring mindfulness, the easier it often is to break the chain. Psychological therapies become more effective when mindfulness is brought to early cues that elicit or set the occasion for undesired behaviors.

The essential Buddhist path of awakening is based on the insight (prajna) that results from systematic development of mindfulness. Increasing awareness is one of the world's universal somato-psycho-spiritual practices. And Buddhism's great contribution to the world's psychologies and spiritualities is the understanding of mindfulness: what it is, how it is developed, and the results of this development.

So, my friends, be mindful.

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Ethics, Mindfulness, and Skillfulness

7

Deborah Orr

Introduction

This chapter will problematize the notion that Buddhism has an ethical foundation as that is understood in contemporary Western discourse. It argues that, nevertheless, through the practice of "mindfulness" in its traditional form, it fosters a way of being that is profoundly moral. It would be a huge project to do full justice to this topic and would likely require not just many chapters but many books, many of which would deal with large bodies of material which are well beyond my competency. So what follows is really just a synopsis of an argument.

I will begin with a preliminary look at the etymology of the words religion, spirituality, ethics, and morality in order to establish an orientation for what will follow. That, then, will be a very brief overview of the history of mindfulness beginning with traditional Yoga, the mother tradition of Buddhism and Buddhist mindfulness. We will look at the historical Buddha and some of his relevant teachings and then the seminal work of the second-century philosopher, Nagarjuna, the founder of Madhyamaka or Middle Way Buddhism, in order to gain an orientation to the traditional practice of mindfulness. Nagarjuna's philosophical work will help to clarify the concepts of emptiness (*sunyata*) and interconnectedness (*pratitya samutpada*) which, when experientially realized, result in the wisdom/*prajna* and compassion/*karuna* that ground skillful behavior (*upaya kasula*) (Schroder, 2001), what I will call moral behavior. We will note the affinities of mindful skillfulness with what Gilligan (1982) has called an Ethic of Care and Responsibility which functions with the communal ego style and which is grounded in empathy. Throughout we will notice the naturalness which grounds Buddhist mindfulness.

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Terminology

As a general principle, the linguistic terrain comprehended by concepts such as morality and others of interest to us can be usefully circumscribed by Wittgenstein's advice to look at the way words are used. But in many instances in the indigenous contexts of the works we will be considering neither words that could be accurately translated into these English words nor close synonyms exist. Consequently, I will frequently use indigenous terms. I won't offer definitive definitions, and certainly not essences, of the terms I will discuss but rather attempt to draw out their uses in their indigenous context, particularly by relating them to other key terms. This will provide a clearer representation than the imposition of contemporary Western categories and definitions.

As Western European cultures made contact with the broader world, they encountered a wide range of spiritual traditions and practices which they largely dismissed as heretical and idolatrous and so designated heathen. In his detailed study of the etymology and history of the word 'religion', Smith (1998) showed that it is a term of colonization. It emerged in its modern sense in the sixteenth century as "an anthropological, not a theological category" (p. 269), and not a native category but one imposed by the Western European Other. It was the lack of what was considered the necessary characteristics of a religion (read the Abrahamic traditions, especially Christianity), which led to the devaluation of indigenous practices. Currently, religion is widely used to comprehend practices that had been excluded by the various attempted definitions of the term that Smith examines. We now commonly see the Hindu religion or the Buddhist religion although these were not used by practitioners and their traditions have little in common with the defining beliefs and practices of the term religion. That will become clearer as we look at the main characteristics of Yoga and Buddhism.

Spiritual and spirituality are much broader terms with uses ranging from reference to the encounter with the fundamental mystery of life which grounds many traditions, to the search for meaning and value beyond the narrow concerns of the self, to beliefs oriented to the transcendental, and to what have been termed *new age* and spiritual but not religious (SBNR) practices. Just what is meant by the term in its various uses can often only be fully captured by participation in specific practices and/or contemplation of their images and texts. In discussing this with my students, I often offer them what Paul Gauguin called his "most philosophical painting," the triptych "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?" (Rewald, n.d., pp. 26–30), as a work that depicts the fundamental mystery grounding many spiritual traditions by raising these questions without offering answers to them. So, while Buddhism doesn't meet the criteria of a religion which Smith uncovers, it does, in addressing these questions, fit with spiritual.

Like religion, ethics has a modern sense that has been universalized and assumed when used, often to refer to beliefs or practices that do not meet its criteria. Toulmin (1990) traced the development of the modern notion of ethics as a formation out of the modern period ideal of scientific rationality which was rapidly becoming hegemonic in all Western cultural domains from philosophy to the fine arts to technology

to politics and beyond (p. 198). Scientific rationality is characterized by its grounding in presumed underlying universal principles which guide rational procedures that are objective, impersonal, and replicable. Kant's Deontology and Mill's Utilitarianism are prominent exemplars of this ethical approach. Ethics in this sense is formally distinct from Western premodern modes of both church and secular reasoning which proceeded by considering the relevant factors of a case and pertinent traditions of moral thought in order to reach a reasonable solution (p. 135). I have argued elsewhere (Orr, 2014) that the distinction Toulmin draws between reasonableness and rationality parallel those to be found in Lawrence Kohlberg's Moral Development Scale between the second level of development, the Conventional, in which *moral* decisions are based on rules such as 'cause no harm' which must be applied to reach a reasonable solution, and the higher third, the Post-Conventional, in which *ethical* decisions are based on principles such as Kant's and Mill's. We'll return to these distinctions below once we gain an overview of the history and development of traditional mindfulness meditation.

Traditional Yoga

I will dwell on Yoga in some detail as it is the mother tradition of Buddhism; the historical Buddha is often referred to as the greatest yogi. The origin of Yoga is not known. It is believed to have existed in the Indus River Basin from around 3000 BCE and was practiced well before the time of the sage Kapila whose dualistic Samkhya ontology influenced Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (Hartranft, 2003), the earliest written work on Yoga dating from some time around the second-century CE. In Kapila's ontology, or theory of the fundamental types of things in existence, *prakrti* is the material, changeable "stuff" which evolves into all that exists, what we would broadly call nature, although it is not a materialistic ontology in the sense that modern Western concepts and theories of nature are materialistic. There is nothing eternal or unchanging at this level, rather all things, including humans, come into and go out of existence and change over time. In Kapila's theory, humans are composed entirely of *prakrti* with one exception, that they also contain a transcendent entity he called *purusa* or pure awareness. *Purusa* was involved in some way with each person, and the role of Yoga practice in his theory was to settle the motions or disruptions of ordinary human awareness, as distinct from *purusa*'s awareness, so that *purusa* could have a clear view of how things really are. Although *prakrti* could obscure *purusa's* view of things, *purusa* could in no way influence *prakrti.* While Buddhist thought developed out of the Yogic tradition, the Buddha dropped Kapila's notion of *purusa*, and so I won't dwell on it further here.

From its earliest known days, and with the exception of Kapila's dualistic theory of *purusa*, Yoga's understanding of the person, and so Yogic practice, was grounded in a radical constructionism. This constructionism has two senses, one in which nature and natural things such as the human being change and evolve over time, and one closer to what Western thought today considers social constructionism in the formation of subjectivity. Ever-changing *prakrti* formed *citta*, consciousness, or

ordinary awareness. *Citta* is analytically broken down into *buddhi* which is intelligence, *manas* which is sensory perceptions originating in the body or in the world outside of the body, and *ahamkara* which is the "I-maker" or source of one's sense-of-self. One's phenomenal experience is comprised of both one's inheritance and their experiences including, importantly, the effects of the *kleshas* or afflictions. The *kleshas* cause the turmoil in *citta* which obstructs *purusa*'s view, and thus the eight limbs of Yoga, which together address all areas of one's life, are practiced to calm that turmoil. These eight/*astanga* limbs are: the *yamas*/external or social practices, e.g., nonviolence or cause no harm/*ahimsa*; *niyamas*/personal practices, e.g., self-study; *asana*/seat, the position for meditation; *pranayama*/control of *prana*/energy; *pratyahara*/sense withdrawal, inwardness; *dharana*/concentration; *dhyana*/absorption or meditation; and *samadhi*/integration with all that is. The metaphor of a choppy ocean becoming calm is often used to describe the desired effect of Yoga on *citta*. Once *citta* has been settled, that is, once one is no longer upset or distracted by such things as desire or anger or a delusional sense-of-self, one is able to have a clear understanding of how things really are, most especially one's self or true nature. When we consider the eight limbs of Yoga, we can see that it is a holistic system that addresses all aspects of one's life.

As noted, it is the *kleshas* that cause suffering or *dukkha*. *Dukkha* may have a physical component, but it is as a psycho-spiritual experience that both Yoga and Buddhism are primarily concerned. The most important of the *kleshas* for both Yoga and Buddhism is *avidya*, ignorance or not seeing things as they are, and the thing that we most need to see clearly, or more precisely experience, is the nature of our own being. *Avidya* is both the cause of and exacerbates the other four Yogic *kleshas*. In both Yoga and Buddhism, it is this ignorance or delusions about one's true nature that is the root cause of human suffering and the behaviors which both produce and exacerbate it. The sense-of-self or "I"/*asmita* is itself a *klesha.* I will return to this point in more detail in the discussion of Buddhist thought below. The other three Yogic *kleshas* are *raga*/attachment to things we desire or deem pleasurable and *dvesa/*aversion or avoidance of the unpleasant or painful. Many of the things people today want and avoid are different from and more extensive than in the ancient world and run the gamut from, as the title of the Buddhism scholar David Loy's (2008) book indicates, "money, sex, and war" to include romantic love, fame, power, and commodities, and the things they avoid include ideas with which they disagree or find problematic, physical discomfort, undesirable body features, aging, death and much else. The final *klesha* is clinging to life/*abhinivesa*.

Citta is usually translated as 'mind' although, as we saw above, it is holistic in referencing all aspects of awareness, and some scholars and teachers are beginning to use terms which attempt to capture its fuller meaning such as bodymind (Hartranft, 2003). The root *klesha* is *avidya*, a Sanskrit term which is often understood as delusional view or ideation although it, too, must be understood more holistically in order to capture the full meaning of *citta*. For instance, one may fear spiders but that emotional reaction will also involve physical responses and actions as well as ideas

about what a spider might do to one. The translation of *citta* into terms that reference only the cognitive, or mind, has been carried through into much of the modern Western work on Yoga and Buddhism and is itself a source of misunderstanding about what mindfulness actually is in that it tends to exclude its non-cognitive aspects. The second *sutra*, or thread, of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* helps to clarify this issue by giving the purpose of Yoga, *yogah cittavrtti nirodhah.* Iyengar (1993) translated this succinctly as "yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness" (p. 46). In providing his readers with the full range of meanings of each term, he clarifies in greater detail what this means. These are as follows: "*Yogah:* union or integration from the outermost layer to the innermost self, that is, from the skin to the muscles, bones, nerves, mind, intellect, will, consciousness and self" (p. 45). With this he indicates that Yoga addresses the self holistically and integrates each of its parts.

"*Citta*: consciousness, which is made up of three factors: mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahamkara*). *Citta* is the vehicle of observation, attention, aims and reason; it has three functions, cognition, conation or volition, and motion" (p. 45). In this again we see that *citta* or consciousness comprehends much more than the Cartesian cogito because it comprehends all those aspects of the self that Yoga addresses.

"*Vrtti*: states of mind, fluctuations in mind, course of conduct, behavior, state of being, mode of action, movement, function, operation" (p. 46). Thus the disruptions of consciousness are not only disruptions of things "happening in the mind" when that is understood as an inner place separate from the other aspects of one's being; they include the full spectrum of human experience and behaviors be they willed or habitual reactions.

"*Nirodhah*: obstruction, stoppage, opposition, annihilation, restraint, control, cessation" (p. 46). In explaining this, Iyengar said, "The *sadhaka* [seeker] is influenced by the self on one hand and by objects perceived on the other. When he [sic] is engrossed in the object, his mind fluctuates. This is *vrtti*. His aim should be to distinguish the self from the objects seen, so that it does not become enmeshed in them. Through yoga, he should try to free his consciousness from the temptations of such objects, and bring it close to the seer [*purusa*]. Restraining the fluctuations of the mind is a process which leads to an end: *samadhi* [profound meditation]. Initially, yoga acts as a means of restraint. When the *sadhaka* has attained a total state of restraint, yogic discipline is accomplished and the end is reached: consciousness remains pure. Thus yoga is both the means and the end" (p. 48).

As we noted above, the theory of *purusa*, the transcendent seer, was rejected by the historical Buddha. Thus, since Buddhist thought retains so much of traditional Yoga's, especially for our interest, the deluded sense-of-self, role of kleshas, and importance of meditation, it will be incumbent on Buddhist thought to clarify how Iyengar's description of the process of overcoming *dukkha* can "work" if, as Buddhist thought holds, there is no seer/*purusa* to benefit from it. Let us turn now to that task.

Siddhartha Gautama: The Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama was born in Lumbini, a town near the local capital city of Kapilavastu. The traditional date of his birth is 563 BCE although some scholars move it up to as late as c485 BCE (Skilton, 1994, p. 19). Kapilavastu was named for Kapila whose work influenced Patanjali's, and so we can assume with some confidence that the form of Yoga Siddhartha initially practiced was influenced by Kapila's dualistic view of *prakrti* and *purusa.* There is a well-known story of his life and quest for enlightenment which, while it is in all likelihood mythologized, appears to be that of a historical person who probably said at least some of the words attributed to him (Armstrong, 2001, p. xviii).

Siddhartha was born into a life of luxury as the son of the ruler of the Sakya clan, Suddhodana. At the time of his birth, a seer predicted that he would be either a great ruler or a great spiritual leader. Favoring political power for his son, his father had him raised in an enclosed estate where he wouldn't be exposed to the outside world, especially spiritual ideas. Nevertheless, several incidents led him into the contemplative life. The first was when as little more than an infant he was left under a rose apple tree to watch a spring plowing ceremony. As he watched the spring fields being plowed, he was moved to deep compassion by seeing all that was being destroyed by this process, the young grasses, the insects, and the rodents. As the word compassion suggests (Latin, cum – with together; patoir, to suffer in the sense of experience or to undergo, root of both passive and passion), this was an experience of oneness with the grasses and insects and rodents in their suffering, one of empathy in which the separate self/*asmita* was "forgotten," but at the same time he had a feeling of great joy (Armstrong, 2001, p. 66). This was what came to be called in Japanese Buddhism a *kensho* experience, an initial awakening experience. It is important to the narrative of his life for several reasons. The first is that it occurred when he was little more than an infant and had no training for enlightenment, indeed no idea what that might be. It was an entirely natural and spontaneous experience. Second, it occurred, while in "nature", it was not the product of or fostered by human society and conventions. Further, the compassion Siddhartha felt was for the lowest of creatures, and for grasses, these were as worthy of response as anything. Finally, when as an adult Siddhartha sat in meditation seeking enlightenment under another tree, it was the recollection of this event that finally triggered his attainment.

But first Siddhartha had to grow up, be married, have a son, and then have a series of encounters that would lead him to leave home and seek Yoga teachers who could guide him on his quest. These encounters were to see a sick man, a dying man, and a corpse. In each case, he asked his charioteer what had happened to these men, and Channa explained that they were experiencing the human suffering that is the lot of us all. Finally, when he saw a monk and Channa told him that this was a man who followed the path of asceticism and renunciation of the world in order to overcome suffering, Siddhartha shaved his head, donned the yellow robes, and left home. He studied under some of the great Yogis of his time who felt he had made great progress, but he never felt he had found what he sought. He then entered into

a period of extreme asceticism in the forest and fasted until he had nearly starved himself to death. Then one day, sitting under another tree,

> "I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree: quite secluded from sensual desires, secluded from unwholesome things I had enter upon and abode in the first meditation, which is accompanied by thinking and exploring, with happiness and pleasure born of seclusion. I thought: 'Might that be the way to enlightenment?' Then, following up that memory, there came the recognition that this was the way to enlightenment.
>
> "Then I thought: 'Why was I afraid of such pleasure? It is pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome things.' Then I thought: 'I am not afraid of such pleasure for it has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome things.'
>
> I thought: 'It is not possible to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food, some boiled rice and bread?' (Majjhima-nikaya 36, 85, 100 in Nanamoli, 1992, p. 21)

At this point, he realized that there was a "middle way" between the extremes of luxury and asceticism, both of which were unhealthy. He continued to meditate in the course of which he defeated all of the seductive daughters of Mara, which represent temptation, unskillfulness, and death. Upon attaining enlightenment, Mara himself visited him and asked who would validate his attainment. At this the Buddha touched the ground and the earth roared its affirmation. Mara realized his defeat and that moment is memorialized in the many icons and images of the Buddha in the earth touching mudra. Armstrong (2001) said of this moment that it "not only symbolizes Gotama's rejection of Mara's sterile machismo but makes the profound point that the Buddha does indeed belong to this world. The Dhamma is exacting, but it is not against nature. There is a deep affinity between the earth and the selfless human being, something that Gotama had sensed when he recalled his trance under the rose apple tree. The man or woman who seeks enlightenment is in tune with the fundamental structure of the universe. Even though the world seems to be ruled by the violence of Mara and his army, it is the compassionate Buddha who is most truly in tune with the basic laws of existence" (p. 92).

The Majjhima-nikaya follows the Buddha into deeper levels of meditation until he summarizes what he has realized in the form of the Four Noble Truths: "When my concentrated mind was thus purified. . . I. .. inclined my mind to the knowledge of exhaustion of taints. I had direct knowledge, as it actually is, that "This is suffering," that "This is the origin of suffering," that "This is the cessation of suffering"; and that "This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering" (Majjhima-nikāya 36 in Nanamoli, 1992, p. 24).

The Four Noble Truths give us a medical model of the human condition in which suffering is not caused by sin but rather by by psycho-spiritual dysfunction or illness. The First Noble Truth is **diagnostic**; it states that human life is suffering/*dukkha*. This is not a physical ailment but rather psycho-spiritual suffering that may have physical manifestations. The Second Noble Truth is *dukkha*'s **etiology**; that suffering has an origin and is caused by the three poisons or *kleshas*; greed or clinging/*raga*, anger or aversion/*dvesa*, and delusion/*avidya*. The root cause of suffering is identification with the delusion of a separate, atomistic, reified self. The Third Noble

Truth is the **prognosis** that suffering may be overcome. And the Fourth Truth gives the **treatment**, a life lived in accord with the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (Samyutta-nikaya 12:65 in Nanamoli, 1992, p. 27). The steps on the Eightfold Path should not be understood as a sequence. Like the eight limbs of Yoga with which they have much in common, they are to be understood and practiced as the integrated components of one's life.

The use of the word "right" throughout in translating the Pali and later Sanskrit texts on the Eightfold Path can leave the sense that some form of ethical or divine law governs all of this. That is not the case. Consistent with Buddhist thought on impermanence and interconnectedness, there is no divine law or universal principle that will guarantee the rightness of our actions, rather they are guided by skillful means/*upaya-kausalya* which is grounded in compassion/*karuna* and wisdom/*prajna*. We will return to this below but first a brief look at what mindfulness was for the Buddha.

Mindfulness is detailed in the *Anapanasati Sutta* (Nanamoli and Boddhi, 2009, pp. 941–948). I have stressed the concern of both the Yoga and Buddhist traditions with the holistic understanding of human being, and in this *sutta* (Pali; *sutra*, Sanskrit), this is fully evident. It deals not with the "mind" in the Western sense nor simply with the breath but with what we might analytically call the four aspects of the person. In the "Mindfulness of Breathing" section, the Buddha guides his followers through four cycles of mindfulness in each of which one of the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" is the focal point. These are the body, the mental formations (i.e., sensations or feelings), the mind, and the impermanence. This process is not one of dealing cognitively with each of the Foundations but rather simply developing a focused, sustained awareness of them. Kabat-Zinn's (1994) useful formulation is well known: "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (p. 4). The focus in Western mindfulness is often simply on the breath; however, this is just the first step, one must proceed to the Four Foundations. The Buddha prefaces his instructions by saying that, "When mindfulness of breathing is cultivated, it is of great fruit and great benefit. .. it fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness.. [which].. fulfill the seven enlightenment factors.. [which].. fulfill true knowledge and deliverance" (Nanamoli and Bodhi, 2009, p. 943). The seven enlightenment factors are mindfulness, wisdom, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity (pp. 946–947).

We need to look more closely at "true knowledge and deliverance," the end result of mindfulness, but first I'd note that in describing the monks to whom he is speaking, the Buddha says that some are "devoted to the development of loving-kindness [*metta*].. . compassion [*karuna*].. .altruistic joy [*mudita*]. .." (p. 943). These attitudes are central to all of the schools of Buddhism and key to its understanding of moral action, so it is important to stress that they are found in the earliest writings which set forth, if not the very words of the Buddha, the understanding of the earliest school, the Hinayana, known today as the Theravada. The ideal of this school was the arhat, understood as a person who pursued his own liberation. The arhat stands

in contrast to the bodhisattva of Mahayana, one who will not accept liberation until all beings are liberated. Unfortunately, this contrast of ideals has led to the frequent judgment that the arhat was simply self-concerned and uncaring of others. But this is clearly not the case in the passage quoted above. *Metta* and *karuna* are central to the *Metta Sutta*, one of the best known and most often recited and referenced works in the early canon. Below is a passage from that work enjoining the *sadhaka*, or seeker, to love "every living being" "as a mother with her life, Will guard her son, her only child." This clearly establishes compassion and loving-kindness as fundamental for Buddhists, including the arhat, and this will be important for understanding the nature of "true knowledge and deliverance." And, before we leave this passage, it is also worth noting that while the Buddha instructs his monks to sit in *padmasana* (cross-legged *asana/*seat) to meditate, loving-kindness, and in fact mindfulness, is to be practiced "Whether he stands, or sits, or walks, Or lies down (while yet not asleep)," that is, all the time.

> Thus as a mother with her life,
> Will guard her son, her only child,
> Let him extend unboundedly
> His heart to every living being.
> And so with love for all the world
> Let him extend unboundedly
> His heart, above, below, around,
> Unchecked, with no ill will or hate.
>
> Whether he stands, or sits, or walks,
> Or lies down (while yet not asleep),
> Let him such mindfulness pursue:
> This is Holy Abiding here, they say.
> > (Nanamoli, 1992, pp.180 – 181)

Nagarjuna

Virtually nothing is known with certainty about Nagarjuna or his life. He is believed to have lived around the second- to third-century CE and so may have been writing around the same time as Patanjali was composing the *Yoga Sutra*. He is credited with originating the Madhyamika or middle way school that has been influential in the development and spread of Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayana branch began to develop around the first-century CE as a path for non-monastic Buddhists. Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika* or Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way (MMK in Garfield, 1995) is one of the great works of world philosophy and is also accepted in the Hinayana/Theravada and Vajrayana/Tantra branches of Buddhism.

While he is singular in the strength of his work, he was working within a tradition of scholarship that developed soon after the death of the Buddha. The Buddha's followers began recording their memories and understandings of his teachings not long after his death in their newly developing monasteries. This work became the Pali Canon, the Tripitaka or three "baskets," containing sermons, monastic law, and

the Abhidharma or later scholarly works, which we have been drawing on in the above discussion. As one scholar pointed out, "Many monasteries began to function as seats of learning rather than as mere shelters for a sequestered spiritual culture" (Dutt, 1959, p. 181) and that a special emphasis on "education for dialectical skill and ability in argumentation" (p. 182) was developed. As the monasteries developed, their curricula expanded to include works of other spiritual traditions, philosophy, agriculture, and architecture among other areas. After the first-century BCE, they also began developing libraries. Thus universities were developed. Nalanda was the most famous of these, which flourished from around the fifteenth- to the thirteenth-century CE with around 1,500 teachers and 10,000 students, many from abroad. So, although we know virtually nothing about Nagarjuna personally, we can say with confidence that he was working within a highly sophisticated intellectual culture.

Nagarjuna's philosophical work has much in common with such Western philosophers as Socrates and Wittgenstein. All three held that people's lives could be seriously damaged by misunderstanding language and consequently having a distorted understanding of reality, including their own nature, and so overcoming these misunderstandings could have a salutary effect. They could change one's life. Thus, in their work, all three did what is considered "negative philosophy," that is, their focus was on clarifying understanding by debunking misleading constructions rather than developing positive positions of their own. But Nagarjuna, unlike Socrates and Wittgenstein, worked within a culture which held that this philosophical work must be supplemented by a meditation practice in order to go beyond the merely cognitive and be fully effective (MMK XXVI: 11). So, it is important to bear in mind throughout this discussion of Nagarjuna's thought that, while he is clearly doing an intellectual form of work, philosophy, this must be understood as being important, in fact only having real meaning and transformative efficacy, in the context of the mindfulness and other practices and rituals utilized in the various traditions of Buddhism. Intellectually what he is doing in this work is working out, or perhaps better uncovering, the description of how things really are and especially how things really are with one's own being which has been sought since the time of earliest Yoga. But this intellectual knowledge is meaningless without the experiential understanding that meditation fosters, especially, as it relates to one's own being.

I will focus primarily on the two central terms in Buddhist thought as they apply to the *sadhaka*, the Sanskrit terms *sunyata* and *pratitya samutpada*. *Sunyata* is most often translated into English as emptiness, but Garfield (1995) asked, "empty of what?", and argues that this aspect of its meaning can be captured by the more familiar English term "essence" (pp. 89–90). The logically contrary Sanskrit term is *svabhava* which is translated as "own being" which is closely analogous to "essence." So, to say that the person is *sunya*/empty is to say that they lack an essence, that is that there is no stable, unchanging core by virtue of which something is a person. Consequently, the person cannot be understood as a reified entity or as entirely autonomous and independent. Rather, the person must be understood as dependently co-arising/*pratitya samutpada* and so radically constructed in

several ways, in terms of karma, evolutionary change, and social construction. In what follows, we will be primarily concerned with the latter two ways. We can note that he is not saying that the person, or anything else that is *sunya*, is nonexistent in the ordinary sense of that word.

Nagarjuna explored the relationship between emptiness and dependent co-origination throughout his work. We can see its sense and significance, and in particular its relationship to language, in the following passage:

> Whatever is dependently co-arisen
> That is explained to be emptiness.
> That being a dependent designation
> Is itself the middle way.
> MMK XXIV: 18

Here we see the assertion that what is dependently co-arisen, that is, existing by virtue of its relationship to other things, is empty. Likewise, Nagarjuna held, what is empty is dependently co-arisen (MMK XXIV: 19). There is a relationship of mutual entailment between the concepts of *sunyata*/emptiness and *pratitya samutpada* dependent co-arising. Thus emptiness cannot be reified; the word cannot be taken to refer to a substantial/*svabhava* thing. This is the middle way between the two positions which he has argued against throughout this work, on the one hand that things have an "essence" or *svabhava*/self-existence or on the other hand that the lack of essence results in nonexistence and nihilism (MMK XV). To say that it is "a dependent designation" which "explains" these terms is to say that this is a use of conventional language. Conventional language, the language of everyday speech and interactions, itself develops out of, is used in the context of and may refer to that which is empty and thus in all of these ways is dependently co-arisen. It exists only in relation to the empty and dependently co-arisen world and the empty and dependently co-arisen people who use it. "The Victorious One, through the knowledge of reality and unreality […]. refuted both, "it is" and "it is not"" (MMK XV: 7); Nagarjuna asserted that this was the position of the Buddha, the middle way between essentialism and nihilism.

As we can see in the verses below from Chapter XXIV, "Examination of the Four Noble Truths," Nagarjuna situated the teaching of the "ultimate truth" in "a truth of worldly conventions."

> The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma
> Is based on two truths
> A truth of worldly convention
> And an ultimate truth.
> MMK XXIV: 8

Without a foundation in the conventional truth,

> The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.
> Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
> Liberation is not achieved.
> MMK XXIV: 10

Without *grasping* the first type of truth, that of worldly convention, which we've just seen is the emptiness and dependent co-arising of all things, the ultimate cannot be *achieved*. There is an important distinction being made here: first, the truths of worldly convention can be known intellectually and these are to be *grasped*. As we just saw, we can grasp the important truths of emptiness and dependent co-arising, the truth of how things really are, by reading Nagarjuna's work. But this is not all there is to it. There is a second truth, and verse 10 indicates that this truth is to be *achieved*, that there is something more to it than simple intellectual knowledge or *grasping* it.

Nagarjuna was explicit, and in agreement with the Buddha, that "The cessation of ignorance occurs through, Meditation and wisdom" (MMK XXVI: 11) in consequence of which "The entire mass of suffering, Indeed thereby completely ceases" (MMK XXVI: 12). That is, the second type of truth, the ultimate truth, lies in the life and experience of the *sadhaka*: the person who achieves it is changed; their suffering ceases. Understanding this truth, experiencing it rather than simply having conceptual knowledge of it, releases them from suffering. Let us turn now to that process.

The Person and the Sense-of-Self

What, then, constitutes a person? There is, of course, no one thing we can point to, no essence. In Chapter XXVI, Nagarjuna gave a description of the person in terms of the 12 links of dependent co-origination/*pratitya samutpada*. While these are called "links," they are not a series with a beginning and an end; they are a description of cyclical existence/*samsara*, an analytic description of the dependent co-origination of the person as related to all else. Garfield (1995) pointed out that these can be understood in two ways. The first, which is important to cosmology and soteriology, is as a theory of transmigration, and the second is as a phenomenological analysis that is important for Buddhist psychology (pp. 336–337). For our purpose at this point, it is the second that is important.

Within that cycle and the 12 links that describe it, a body is produced. As a result of there being a body which can perceive the world and come to crave things, there emerges a "grasper." The grasper is analyzed into the five aggregates which are the matter, sensations, perceptions, intellect, and dispositions which make up the experiential sense-of-self/*asmita*. It is this grasper that acts out of ignorance, especially the delusional belief that the sense-of-self is a substantial thing, which is what she/he is. By this they produce their own suffering/*dukkha*.

But how on the psychological and experiential level can we understand the emergence of the human being as a grasper? For this we must look to the normal development and birth of the human infant. From its conception as a zygote and through the embryo and fetus stages, under normal circumstances, the developing being has no need to grasp for or desire anything; indeed it has no conception of being a self which is separate from something which is other. It exists in comfort and security, at one with an environment that entirely meets its needs. It floats in a

temperature-controlled fluid that buffers it from all the shocks of the world, while all of its sustenance needs are met. In this environment, it has no experience or conception of self or other, being or nonbeing, and comfort or pain and none of the other dualistic structures which will soon organize its world and its sense-of-self as an entity in that world. Birth is a shock to every aspect of its being. The comforting and protective fluid bath is lost, the temperature fluctuates, and the baby soon experiences hunger and discomfort. No matter how loving and attentive its mother is, she cannot satisfy all of its needs in a way that will replicate its experience in the womb. Although inchoate, it desires what it does not have and can never have again. Thus it is, as Buddhist theory has it, that contact with the world is what gives birth to the grasper. It is this contact, and the experience of desire for something other that is an inevitable outcome of it, that gives rise to the root delusion that the self of the grasper is separate from all else. Thus begins the striving for something that will bring with it to the grasper the security of wholeness and permanence.

On the phenomenological level, the new being has begun to experience itself as separate from all else. It no longer has the feeling of wholeness it had in the womb, it feels that something is lacking. As we have seen above in the discussion of Nagarjuna's work, this experience is delusional if it goes beyond a simple need for food or warmth to create the grasping sense-of-self as a thing separate from that thing that it grasps. Through this experience, the baby begins to construct its sense-of-self in terms of lack. It's not just that I'm hungry but rather that I am lacking in something that I need in order to feel whole, to feel secure, and to feel really real. To achieve this, I want to have that thing which is other than myself, not simply to satisfy my hunger but to enhance or secure myself. As we can see, by this point, the "three poisons" or *kleshas* of Buddhism are functioning in the life of the child, the root delusion/*avidya* of a separate, atomistic sense-of-self/*asmita*, the desire or greed for something other than the self/*raga*, and the anger and avoidance of what it does not want/*dvesha*.

This experience will be encoded conceptually and experientially as the child learns its native language-games, "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (Wittgenstein, 1968, §7). Through these it will experience, think, and speak about its desires and act to fulfill them. Languages in the Indo-European family, of which English is a member, are strongly organized along a dualistic structure which operates on what Warren (1988) has called a "logic of domination." This conceptual framework is organized on a mutually exclusive A/~A structure of absolute dichotomies in which the ~A side is defined not only as separate from but also in terms of deficiency and lack relative to A. Psychologically A represents the self, and the inferiority of the ~A justifies its domination, its being taken and used by A. Things in the ~A category can include other humans as well as all else that is understood as separated from the self, for instance, in a common formation by being designated "nature" or "closer to nature" than the transcendental self.

Loy (2002) traced the history of the development of Western culture as the proliferation of things that the self attempts to acquire or indulge in in order to fill in the "void" created by lack, that is the suppressed sense, originating in the contructed

and impermanent nature of the self, that "I am not real". These things include not only material commodities but also much else as he detailed in *Money, Sex, War, Karma* (2008). That sense-of-lack, the shadow of the sense-of-self, is much exacerbated by the extreme individualism of Western culture. It is the delusion of the reified self and the attempt to secure and validate that self by dominating and/or consuming the Other that produces *dukkha* not only for the self but for all that has been Othered into ~A.

Attempting to fill the void that is the experience of the sense-of-lack is futile since there is no reified self to validate nor can one be developed. The self, like all else, is *sunya*; it is not a reified thing and cannot be turned into one. But, Loy (1992) argued, "It is possible to end our dukkha because the coming-to-rest of using names to take perceptions as self-existing objects can deconstruct the automatized inside-outside dualism between our sense-of-self [the inner/A] and the "objective" everyday world [the outer/~A]" (p. 171). In order to overcome *dukkha*, the principle name that must be deconstructed is the name of the self; "the best way to resolve that fear [that I am no 'thing'] is to become nothing" (p. 173). The way to becoming no "thing" and so dissolving "the entire mass of suffering" is given by the Buddha and explicated by Nagarjuna; it "occurs through meditation and wisdom" (MMK XXVI:11).

As in the practice of the *Anapanasati Sutta*, one focuses on the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness," the body, the mental formations (i.e. sensations or feelings), the mind, and the impermanence. Here impermanence is the *experience* of the non-reified nature of the other foundations, the body, the mind, and the sensations and feelings. That is, their being as *sunya*. The flip side, so to speak, of *sunyata* with its implication of impermanence is *pratitya samutpada*, the interdependence or dependent co-arising of all things which are all also *sunya*. The realization that meditation fosters is that "I" am not a thing but rather no thing and so everything. In the words of Loy (1992), "to become completely groundless is also to become completely grounded, not in some particular, but in the whole network of interdependent relations that constitutes the world. The supreme irony of my struggle to ground myself is that it cannot succeed because I am already grounded in the totality" (p. 174). This experiential insight is wisdom/*prajna* and the foundation of compassion/*karuna* which conduces to moral action/*upaya kasula*.

Mindfulness and Contemporary Selves

Importantly, mindfulness meditation begins with the being of the meditator, their body, mind, etc. The understanding of how things really are that both Buddhism and pre-Buddhist Yoga sought was first and foremost the understanding of one's own nature. One learns through this that one is not a Cartesian mind separated from a body nor is one a Hobbesian isolated social atom at war with all others as the two major Western views would have it. In the meditation experience, the emerging understanding is of interconnectedness, ultimately with all else. And on the level of simple common sense, it is obvious that if humans were Hobbesian beings, the

human race would never have gotten started. Connection and care are essential to our very being. We are mammals that require a long period of care simply to survive. On the level of conventional life and truths, it is natural to be caring of that which is considered a part of oneself or closely connected with oneself. For the individualistic Westerner, that is often limited to close relations and is found most commonly exemplified in the mother's care for her child. However, for many other cultures, that relationship extends to the earth and the other beings with whom we share the earth.

The Mohawk midwife Katsi Cook reminded us, "That woman is the first environment is an original instruction. In pregnancy our bodies sustain life.. . At the breast of women, the generations are nourished. From the bodies of women flows the relationship of those generations both to society and to the natural world. In this way is the earth our mother, the old people tell us. In this way, we women are earth" (quoted in Klein, 2014, p. 417). Cook's reminder is mirrored in the statement by the Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (2013) who wrote, "We often forget that the planet we are living on has given us all the elements that make up our bodies. The water in our flesh, our bones, and all the microscopic cells inside our bodies all come from the Earth and are part of the Earth. The Earth is not just the environment we live in. We are the Earth and we always carry her within us" (p. 8).

The *Metta Sutta* enjoins the practitioner, referred to throughout with the male pronoun, to act toward the world and all beings in it, "Thus as a mother with her life, Will guard her son, her only child." But how probable is it that a male, particularly a contemporary Western male, would be able to replicate the maternal attitude and behavior? Carol Gilligan's (1982) research into contemporary Western women's moral development and style of moral reasoning highlights the naturalness of the mother's care for her child. However, she is clear that the association of the development of maternal care and caring thinking with women but not with men is empirical and that her work shows the interplay of both of the two moral voices that she distinguishes in both sexes (p. 1–2). Other research (Orr, 2016; Stack, 1993; Johnson, 1988) have found that the moral voice Gilligan found associated with women is also available to Western men and is widespread in non-modernized cultures. Johnson's (1988) research shows that the prevalence of the moral voice-gender association is a function of socialization. Like Gilligan she presented her subjects with moral dilemmas and found that their style of moral thinking varied in accord with their gender. But when she asked if there was another way to deal with the dilemma, each subject would product the "moral voice" typically associated with the other gender.

To explain the formation of different moral voices, Gilligan utilized the work of Chodorow (1978) whose research showed that the development of the different ego styles which ground the two moral voices is a function of both which parent is the primary parent and of differential styles of parenting depending on the sex of the child. The typically female communal ego results from the closer association of the mother and girl child, while the male child is typically encouraged to separate and develop an agentic ego. Thus, Gilligan (1982) asserted, the girl develops "a basis for *empathy* [my emphasis] built into their primary definition of self in a way that a boy does not" (p. 8). But not far below the surface of his socialization, this empathic

capacity exists for the boy as well. While space precludes a full discussion of it here, the developing research on empathy as an inherent capacity in humans, which we share not only with other primates but also with elephants, cetaceans, and others (De Waal, 2013, 2009, throws new light on the ground of prosocial and moral action as well as on an important aspect of *Pratitya samutpada*/interconnectedness.

It is significant that the association of the Ethic of Care and Responsibility characteristic of women is mediated by the communal ego style, which is grounded in a sense of the self in relationship with others. This moral reasoner tends to be cooperative and open and works to preserve a sense of community and relatedness. This orientation uses a narrative logic and seeks solutions to problems that preserve relationships and avoid harm in an attempt to support the flourishing of all involved. Thus, when girls and women were tested for moral development, they typically scored lower on Kohlberg's moral development scale. In terms of the ethical/moral distinction I noted in the introductory discussion, they tested as 'only' utilizing pre-ethical moral reasoning.

On the other hand, the Ethic of Rights and Justice is associated with the typically masculine agentic ego. This is a scientific-style reasoner who tends to be highly individualistic and alienated from others. The logic of domination, with himself in the A position, organizes his thinking. Thus, in his ethical thinking he is unemotional and unconnected (objective and impersonal as science demands) and, in the words of one of Gilligan's (1982) young male subjects, sees a moral problem as "like a math problem with humans" (p. 26). Boys and men are in, or are seen by Kohlberg as moving toward, the highest level of ethical reasoning which utilizes scientistic principles such as those found in Kant's or Mill's theories. While this ethical stage and its mode of reasoning are valorized in this culture, it is the polar opposite of the ethic of care. It is the "Ethic" of Care and Responsibility, which is grounded in the inherent human capacity for empathy that, while it is in many respects qualitatively different from the realization of care and connection that meditation facilitates, is one human cultural manifestation of it.

Moral Action as Skillful Action

Mindfulness meditation facilitates the development of wisdom/*prajna* and care or compassion/*karuna*, but can it provide us with *moral* guidance for the many, complex issues which now confront us? How can it help us shape every aspect of our lives in the Noble Eightfold Path? How can it help us decide how to best proceed with the wide range of issues we now face from dealing with personal questions of how we interact with others, to what commodities to consume, or the form of work we will do, to the daunting challenges of the environmental crisis, poverty and the growing wealth gap, overpopulation, or war? As we saw with the arhat and the bodhisattva, the insights of *prajna* and *karuna* do not lead to individualistic personal attainment, given the interconnectedness of all things that would be neither possible nor logical. Rather, the development of deep wisdom and compassion fosters the development of the resolve and strength of character to follow through with one's insights and act on them for the good of all affected. But how ought we go about this?

Prajna, the wisdom of seeing how things really are, in particular fosters the insights necessary to do this. Schroeder (2001) noted that the words and actions of the Buddha often seemed inconsistent. The reason for this is that he realized that people differed in many ways, spiritually, intellectually, and others. "[T]he Buddha knew it would be useless to preach universally or speak as if everyone were the same. He knew that if he wanted to help others he would need to be sensitive to the karmic differences of human beings and mold his teachings to their level" (p. 2). So, for instance, in dealing with someone who is angry or defensive, he could see the pain and insecurity that lay beneath their overt behavior and proceed accordingly. In this way, the practice can help us to develop *upayakausalya* or skillful means and the wisdom and compassion to understand others and so find the most efficacious course of action in our dealings with them.

But we also need knowledge and critical skills to analyze many of the problems we now face and to develop the tools and techniques to address them. As we have noted above, Buddhism developed out of an intellectual milieu and gave rise to the greatest centers of learning of early human history. Contemporary scholars, such as Thurman (2006), have argued for the role of mindfulness in education today not simply to de-stress and develop concentration but to develop the wisdom and compassion out of which moral action develops and which can be brought to bear on our knowledge to develop skillful solutions to our social and global problems. In this connection, Abe (1985) argues regarding one form of Buddhism, Zen, that understanding the philosophy is essential to its practice. Zen Buddhism is not "something amoral, something which you simply let flow from your desires or instincts, just like an animal, without thinking of good or evil." He continued that "intellectual understanding without practice is powerless, but practice without learning is apt to be blind" (p. 2). Except in rare cases, this is certainly correct, and intellectual work, for instance, the study of Nagarjuna's philosophy, can help lessen the hold of powerful but erroneous and so harmful ideas. But what we need to add to this is that intellectual understanding, knowledge, and critical skills are also necessary in order to act effectively in the world. Both the fruits of mindfulness and the fruits of intellectual study are necessary on the Eightfold Path; this is true both of the sorts of moral actions we take every day and certainly is true and necessary for the moral actions we may take to address our current social, political, and environmental problems.

Conclusion

I have argued above that there is no "ethical foundation" in the modern Western sense in Buddhism. Not only do we not find such a thing in the words and practices attributed to the historical Buddha or in Nagarjuna, the major philosophical voice of Buddhism, but such a thing would be entirely against the lived experience, the philosophy, and the logic of Buddhism. Instead what we find is a psycho-spiritual practice, which fosters a deep self-understanding by the *sadhaka*. The potential result of this practice is the experiential realization that the self is a construction, we in the modern West would say a social construction, which can foster a delusional

self-understanding. The root delusion, rooted in one's sense-of-self, is that one is a Hobbesian isolated social atom although this may never be explicitly formulated. However, having given up this root delusion and the other *kleshas* through the practice of mindfulness meditation one can come to rest in the realization that, as Loy (1992) put it, "to become completely groundless is also to become completely grounded, not in some particular, but in the whole network of interdependent relations that constitutes the world. The supreme irony of my struggle to ground myself is that it cannot succeed because I am already grounded in the totality" (p. 174).

The realization that Loy described is often taken to be an all-or-nothing experience: one has an epiphany and changes forever or doesn't have it and remains both a victim and a cause of *dukkha*. But this was not the experience of the Buddha. When, seeking enlightenment, he remembered his childhood experience under the rose apple tree he understood that this was what he was looking for. But prior to that memory, and apparently having forgotten about it, he believed that he could find a relief for suffering and so he left home to become a *sadhaka*. So it is for most of us. We can catch glimpses, we can study and practice, and we can attempt to bring what understanding we have into the Eightfold Path of our lives. As we struggle to find the best way to do this, the skillful means we need, our lives can become progressively more moral. But, as we also saw above, our culture throws many obstacles in our path, many daughters of Mara as the Buddha's culture would put it, in its valorization of money, sex, war, fame and power and the ubiquitous bombardment of inducements to consume and to compete to which we are exposed. But more fundamental is our socialization process which teaches us to be either feminine, which has traditionally meant to be passive and accepting of the status quo, or masculine and thus hyper-individualistic and prone to a multitude of forms of violence. These range from the everyday forms of mistreating others in order to get ahead to the extremes of war. In a chapter titled "Why We Love War," David Loy (2008) has argued that this not only gives the warrior a sense of excitement and purpose, but, when it is a spiritual or holy war, "it can provide a heroic identity that transcends death for death is not checkmate when you are an agent of God" (p. 133). And, as Bob Dylan sang, we all think we have "God on our side" when we do battle.

The work of Gilligan, Chodorow, and others have shown that an essential quality for one on the Eightfold Path, empathy, is available to boys and girls and men and women. This quality of being able to identify with the suffering of the other, if even in a minimal way, is a chief impetus to action. This is not just knowing how they feel but feeling with them as the word compassion indicates with its roots in the Latin words meaning to experience or undergo together, as one. We have all had this experience, for instance, when seeing a hungry, crying baby in a UNICEF TV commercial. But knowledge can help to provide a spur to action as well. For instance, the information that in 2010 global arms expenditure was $1.6 trillion but, as Sachs (2015) has argued, "spending 10 percent of this annually could eliminate extreme poverty and starvation throughout the world" (in Macy and Johnstone, 2012, p. 107). This is the most abstract form of information, the polar opposite of the moving sight of the crying baby. But in this case as well, the sense of interconnectedness, or interbeing in the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, can move us to action when we have access

to natural human responses. Mindfulness opens that availability to boys as it opens to girls the courage to act on their feelings. What it doesn't give is a roadmap to peace and security, but it does give the incentive to begin to look for and work for it. I have argued that mindfulness meditation does not provide us with an ethical foundation, but it does give us access to our innate compassion and wisdom. Thus moral action is fundamental to our nature.

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Part II

Education and Pedagogy

Co-creating the Ethical Space of Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Donald McCown

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to circumvent the critical discussion of ethics in applications of mindfulness and instead to look directly at the actions of those who are learning to practice mindfulness together and describe what happens. Naturally, this shift of tactic (if not of subject) requires some explanation to focus the work that must be done philosophically, practically, and pedagogically, to arrive at useful understandings for further application.

Philosophically, this chapter begins with a non-foundational stance, delineated in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (Diamond, 2000; Wittgenstein, 1922), that we cannot identify some particular part of life or way of speaking that corresponds to ethics but rather that the ethical completely suffuses the world of our everyday life. Certainly, we can lecture about or discuss ethics, but such activity is not necessarily ethical itself, nor would it inevitably generate ethical action. The ethical is not what we talk about; it's what we do.

Practically, then, the chapter must look closely at the actions of a particular form of learning and applying mindfulness—what participants and teacher do together. The choice here is to view the "first-generation" mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), represented by mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), which are built on the same curricular armature and have been used to generate the lion's share of the contemporary scientific evidence base for application of mindfulness (Crane et al., 2017).

These MBIs share the characteristic that they emphasize training in formal and informal mindfulness practices, including practices described as derived from

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Buddhism but brought into language that more or less fits the scientific and thera-peutic worldview of public discourse in the West. It is worth noting that these MBIs have attempted to shield themselves from the current ethical critiques of mindful-ness applications from within and without the MBI community (e.g., Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013) by claiming that they have an implicit ethic that emerges from the practice itself to be embodied and made mani-fest to participants by the teacher (Grossman, 2015) and also that MBI teachers are bound to and protected by the clinical ethical code of their "home" profession (Baer, 2015). Neither of these attempts is satisfactory from the point of view of this chap-ter, as they are based on language about ethics and privilege of the teacher as an ethical agent at the expense of the entire group and its unique actions in the moment.

Pedagogically, the MBIs are still significantly under-theorized. The assumptions about what happens in the classroom are shaped by and considered to be congruent with the forms of research applied to them. Four decades of MBI research have focused almost exclusively on quantitative analysis of individual outcomes of par-ticipants, whether measured by self-report, physiological tests, or neuroscience imaging. This individualistic view has all but obscured the fact that the intervention is offered in a group and that the networks of relationships and resonances among participants and teachers build and thicken—even in the silence—across the weeks of the course. Such a complex situation, with its many actions, must have an impact not merely on relieving each person's pathology but also on the capacity of the group as a whole to hold, support, and be with each other, yet there is but a very thin literature attempting to describe this.

Individualism is so unquestioned, in both MBI research and pedagogy, that a rare attempt to measure what happens in the group, *because* of being in the group, was nevertheless reported with respect to individual outcomes (Imel, Baldwin, Bonus, & MacCoon, 2008). The study noted that the group effect accounted for 7% of the variability in outcomes—a huge number—comparing favorably to the 5% of vari-ability attributable, in psychotherapy studies, to the therapeutic alliance. A powerful force was identified, yet this direction for research has not been pursued.

So, individualism is enshrined, and, without data or even reflection, the teacher is valorized as having the most powerful effect on the group. A qualitative study of the role of the teacher in MBCT suggests that current teachers give little consider-ation to the high value that participants place on the support of their fellows (van Aalderen, Breukers, Reuzel, & Speckens, 2014). It is not simply the extra encour-agement that participants appreciate, but further, as peer relationships grow, partici-pants come to depend less on the teacher. While the study authors noted that some teachers consider the group situation to have value in itself, they suggested that the actual value may be underestimated and that importance of the group may need more attention in formal teacher training programs.

My colleagues and I have suggested that the research and pedagogical con-cerns of the MBIs are located in different discourses that need not affect each other and have adopted a social constructionist view that emphasizes the rela-tional dimension (Gergen, 2009; McCown, 2013; McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010; McCown & Wiley, 2008, 2009); although others have concurred on the

relational context (Crane et al., 2015; Crane, Kuyken, Hastings, Rothwell, & Williams, 2010; Crane et al., 2017), they nevertheless maintain an individualistic conception of participants and valorize the teacher.

Now, we have a stance from which to consider ethics in the MBIs. We will eschew a focus on ethical language. We will adopt MBSR as a paradigmatic intervention. And we will work with a view of the pedagogy that considers the actions of the group and supports the pursuit of a non-foundational ethic.

From Co-creation to Confluence

We start from relationship; in fact, humans are born into relationship. Who we are with defines what we do. That is, we co-create the situation in which we find ourselves, and thus we often "find ourselves" to be different. Each instance of co-creation is unique and, therefore, unrepeatable. Considered in this way, the activities of teaching and learning mindfulness in a group (even in a dyad) are an ongoing co-creation that involves and affects teacher and participants equally.

Gergen (2009) offered a way of considering co-creation in the fullness of its implications. He describes the situation, say, of the MBI classroom, as a *confluence.* He defined it in contradistinction to the dominant interpretation, in which a group of individuals seen as having bounded identities and autonomous agency choose to be accountable to the others with whom they have gathered. In the confluence description, participants are defined by the situation in which they find themselves; they know who they are (better, know what they are doing) moment by moment as the activity of the group unfolds. That is, in meditation practice, the action defines meditators who come to sit quietly and a teacher who speaks instructions aloud. All change later into dyad partners who speak to each other and shift again to come together in plenary dialogue. The description of confluence does not include inner agency or outside control but rather a tacit understanding within the relationships of what is happening now.

It is difficult to find ways to express this sense of co-creation, because the English language is dominated by the idea that we are individual agents with relatively impermeable boundaries. Gergen (2009) found no way out of this linguistic bind but suggested, rather, that we reimagine terms like teacher and participant as referring to relational beings. We might wish for descriptive resources like those in the more collective culture of South Korea (McCown & Ahn, 2016). There, when two or more are gathered in participatory harmony, the situation can be described with the term *ahwoolim*, which denotes a softness of self-boundaries that allows pleasure in unity. Another term, *shinmyong*, indicates an ecstatic state in which participation in the fullness of the life of the group in the moment is mutual—literally, a divine brightening. Confluence is perhaps a strange word, yet none of these terms are simply speculative or philosophical; the experience may be described physiologically, as well, and such description may lend credence to the ethical understandings this chapter is moving toward.

Social Engagement Happens

Key to such a physiological description would be the mirror neurons in the brain that help to sense, represent, and track the actions and intentions of others (Gallese et al., 1996). Simply stated, humans have a capacity to attune and resonate with each other. We witness another's pain or joy, and our brain tries it on, reflecting the feelings in our body, simultaneously. Access to others in this way is instantaneous. Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, and Lenzi (2003) described the brain circuit that carries the first sense of the other's expression and posture from the mirror neuron system, to the superior temporal cortex to process how it feels in the body, then through the insula to the limbic system to get the emotional content, and back through the insula to the prefrontal cortex to define how the other feels. Siegel (2007) dubbed this the resonance circuit and suggested that although it is described as interpersonal, it also works in an intrapersonal way for one who practices meditation. In meditation, the prefrontal cortex is active, so it downregulates the limbic system, particularly the amygdalae, thus reducing negative affect such as anxiety and fear (Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007; Lieberman, Eisenberger, Crockett, Tom, Pfeifer, & Way, 2007).

So, now, consider an MBI group in meditation. The participants and teacher (imagine confluence) potentially are resonating intrapersonally (and perhaps interpersonally), and pleasant feelings, even a certain equanimity, have shaped the faces and bodies of much of the group. They open their eyes and take in the full view of the environment. Now, to understand the objective basis of the power of confluence, we need to make one more move—to include Porges's (2011) polyvagal theory of regulation of the autonomic nervous system.

Based on the evolution of the autonomic nervous system, particularly the vagus nerves, the polyvagal theory describes three behavioral strategies available to humans for adapting to life-threatening situations, and challenging situations, and (does this surprise you?) situations of safety and caring. Respectively, the strategies are *freeze*, *fight/flight*, and a third somewhat surprising one, *social engagement.* This third response is triggered when the environment feels safe: the new vagus nerve slows the heart rate, inhibits the fight/flight response, and prepares us for positive social encounters through optimal communication. It regulates the muscles of the face and head for the actions required, opening the eyes wider to see others better, tunes the ears to the range of the human voice (a dangerous move in unsafe spaces, as predators make noises lower and higher), tones the muscles of the face and neck by which subtle expressions and gestures are possible, and tones as well the muscles of speech for clear articulation. Underlying these changes is—and this is important—a release of oxytocin, the "love" hormone of birthing, nursing, and pair bonding. With the onset of this response, an atmosphere of calm and safety may be established among those gathered together, which reinforces itself as participants' mirror neuron systems try on the faces, postures, and gestures which are also responses to what we will come to call friendship, later in this chapter.

As prelude, we might consider a description drawn from the language and practice of the Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers. In their service,

meeting for worship, the group is waiting silently, in stillness, for the moving of the Holy Spirit. The term waiting is used not with contemporary definition but in the older way as in a "lady- or gentleman-in-waiting" who is in the background still, and silent, yet prepared to respond instantly to any need or prompting from the royal person. In meeting for worship, promptings of the spirit may take over the participants, and the situation would be known as a *gathered* or *covered* meeting. Kelly (1947) described this:

> a blanket of divine covering comes over the room, a stillness that can be felt is over all, and the worshippers are gathered into a unity and synthesis of life which is amazing indeed. A quickening presence pervades us…and awakens us in depths that had before been slumbering. The burning bush has been kindled in our midst, and we stand together on holy ground (p. 3).

Something happens when humans come together in the quiet of mindfulness practice. The confluence that is a classroom of participants and teacher learning to practice mindfulness together often takes on a particular character, related to the situation we have been describing, which may be seen to have ethical implications. What is required in order to make this clear is an analysis of the shared activity of the pedagogy of the MBIs, which follows.

Ethical Qualities in the Pedagogy

If the MBI classes co-create mindfulness, then the activity achieves that is not only the formal meditation but also all the actions of the group. Therefore, it is this overall practice of the pedagogy in the confluence that requires analysis to move toward an understanding of how "ethics" suffuses it. Such an analysis, naturally, requires a focus on the concept of confluence, rather than on the dominant model of education theory. The pedagogy of mindfulness does not belong exclusively to MBI teachers, rather it is a continually evolving process, shared with all participants.

Moments of mindfulness—produced by formal or informal practice—may be shared by participants, as some choose to enter dialogue (predominantly mediated by the teacher) by giving an account of their experience and clarifying it through reflection. This, of course, happens out loud with a few participants. For other participants, it happens in silence, in their "unfinished dialogue" of thinking, as Gergen (2009) termed it in relational language, which may move the group toward a new and more nuanced understanding of and capacity for mindfulness.

Mindfulness is also co-created when participants are doing their "homework" of formal practice in solitude. In the relational view, the voices of teacher and other participants are still present and contributing to the situation. This is literally true, because participants practice at home by listening to recordings made by the teacher, and is also *literarily* true, as the "texts" of dialogues spoken aloud in the class sessions are always available to influence the unfinished dialogues worked through when participants are alone.

Together or alone, participants and teacher undertake the actions of the pedagogy—constantly learning the practice of mindfulness. Experiences of moments of mindfulness are unique. They arise from the contexts and texts available in the moment. As a result, there is no static, once and done experience or definition of mindfulness. Rather, there is an infinite number of definitions, shaped in the lived moment, not merely by emergent texts but also by the expressivity of the vocal quality, expressions, gestures, and bodily comportment of all in the confluence of the moment. There will be many such moments and definitions across the arc of the course. They may have their genesis in words, such as Kabat-Zinn's (1994) well established "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (p. 4), or from dialogue about an experience, such as the iconic activity of eating a raisin in a mindful way. Through the incidence and coincidence of spoken and unfinished dialogues in class after class, such thin definitions thicken, deepen, and become more nuanced and elaborated, serving participants better and better.

What mindfulness is in a particular class is, therefore, particular. It is recognizable, certainly, because it is shaped by common language used by the teacher. Yet it is nuanced by the very specific experiences of the participants unfolding moment by moment—in spoken or unfinished dialogue. Again, there is not a defined mindfulness that gets learned and practiced, but, rather, mindfulness is co-created in a unique way. That means, to investigate the idea of ethics in MBIs, we must analyze the pedagogy itself.

An Ethical Analysis

This analysis keeps equal focus on the relational and the ethical, to identify the qualities of the human environment created by the actions of the class. The qualities to be found are not methods or means, neither are they principles or rules for ethical behavior of teachers or participants—remember that we are eschewing a language-driven concept in favor of one that is simply descriptive. In a truly successful description, the qualities that are present would be identical to the environment. Put in the reverse, withdrawal of any of the qualities would dramatically change the environment—from a sense of being gathered to a sense of fragmentation and individual boundaries. Such a description of the qualities would show each to be discrete *and* interrelated, not overlapping, yet mutually supporting. Such a description would act as a map or model useful for making the ethical inquiries about the environment —the co-created ethical space—itself (McCown, 2013).

There is significant similarity among the MBIs derived from the MBSR model—regardless of the target population (Crane et al. 2017). The book, *Teaching Mindfulness*, analyzes this meta-structure, acknowledging the logic of MBI pedagogy and revealing the *teaching intentions* across the curriculum (McCown et al., 2010). The term teaching intentions is applied in opposition to learning objectives; intentions are held lightly by the teacher allowing the curriculum to unfold contingently within the co-created space of the class, rather than the imposition of

curriculum suggested in the term learning objectives. It has shown itself to be useful in alive moments of teaching, as well as in reflective work of critique and innovation in curriculum design and development.

The teaching intentions, in a useful order, are (1) experiencing new possibilities, (2) growing compassion, (3) discovering corporeality, (4) cultivating observation, and (5) moving toward acceptance. Although they are distinct and numbered here, it is more useful to consider them as simultaneous and fluid in their order, allowing for the never-repeated experience of co-creation across the course duration. For example, cultivating observation, identified with the capacity for "re-perceiving" (Shapiro, et al., 2006) or "decentering" (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), which can be seen as the key movement of the pedagogy, facilitates moving toward acceptance and is bracketed and supported by the immediate and ongoing intentions of experiencing new possibilities, discovering corporeality and growing compassion.

Experiencing New Possibilities Consider the raisin. Early in the curriculum, participants are asked to step out of their habitual ways of engaging the world and to touch, smell, see, and even listen to a piece of dried fruit—making it strange and new. In this same class, the participants, with their often long lists of medical and mental health diagnoses (or self-diagnoses), are confronted by Kabat-Zinn's (1990) oft quoted statement (or some rhetorical equivalent): "as long as you are breathing, there is more right with you than there is wrong, no matter how ill or hopeless you may feel" (p. 2). Those tightly identified with their diagnoses are cast into an environment where no one is interested in that identity and no one has them under surveillance—and they can relax from self-surveillance. How frightening, how freeing, it is to have a new life in that moment and every moment of the course from then on. One distinguishing relational quality here is actually an absence—there is no sense of pathologizing.

Growing Compassion This intention has a different character as the course begins compared to its ending. At the start it has a centripetal movement, as many participants seek relief from their suffering by drawing compassion from the teacher and others toward themselves, while others may find compassion difficult to accept for themselves yet may offer it to others (and try to "fix" them), so the centrifugal movement is there in nascent form as well. Later in the curriculum, the formal practice of loving-kindness is introduced, most often in the full-day session after participants have experienced extended silence and practice so that intra- and interpersonal resonance help encourage the possibilities of the practice. Participants experience a formal link to the relational dimension—revealing how their growing self-connection from the class may impact those whom they love and those with whom they spend their time, including each other and, ultimately, the world. This is also a moment in which many connect their practice to their spiritual and religious commitments. They experience centripetal and centrifugal movements of the quality of compassion simultaneously and with different understanding across the duration of the course.

Discovering Corporeality Western culture privileges the cognitive. Embodied experience, in Hamlet's phrase, is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." In the MBI curricula, participants are directed to the sensations, emotions, and thinking arising in each moment. Typically, the first formal practice in the curriculum practice is the body scan, which helps participants through experience and later dialogue to separate their opinions, stories, anticipations, and memories about their bodily experience from their immediate experience—which may be very different. In each class session, participants have the opportunity to move from the already known to the edge of the unknown, by using attention to the body. Thoughts may be explored as to how the body responds to them. An emotion may be considered beyond the story that is its genesis, revealing the body sensations of, say, anger, as a form of energy—that may even be pleasant. When the teacher asks a participant if she is willing to undertake such an exploration in spoken dialogue, the other participants (and the teacher) take part, in their own ways. All have the opportunity to track the moment-to-moment changes in body sensations that become more and more evident through practice. There is a quality of appreciating contingency that comes through in the pedagogy.

Cultivating Observation This is the key move of the pedagogy. For many participants, it takes some time, a class or two, before a capacity to observe experience—body sensation, thinking, emotion—shows itself. In early formal practices such as the body scan and sitting meditation, instruction suggests that participants notice when the mind wanders from the object of attention—a part of the body or the breath—and then choose to return. They discover that the moment of noticing that attention has drifted is a moment of awareness, and it may dawn at last that such a moment is vast—nothing less than their whole world. From such a perspective, a quality surrounding the practice emerges: the practice is not about changing or fixing something, or getting somewhere, or learning some lesson (as might be expected in a course). Any of these outcomes would be side effects of undertaking the practice; the practice is not instrumental—it's about the exploration itself.

Moving Toward Acceptance It is easy to interpret this as an achievement of each individual participant, and this is reinforced by the direction from which MBIs have been researched. A contrary interpretation comes from the relational direction, in which the co-created mindfulness of the group facilitates a level of non-reactivity that can sustain participants as they meet aversive sensations, thoughts, and emotions in their explorations—spoken or unfinished dialogues. The element of non-judgment in the co-created definition of mindfulness can blossom into "an affectionate, compassionate quality…a sense of openhearted, friendly presence and interest" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). The quality might be dubbed friendliness or even friendship, as there is a regard of the group within the group.

The Skills of the Teacher   The actions and attitudes of the teacher within the co-creation of the MBI group may also be analyzed for contributions to the qualities of the space. Four skill sets of the teacher (McCown et al., 2010)—stewardship, homiletics, guidance, and inquiry—can assist in this analysis.

Stewardship   Participants in an MBI course are coming together to explore their experiences, often prompted by particular suffering. They must be cared for in some basic ways. The stewardship skills are the way this can happen: a steward, literally, is the guardian of the hall. So the teacher's actions to set up and maintain the architectural space, from adjusting temperature and lighting, to setting up chairs in a circle are important and symbolic. The circle of chairs, as with King Arthur's round table, cuts through hierarchy—no one has the preferred seat. Further, participants are turned toward each other, so the attitude, which is reinforced by the teacher, is that there are many with valuable experience of life, many who can contribute, and that there are no right answers.

Stewardship comprises the acts of tending the ethical space, by attending to the co-creation of mindfulness. The space is not invulnerable. Dramatic distractions in the physical or interpersonal environment may threaten or collapse it. Formal or informal mindfulness practice is the steward's tool in such moments. With a loud, unpleasant sound outside the room—say, a line of blaring fire engines passing the building—a move could be to touch into a short, formal mindfulness practice and be with the sounds. The co-creation of mindfulness binds the group together and sustains it through the event, so it need not be seen as the effort of the teacher. When it is over, a dialogue may help to turn the experience into what was noticed about distractions, the mind's tendency toward stories and worry, and the evanescence of powerful events. The teacher is not central; the group's capacity to regulate itself belongs to all. The quality that comes through is the subversion of hierarchy.

Homiletics   The word's Greek root suggests talking *together*, so this skill is about engaging with and responding to participants. The teacher draws as much didactic material from the group as she can, to avoid the position of expert and aid in the thickness of the co-creation. Even the use of "texts" adds to the non-hierarchical nature of the co-creation of an ethical space. As participants engage in dialogue about their experiences with mindfulness, the memorable incidents become "texts." So didactic material is democratic in nature, with participants as respected authors. In a similar move, the notable use of poems and stories in MBI pedagogy (Baer & Krietemeyer, 2006; Segal et al., 2002) subverts the teacher's position as expert, because the "wisdom" is available in a poem—or even a children's book. The skill contributes to the qualities of lack of hierarchy and the presence of friendliness.

Guidance   Although it is most evident in the language used to lead formal practices, there is a way of speaking that permeates the pedagogy. The particular style developed by Kabat-Zinn (2004) was meant to help make mindfulness possible by

avoiding ways of communicating that might "generate resistance" in participants or "create more waves in the thought structure." Skillful language undercuts any sense of striving—the "if you did this long enough, you'd be better" idea, emphasizing rather the non-instrumental quality of the practice. It rejects idealizing—that "I know how to do this and I'm going to teach you" stance—instead, steering around hierarchy. It eschews fixing—the suggestion that mindfulness can "reverse your deficits" approach—again emphasizing the non-instrumental quality. And it ducks the setting up of dualism—where "an observed and an observer" might be posited, drawing participants deeper into the quality of friendliness.

The language, then, is invitational and suggestive, in the realm of diplomatic dialogue (Moss, Reibel, & McCown, 2016), saying "maybe you could try this," or "what would it be like if you," rather than just "do this." Famously, in Kabat-Zinn's (2004) approach, the imperative is replaced by the present participle: not "breathe in" but "breathing in."

The skill is transcendent and offers participants the opportunity to have their own experience, with as little mediation by the teacher as possible. The teacher meanwhile guides and speaks from her direct experience of the relationships of the confluence, maintaining the co-creation of the ethical space, without fanfare, in ways that are non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental.

Inquiry This is not general conversation with the group; it is a moment in which the teacher and a participant explore together the participant's subjective experience. Inquiry brings the tacit understandings of the moment into language, where they can be investigated more closely.

The teacher's stance is based on friendship, curiosity, and "not knowing." The teacher is open to whatever comes out of the inquiry dialogue—there is no direction, no agenda—simply an encounter of the most human kind. This is evident in the open-ended nature of the questions that generate an inquiry. It might begin simply as, "How was it for you?" And a reflective response might be followed by "Can you say more about that?" It is the depth of reflection and engagement of participant, teacher, *and* the others in the group who witness the dialogue (while undertaking their own unfinished dialogues) that move everyone toward new understandings. Inquiry, after all, is shared work. The skill is in holding the outcomes with openness—a kind of cosmopolitanism. That is, all the participants are free to ascribe their own meaning to their experiences, within or outside any particular tradition of thought or spirituality.

Qualities Revealed in the Pedagogy

Throughout the analysis above, seven qualities were identified, associated with particular curricular intentions and specific skills of the teacher. In order of appearance, the qualities are of (1) not labeling pathologies, which might shorten to

non-pathologizing; (2) a turn toward the experience of the moment in the body, which might be shorter as *corporeality*; (3) tracking the continual changes of conditions in the moment, which might be put as awareness of *contingency*; (4) an all-over sense of friendliness toward self and others, which might be dubbed *friendship*; (5) a stance by the teacher of genuine curiosity and not knowing about participants' experiences, which might be termed *non-hierarchical*; (6) an attitude that frames the practice as exploration with an unknown outcome, not a fix or cure, which might be called *non-instrumental*; and (7) openness to the meanings participants place on their experiences or *cosmopolitanism*. These qualities are distinct from one another, although they seem at first glance to relate in obvious and subtle ways. What remains, then, is to understand the ways that they relate, which may reveal a structure or model for their effect in creating the ethical space that characterizes the MBIs.

A Model of the Ethical Space

Now, it is time to draw a model of the ethical space (McCown, 2013). It is not an attempt to freeze the qualities found in the pedagogy, to use and apply them to solve some ethical dilemma; rather, it is a description of the actions of the participants and teacher (the confluence). As such, it may be different in each group—even in each class session. Yet, the situations may be congruent enough to be described by a generous model with flexible boundaries.

To keep boundaries soft, the model (Fig. 8.1) is presented in three *dimensions*, a word suggesting something distinct yet potentially boundless. The seven qualities discovered in the pedagogy divide logically into three dimensions: of *doing*, of *non-doing*, and of *friendship*.

The doing dimension comprises the qualities that start (mnemonically!) with "C," corporeality, contingency, and cosmopolitanism. They are located within the flow of the confluence, in the actions and experiences of the moment.

The non-doing dimension (again mnemonically) comprises the "non-" prefixed qualities, non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental. They are most easily seen as shaped by teacher actions and seem to be mutually supporting. That is, the entire non-doing dimension may collapse with the compromise of any one quality: pathologizing can only take place when the teacher has assumed a higher status as one who "knows" (rather than staying with "not knowing"), and with a higher status comes the privilege to prescribe, allowing the actions of the curriculum become instrumental. Such a collapse could begin with any one of the three qualities of that dimension.

The third dimension might be described as not only boundless, but also penetrating: friendship suffuses all six other qualities, binding them together—staining and sustaining them. Friendship is the full character of the pedagogy.

DOING DIMENSION
Corporeality
Cosmopolitanism
Contingency

NON-DOING DIMENSION
Non-Pathologizing
Non-Instrumental
Non-Hierachical

FRIENDSHIP

DOING DIMENSION
Corporeality
Cosmopolitanism
Contingency

NON-DOING DIMENSION
Non-Pathologizing
Non-Instrumental
Non-Hierachical
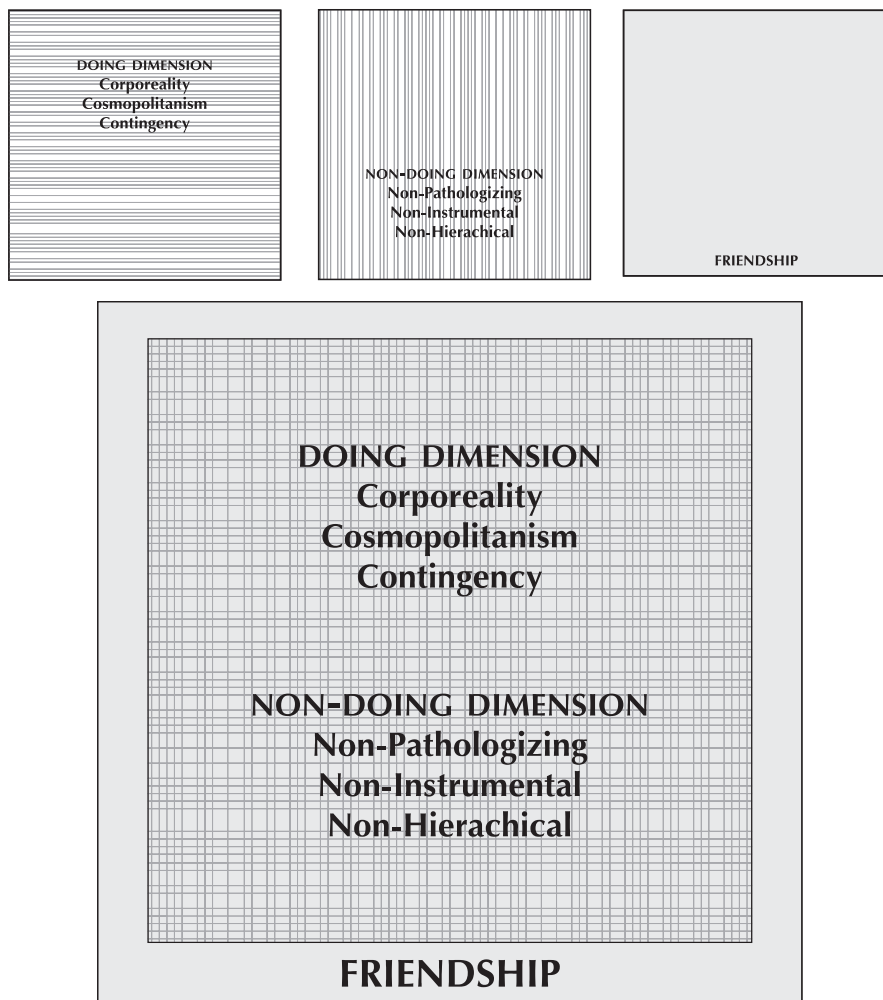
FRIENDSHIP

Fig. 8.1 Together, the doing and non-doing dimensions come together to form the ethical space in which the gathered mindfulness group acts. The space is pervaded by the third dimension, the quality of friendship that characterizes the conception of mindfulness within the MBIs

Relationships between the Dimensions

Although graphic conventions limit the expression of the model of the ethical space to the plain of the page, it is profitable to think beyond it. All of the dimensions are engaged at once and therefore have no set order; any sequencing that is suggested in this presentation is purely for descriptive convenience. The subtle ways in which qualities interact with their own dimension and between the other dimensions are critical to the description. What follows is meant to capture the specificity of the cross-hatching or meshwork suggested in Fig. 8.1.

The Doing Dimension Whether from the perspective of teacher or participant, this dimension comes into focus through concrete actions in the classroom. Each of the three "C" qualities is evident, say in the guidance of practice offered by the teacher, and is further reinforced in the dialogues that follow. In MBSR, this starts immediately in class one and is clearly demonstrated in the first formal mindfulness practice, the body scan, which is an epitome of the course. Working from a perspective colored by cognitive therapy, the developers of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy found their horizons expanded:

> We could see more clearly why MBSR used body-focused awareness exercises, including a body scan exercise that involved focusing awareness on each part of the body in turn, as well as stretches, mindful walking, and yoga. These were not simply added extras, but a central way in which a person might learn to relate differently to his or her experience. The MBSR approach allows participants to see how negative thoughts and feelings are often expressed through the body. These sensations, too, could be held in awareness and observed, not pushed away. Awareness of the effect of negative thoughts and feelings in the body gave participants another place to stand, another perspective from which to view the situation. This awareness discouraged avoidance of difficult or painful thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. Instead, it suggested a measured and reliable way of "turning toward" and "looking into" these experiences. (Segal et al., 2002, pp. 60–61)

In the guidance of the body scan, which is generated from within the teacher's own experience of the practice in the moment of speaking (Kabat-Zinn, 2004), the quality of *corporeality* is actively expressed. A sense of this can shine through in just a scrap of guidance from a body scan script, such as this:

> Moving now to the shoulders, checking into their condition in this moment, any tightness or softness, recognizing that this is the condition *now* … accepting it, knowing that it does not need to be some other way… and knowing also that conditions change… noticing if there is a sense of the breath in the shoulders… how much of the body does breathing affect? (McCown et al., 2010, p. 189)

The simultaneity of the quality of *contingency* is evident here, as the guidance offers participants their experience of the shoulders in the moment and suggests its transience in the next breath. The language used in MBSR classes presumes that change is underway. The present participle (e.g., "Moving now to…") drops the participants directly into the flow of experience. The basic questions of "What are you noticing" and "How is it for you?" emphasize the flow and turn of the participants toward it. The key move of the pedagogy, to be with and in the experience of the moment in a friendly way, is catalyzed in such simple inquiries. As such questions and language usages are used in dialogues with the teacher, in dyads and small groups, and, of course, in participants' unfinished dialogues, the temporary nature of the moment, and of any description of it, becomes increasingly evident.

In the opening moments and experiences of an MBSR course, the appearance of the quality of *cosmopolitanism* may seem to lag behind corporeality and contingency. Participants begin a course uncertain about how—even whether—they may give meaning to their experiences, stemming from expectations of typical

classroom practice in which the teacher is expert and provides "correct" interpretations. Such expectations are dashed within moments, as the teacher turns back answer-seeking questions with the riposte, "What do you think?," and takes up an open, not-knowing stance, which demonstrates cosmopolitanism by allowing meaning to emerge from dialogue, which informs all levels of communication in the classroom.

As the focus on corporeality and contingency has their effect on participants' experience, cosmopolitanism provides a certain kind of clarity around questions that might be perceived as religious or spiritual. In MBSR, perceptions about the nature of the self, for example, are not pushed for and are held very tentatively: "My colleagues and I don't ever lecture about this or say this to people. *They* say it to us. They say things like, 'Who am I if I am now observing these things?'" noted Saki Santorelli (Horrigan, 2007, p. 140). Openings for meaning are often on offer through classroom actions, such as reading aloud a poetic text. Mary Oliver's poem "The Summer Day," a staple of the MBIs, closes with the question, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do / With your one wild and precious life?" This is an opening; participants may answer in the comfort of their own cosmopolitanism. It holds lightly all that is heavy in the classroom, spoken or unfinished: the fragile boundaries of the self, extremes of emotion, evocation of suffering and death, and the evanescence of happiness.

The Non-doing Dimension   The "Non" qualities are defined in absence, in what is lacking in the actions of teacher and participants in the classroom. In the opening instants of the first class, they can be identified with the teacher and the curriculum, yet, as with the "C" qualities, with due speed they become qualities inextricable from the confluence. A recounting of their interrelationship might start right at the end of the body scan described in the discussion of the doing dimension.

As the teacher asks participants a basic question, "How is it for you now?", one woman speaks right up.

"I can't do this right," she says. The teacher looks at her quizzically. She continues, "My mind shoots around all over the place." "I can't focus at all."

The teacher responds, "I know, that's like my mind too. That's what minds do—yours, mine, and everybody's." She turns her head to include the whole class and raises her hand. Hands go up all around the circle. Participants look around at each other, and the teacher resumes her inquiry, "So, what did you do when your mind went off somewhere?"

"I just came back to your voice and what we were supposed to be paying attention to," she says.

"So, you knew what to do, and then you did it, right?"

"I guess so."

The teacher asks, "And how many times did you notice that your mind went away?"

"Oh, my god, hundreds, I'll bet."

"Hundreds of times of coming back to your present moment experience. You see, that's hundreds of times of practicing exactly right."

In this scene, all three "non" qualities are manifested simultaneously—non-hierarchical, non-pathologizing, and non-instrumental. A description of their interaction could begin anywhere.

Let's begin with *non-hierarchical*. The fact that the class is arranged in a circle is an encapsulation of what is missing—there is no preferred seat for the teacher. Everyone is a participant, and all are facing one another. An early pedagogical move asks that participants speak to the group, not just the teacher. This is reinforced with nonverbal cues, as the teacher looks around the circle to show the wider connection. Another move asks participants to speak together in dyads or small groups, with no need to report into the teacher at the end. Whatever is said belongs only to the participants, which subverts the tendency toward teacher preferment.

The classroom language, too, has a significant absence of what Kabat-Zinn (2004) referred to as "idealizing," the structures in which the teacher is the knower and the participants are learners. Instead, the talk is about sharing an adventure, as in, "Let's have an experience together and see what comes of it," whether eating a raisin, practicing a body scan, or joining in dialogue. No one in the room knows what will happen, but all are engaging the key move of the pedagogy by turning toward and being with in their experience in the moment. This leads to what might be discouraged in therapeutic contexts, "self-disclosure" by the teacher. In the MBSR group, however, the teacher is implicated in the situation. Every moment is a moment of self-disclosure, for everyone. There is no hierarchy of value for experience.

It is worth noting here that the academic training programs for MBSR and MBCT teachers in the UK, associated with the discipline of psychology, chose to use the term "teacher" rather than "therapist" for those undergoing training (Crane et al., 2010). The two identities are mutually exclusive. The tensions inherent in teachers' professional identities will be explored in a separate section below. The point here is that the non-hierarchical quality (and because of their simultaneity the other two "nons" as well) is endangered by shifting roles.

Within the vignette above, *non-pathologizing* is also salient. The characteristics of MBSR participants are a place to start with this. They are all there for different reasons. As Saki Santorelli has explained:

> Medicine for the past 120 years has really developed tremendous acumen for the differential diagnosis. We give a single diagnosis and then we develop a single treatment modality to meet that diagnostic condition. In the Stress Reduction Clinic, we have done it the other way around. We've said that instead of making the groups homogenous, we will make them heterogeneous. Why? If people participate for the same reason—say heart disease—well, that's what they have in common and where conversation will naturally gravitate. Sometimes this can be very useful, sometimes not. Conversely, if you have people in the room for 25 different reasons, their common ground becomes the work of developing their inner resources in service of whatever ails them. (Horrigan, 2007, p. 142)

Heterogeneity redefines the participants, not only as the teacher does not focus on their diagnoses but also as they shift their focus as well—getting out from under the self-surveillance of their condition. While mindfulness has been negatively characterized as self-surveillance (Gold, 2011), in the MBIs, the key move of the pedagogy of turning toward and being with and in experience as it arises reveals the reverse. Through contingency (and corporeality), participants recognize that no condition, no symptom, is static. Thus, the ethical space of the confluence becomes a site of resistance in which participants can identify with change and become aware of new ways of experiencing their lives and new ways of being.

The pedagogy of mindfulness, as Kabat-Zinn (2010, p.xi) suggested, is not "just one more method or technique, akin to other familiar techniques and strategies we may find instrumental and effective in one field or another." It may be better described as *non-instrumental*, as the pedagogy insists that we can turn toward; however, we are in the moment and be with and in that. This is not some idealized "acceptance" of the way things are; it is more radical than that. There is profound curiosity, at the level of fearlessness, in the turning toward. The participant is faced with the choice about changing what can be changed. The teacher does not make the choice, nor influence how the change should come about. Only the participant decides and makes meaning. So, cosmopolitanism is at play as well.

The non-instrumental quality is best represented by the way that the skill of inquiry works—either when led by the teacher (Santorelli, 2016) or when undertaken by participants as spoken or unfinished dialogue. The essential ground rule, repeated as often as necessary in the course, is "no fixing"—on which the non-hierarchical, non-pathologizing, and non-instrumental qualities depend. In challenging situations of physical and/or emotional suffering, it may be difficult to simply be with and in what is arising in the moment. If the inquiry can stay within that key move of the pedagogy, however, it can:

> work to subvert a strong internal and external tendency to look for certain (sometimes quite fixed) kinds of improvement or resolution of difficulties. This is a tendency that can play out in therapeutic and mental health contexts in familiar and unhealthy ways for both practitioners and clients at times. In comparison, the possibility to experience a sense of 'OKness' in the midst of 'not-OKness,' is a broader influence offered by the meditative traditions, which can inform not merely process but also potentially a different approach to content. (Crane & Elias, 2006, p. 32)

This possibility of "OKness in not-OKness" is the basis of the co-creation of mindfulness, which comprises the confluence. It is not simply the work of the inquiry dialogue partners, it is the work of all. All the "C" and "Non" qualities must be present for it to be possible, and the thing that sustains them is the last dimension—and its single quality.

The Friendship Dimension   It may be helpful to recap the discussion above of the work of Porges (2011), described as the social engagement response. This response, which reverses fight or flight and prepares the body and mind for intimate levels of communication, is characterized by stillness and quiet in demeanor, the capacity to

listen deeply and understand, and the ability to clearly articulate information to others. Remembering that a release of the "love hormone" oxytocin is part of the response suggests possible intensity of the atmosphere within an MBI group. The formal mindfulness practice may initiate this response, which becomes the background for the co-creation of the ethical space. This is one way of thinking about friendship.

Yet friendship is certainly more complex and layered, involving as it does at least two and often as many as 30 participants, in various situations of suffering and exploration. The pedagogical actions undertaken in the class, relying on every one of the "C" and "Non" qualities, have a powerful impact on the entire group. Imagine a teacher-participant inquiry in which physical pain and its effects on the emotions are being explored. The dialogue is oriented around body sensations. The entire group is paying attention, tracking what is happening with the participant who is speaking, or engaging in his or her own explorations as unfinished dialogue. The co-created mindfulness of the room is supporting them all. And the situation is recursive. As the spoken dialogue touches experience, the language becomes thick and expressive and draws vivid responses from the participants. All of this deepens the quiet, the emotion, and the friendliness in the space.

The support that participants feel in and from the group that allows them to turn toward and be within their experience of the moment is not simply theoretical nor is it merely physical. Rather, it is relational. Present with the group, or alone with the "group within," more is possible than before. The friendship of the ethical space is an atmosphere that is alive for those within it. Emerson (1841/1983) characterized it beautifully in the opening paragraph of his essay "Friendship":

> We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken. Maugre all the selfishness that chills like east winds the world, the whole human family is bathed with an element of love like a fine ether. How many persons we meet in houses, whom we scarcely speak to, whom yet we honor, and who honor us! How many we see on the street, or sit with in church, whom, though silently, we warmly rejoice to be with! Read the language of these wandering eyebeams. The heart knoweth (p. 331).

To put it, perhaps, more succinctly, the ethical space generates and maintains itself. While co-creating mindfulness through the pedagogy, the group (and its participants) possess a particular know-how. They can be in the moment together, whatever the quality of the moment.

Ethical Beyond the Space?

As participants return again and again to co-create mindfulness in the ethical space of the MBI confluence, they are steeping in a particular atmosphere with particular possibilities. How can we think about how this changes them? How can we explain "outcomes" in a relational discourse?

Gergen (2009) has a concept that clarifies. He noted that we partake of many different confluences as we go through life. As we steep in them, we develop a repertoire of potential ways of being—potentials Gergen called them—and we can therefore be described as a *multi-being.* As we continue to move from situation to situation, to enter new and different relationships, the potentials of our multi-being are available as needed and appropriate. As Gergen put it: "In sum, all meaning/full relationships leave us with another's way of being, a self that we become through the relationship, and a choreography of co-action. From these three sources, we emerge with enormous possibilities for being" (p. 137).

The atmosphere in which the group is steeping is not a figure of speech. Rather, it is an objective and subjective experience recognized within an undivided relationship between self and others (Böhme, 1993; Bollnow, 2011; Ingold, 2013), which is a useful redescription of confluence. That the atmosphere is shared so broadly is made clear through a question to the group such as, "What is it like in the room right now?" Dialogue may ensue, and participants often come to close agreement on a description.

Consider the atmosphere that develops through an inquiry between teacher and participant following the body scan practice that we've been returning to throughout this chapter. Louise, a chronic pain patient, responds to the question, "Is there anything left to say about this experience?"

Timidly, she ventures, "I had trouble with this," and sits quietly.

The teacher prompts, "Can you say more?"

"I was in a lot of pain—a lot—the whole time."

"So, what did you do? Did you find any ways to help yourself?"

Louise pauses, thinking, and says, "I tried moving, but I couldn't get any relief. I ended up just listening to you and trying to follow the scan. I kept being pulled away by the pain in my back."

The teacher asks, "And what happened?"

"Nothing really. Nothing changed for me, but I got through it. Trying to stay with what you were saying kind of distracted me, so I guess that was a help."

"I'm curious about how it is for you right now, Louise," says the teacher. "What do you notice when you check in?"

"It's the same. Still hurting. It's so frustrating…and sad."

"Would you be willing to, maybe, just take another look? Just bring your attention to how it is now, and see what happens?"

"Well, I guess I could try."

"We can all do this with you," says the teacher, looking around the circle and taking in the other participants, who are quiet and still, watching or looking down or away and then saying, generally, "Maybe closing your eyes, if that suits you, and bringing your attention into your body in this moment." Fifteen seconds go by, a long time. "Louise, what are you finding?"

"Well, it hurts, the same as before."

"OK, let's try something. Can you bring your attention to one place that is hurting? It doesn't need to be the most painful place." A little pause. "And can you find a friendly way to stay with that? Maybe you could notice your breathing, and see if

that helps you to hold the sensations a little more softly. So, you're just softening around the place you've chosen to be with."

Thirty seconds go by, a very long time. The teacher asks, "Louise, what are you noticing now?"

"It still hurts," she says, "but it's different…not so sharp as before."

"Can you stay with it? Keep breathing and softening?"

Another long time. A silent room. "Let's just check in again. What do you notice now?"

"It was duller for a while, but now that you've asked, it's back to the sharpness again. But there were better moments, I guess."

The teacher pauses. "So there was the same old, same old, and for moments there was something better, or at least different. That's worth knowing, maybe, Louise?"

"I think so, yeah."

The teacher looks around the circle, sitting together in the quiet. Not quite ready to move on.

The group is steeping in an atmosphere of friendship, the ethical space, produced in the co-creation of mindfulness. All (or nearly all) are moved in their own way by the dialogue or by their own possibly parallel unfinished dialogues. They are steeping and being imbued with the potential to create such a space, to create community, with others, elsewhere.

Such a possibility lies in the power of the atmosphere. This has been described as the sublime (McCown, 2016), a concept drawn from aesthetic theory (e.g., Burke, 1759/2008). The sublime is associated with confronting moments of "terror," such as, for Burke, storms at sea or ascents of mountains. Such confrontations take spectators beyond the rational, beyond the limited ego, and into a space where it is possible to connect with others. Adapted for mindfulness-based theory, the sublime identifies those strong moments of turning toward and being with and in experiences of unpleasant affect—the looming extremes such as death or madness. The dialogue with Louise above carries some of this existential anxiety, and the atmosphere created might be related to the sublime.

In relating the atmosphere of steeping to the question of the ethical, a different aesthetic description may be invoked—tragic drama. We can consider the encounter with tragic events within a structured ritual frame, as in the classical liturgy of the *Dionysia* of Athens. In it, tragic narratives are enacted in front of the assembled citizens of the *polis* with the goal of reaffirmation of the solidarity of the city—the capacity to be together for the good of all (Williams, 2016).

There is a sense that the key move of MBI pedagogy—sitting still with what is arising in the moment—reflects or reenacts the transformative experience of the audience of a tragic drama who are sitting still while being moved. Cavell (1987) noted that this contemplative immobilization in assigned seats keeps audience members from calling or acting out during the drama, which causes each member to recognize their own separateness and the otherness of the one undergoing the tragedy. This unusual position confronts the audience members with a clear view of the other's full humanity and thereby their own. Paradoxically, this recognition of mutual separateness—one cannot have the other's experience—does indeed create

solidarity, as well as a space in which ethical community may arise and participants may steep.

In traditions of dramatic performance, a composed text is enacted. In the MBIs, through inquiry with the teacher, participants struggle aloud with the suffering that comes to them in the moment and is perhaps assuaged in the key move of the pedagogy, and that experience becomes a unique text for the group (McCown & Billington, under review). Such texts continue to influence the atmosphere of the classroom as they are alluded to aloud or recalled in unfinished dialogue. They add intensity to the process of steeping.

The intensity of the atmosphere is useful for the teacher in the MBIs, because when the tragic has been confronted in the classroom, it may be assumed that the ethical space is working and that participants are being imbued with potentials of being together in an ethical community. Conversely, when the tragic is avoided, or never invoked, the ethical space may be weaker, with less well developed potentials.

Intensity also answers some of the current questions asked under the guise of ethics about effective applications of mindfulness in non-clinical settings. When the default is toward being with and in a pleasurable experience, such as the reduced stress and increased happiness promised by so many programs—opportunities to touch the tragic dimension are restricted, which keeps intensity low and undermines the benefits of the ethical space. With well-educated and highly practiced teachers, the clinical applications of mindfulness continually invite the confrontation with tragedy and ensure the fullness of the community of the ethical space and the potentials developed by steeping within it.

When the Ethical Space Collapses

Teachers cannot bring the ethical space into being or maintain it through acts of will or by applying techniques. It is, simply, the group's successful co-creation of mindfulness, its engagement with the key move of the pedagogy, of turning toward and being with and in whatever is arising in the experience of the moment. Within the confluence of relationships of participants and teacher, seven unique qualities have been identified and employed in a model. Of course, many more and different qualities might be found and used to create other models as well. What truly matters, however, is that the qualities come from actions in relationship. The model only describes what an MBI group does—not some "implicit" ethical principles that can be "applied" in other situations.

The model may be useful for thinking about refinement of curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher training. Further, it can be used to better understand the tensions between teachers and participants that may lead to abandonment of the pedagogy of mindfulness and the collapse of the ethical space. Gergen's (2009) notion of "first-order moralities" makes this easy to see. He pointed out that within a confluence, everyone involved shares an understanding of what the good life is for the group and thus knows what to do. To do something opposed to the good would require "stepping

out" of this way of being together and aligning with another possible way of being, another first-order morality available within one's multi-being.

To think this through, then, an optimal class will maintain the pedagogy—turning toward and being with and in experience—throughout the class session. Together they find that they know how to "go on" with the co-creation of mindfulness. However, should a participant find that she is unable to go on and instead "steps out" of the first-order morality of the group, perhaps to align with a way of being from the world of her medical treatment or her family of origin, the teacher is challenged. The teacher may choose to try to return the group again to the pedagogy of mindfulness, reinforcing the first-order morality of turning toward and being with and in experience. Contrariwise, the teacher might find the participant's actions such that the pedagogy will not be helpful and choose instead to align with a different first-order morality, such as clinical psychology, in which actions are guided by other views of the good life—even including a code of professional ethics and legal considerations.

The good for the MBIs, of course, is to maintain the first-order morality otherwise known as the ethical space. There are three main considerations in maintaining the space. First, it is important to expand the group's capacity to turn toward and be with and in experience. This comes, unsurprisingly, through the ongoing practice of the pedagogy. The more practiced the group becomes, the more they see and understand the goods generated in the ethical space, and the less likely any participant is to "step out." In other words, the participants need to steep in the atmosphere. Second, is the teachers' version of the first. We might think of it as growing trust in the pedagogy; as teachers know they can help participants turn toward and be with whatever is arising—even unpleasant and threatening experiences—they are less likely to step out. So, for both participants and teachers, what matters most is the time spent in the classroom as they are co-creating mindfulness and steeping in the ethical space. Third is a bit more technical. It has to do with the other possible first-order moralities with which participants or teachers may choose to align if they step out. Teacher and participants alike are multi-beings, so the repertoires available are quite large. It is to be hoped, and is often true, that participants step out into the most helpful first-order morality that is accessible to them in the moment. Such moves may be benign to the group, and go unnoticed, as the participant steps out in the "unfinished dialogue" of thought, resolves her tensions, and rejoins the group in the practice of the pedagogy, with no actions taken in the confluence. It is also possible that a participant may speak aloud about stepping out, and that the teacher may be able to re-engage her with the pedagogy, and the group can all go on together.

When a participant's stepping out becomes potentially threatening to others, the teacher may then be required to step out as well and to align with a different first-order morality. Again, this will most likely be the teacher's professional identity, which calls into play the ethical code and professional principles. The relationship then may become, for example, social worker to client—or clients, as all in the room are the responsibility of the social worker. MBI teachers have as many potential realignments as there are professional disciplines—more than 185 different disciplines and organizations in mental health alone, each with a written code of ethics

(Pope, 2012). Whether in mental health, medicine, or allied health professions, the point is that MBI teachers should know their "home" profession well, as it will most often be the first-order morality that they shift to in emergent situations.

This need to step out and meet a participant, and the group, is not an abandonment of principles, it is a changing of actions, a move from one morality to another—the kind of move that we undertake many times a day. It is simply acknowledgement that, in emergencies, the legal, rather than the relational, is the binding relationship. This is the reality of living in a society in which responsibilities are divided as they are, and liabilities are calculated as they are.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken a non-foundational approach to ethics in the MBIs in clinical applications. An analysis of the actions of the teacher and participants together came to identify the successful co-creation of mindfulness in the group with an ethical space, a first-order morality in which everyone implicated knows what they must do in a given moment to go on together.

The outcome of the analysis has been a model of the ethical space, in three dimensions: a doing dimension featuring actions around corporeality, contingency, and cosmopolitanism; a non-doing dimension featuring the absence of hierarchy, pathologizing, and instrumental use of mindfulness; and a dimension of friendship that colors the entire model. As participants and teacher maintain this ethical space, they steep in it, being imbued with potentials for recreating it in other situations with other people. As long as the group is capable of practicing the pedagogy of mindfulness together, turning toward and being with and in the experience of the moment, the ethical space is maintained.

In situations when it is not possible for participants or teacher to engage the pedagogy, they may "step out" of the ethical space and align with a different first-order morality. Teachers by default may use their professional identities in medical or mental health care as alternative first-order moralities, to provide the kind of protection and accountability required in the current litigious situation.

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Beyond Manipulation: Radical Humanist and Care Ethics Perspectives on Mindfulness Education

James Reveley

Introduction

Teaching mindfulness to schoolchildren is currently in vogue. In the last decade, mindfulness meditation programmes have been introduced into schools in England, Australia, Israel, Hong Kong and the United States (Flook et al., 2010; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Joyce, Etty-Leal, Zazryn, & Hamilton, 2010; Kuyken et al., 2013; Lau & Hue, 2011; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Under the sway of teacher education manuals (e.g. Broderick, 2013), informal mindfulness initiatives in the classroom proliferate. Getting primary schoolchildren to do mindful breathing is a case in point. At the start of each class, the teacher tells class members to pause for a minute or so and then encourages them to concentrate on the present moment while performing a breathing exercise. As the mantra of a recent study advocating this practice goes, "pause, breathe, smile" (Bernay, Graham, Devcich, Rix, & Rubie-Davies, 2016).

Empirically, inculcating mindfulness has been found to stop young people from developing affective disorders such as depression (Raes, Griffith, Van der Gucht, & Williams, 2014). Though the so-called therapeutic education has its sociologist-critics (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009), the mindfulness component of this education cannot simply be dismissed. According to a recent meta-analytic study, the risks of drug treatment for children and adolescents with depression outweigh the benefits (Cipriani et al., 2016). Therapeutic mindfulness education provides an alternative. Self-regulating emotions is a key capability that mindfulness training instils in young people (Galla, Kaiser-Greenland, & Black, 2016; Huppert & Johnson, 2010). Personally learning to reflect upon and adjust one's emotions is the goal; this reflective stance can be developed in school settings by teaching simple mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises (Hyland, 2014).

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Yet despite the pathology-preventing and wellness-enhancing effects of mindfulness training, when considered from a religio-ideological standpoint, integrating mindfulness into the K-12 curriculum is not uncontroversial. Arguably, even in its scientised and secularised psychotherapeutic and educational versions, mindfulness is a vector for transmitting Buddhist values (McMahan, 2008; Wilson, 2014). The threat to secular education that secularists may perceive is compounded by Žižek's (2006) denunciation of "Western Buddhism" as a hypnotic fetish in capitalism. Before sounding the alarm bells, however, it is worth noting that Møllgaard (2008) takes Žižek to task for oversimplifying the matter. There is simply no consensus about the connection between Buddhistic practices and capitalism. Indeed, the spread of mind-body practices such as mindfulness meditation has variously been praised for providing a consciousness-altering way of fostering resistant subjectivities and chided for creating politically quiescent ones (cf. Critchley, 2007; Orr, 2002). One thing is clear: curricularising mindfulness is not above moral criticism.

Just because mindfulness is widely practised and has some good effects does not mean it is morally justifiable. Indeed, the authors of a recent review of therapeutic applications of mindfulness have substantial "ethical qualms" (Harrington & Dunne, 2015). In addressing such concerns, it is not enough to focus solely on the positives; the negatives have to be considered too. A prime objection is that inserting mindfulness into the curriculum manipulates young people without their moral consent. My goal in this chapter is to assess one such argument and to posit an alternative.

I begin by deriving the Mindfulness-As-Manipulation (call it MAM) argument from Cederström and Spicer (2015). Though the authors do not deal with mindfulness training supplied to young people in schools but rather to employees in work organisations, their work has clear educational implications. After drawing these out, the chapter proceeds to show, contra MAM, that school-based mindfulness training can be a technique of "emancipatory education" (Biesta, 2014, p. 77). A spillover effect by which this training prepares young people for the emotional demands and challenges of activism gives it this potential. To the extent that mindfulness training furthers the end of transformational social change, its normative foundations can be located in the (neo-Aristotelian and Nussbaumian) radical humanist ethical theory expounded by Wilde (2015). Using care ethics I then pick some logical-moral reasoning sand out of my argument, before moving to a brief conclusion.

The Mindful Subject as Moral-Cultural Dupe

As advocates of the MAM thesis, Cederström and Spicer's work supports no conclusion other than this: mindfulness meditation's insinuation into the curriculum should be opposed on moral grounds. Two moves take the authors in this direction. First, they label mindfulness a vehicle for inculcating in the individual ethical norms useful to capitalism and overriding moral intuitions and predispositions that are not. Second, they suggest that being personally preoccupied with wellness

disenables a practical politics of resistance. On these counts teaching mindfulness techniques in schools lacks ethical justification. I will consider each in turn.

The authors' critique of mindfulness is based on their assertion that "wellness has become an ideology" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 3). The ideological subsumption of wellness supposedly stems from capitalism's requirement for healthy and "productive bodies" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 4). As an ideology, they contend, wellness carries with it a binding ethic—"biomorality" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 5)—which entails a moral duty to enhance one's well-being. Issuing forth from this ideology is "a wellness command", which is experienced as an "impossible demand" for constant self-improvement that zeroes in on the body (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 6).

If the wellness command is as forceful as Cederström and Spicer say it is, what makes it so? Why do we try to obey the command? They provide no direct answer, but from what they have written, it can be inferred that we obey because we are immersed in a culture that prizes health and self-responsibility. On matters of culture, the authors appeal to Christopher Lasch and Slavoj Žižek. From the former they derive the idea that we live in "a therapeutic culture" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 14) and from the latter that the ideals of this culture penetrate the psyche through "a postmodern superego" which "tells us to do more, to be better, to be ourselves" but ultimately "remains disappointed, constantly pointing out that we could have performed much better" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 15).

As an ideology, wellness "offers a package of ideas and beliefs which people may find seductive and desirable" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 3). Leaving the equivocation aside, this statement construes ideology in cultural terms as a widely held belief system. This is not inherently sociologically problematical (Swidler, 1986). But, with regard to wellness ideology, what precisely are the cultural transmission mechanisms? Cederström and Spicer's work is replete with examples of how the wellness command is conveyed at work through corporate wellness and fitness programmes, including dieting regimens. Indeed, the corporation—notably Google—is the site where they open their discussion of mindfulness training. Yet, the command "is by no means confined to the workplace" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 132). The command seeps into everyday life through popular culture and the media, by means of television shows about food and cooking, self-help books and merchandise on dieting, health-tracking devices and the like.

To summarise Cederström and Spicer's position, wellness ideology comes to be embraced through training programmes at work and through immersion in popular culture. Given the emphasis they place on culturally derived norms and beliefs, the transmission mechanism by which wellness norms become internalised, one can reasonably assume, is socialisation—secondary socialisation, in particular. Reading Cederström and Spicer this way is consistent with one of their source texts, *The Culture of Narcissism*, in which Lasch (1991) stresses the importance of socialisation while noting the decline in the principal vehicle of primary socialisation: the family. Notably, Lasch (1991, p. 239) asserts that by the 1970s, the time when he was writing, "families no longer played an important role in the transmission of culture".

The concern with secondary socialisation provides a way of positioning schooling relative to the wellness syndrome. Given the burgeoning growth of mindfulness programmes in schools, if wellness truly is an ideology, then the school must be one of the locations where it seeps into consciousness. Institutionally, secondary socialisation and subject creation occur simultaneously within the education system (Besley & Peters, 2007; Willis, 1977). Following Cederström and Spicer's argument to its logical conclusion, when it comes to creating subjects who are disposed to answering the wellness command, schools are as important—if not more so—as corporate wellness initiatives, television and social media. It is but a short step to construing mindfulness training in school as a starting mechanism for the lifelong process of subjects being rendered susceptible to the wellness command.

Extended this way, the Cederström and Spicer framework has clear educational implications. The most obvious one is that exposing children at school to mindfulness meditation can function vector-like to transmit the wellness syndrome to them. Pushing the argument further, mindfulness discourse can contribute to this syndrome by playing on young people's emotions, evoking guilt if they cannot achieve fully mindful states, at the same time as the discourse exhorts them to learn emotion management strategies. The school therefore becomes a site where their emotional wellbeing can suffer. I know of no moral system that could be used to justify this outcome.

I nonetheless want to caution against going too far down the track of simply taking what Cederström and Spicer say at face value and factoring education into the mix. A prime reason is that their position is not too far from the 1950s structural-functionalist sociological orthodoxy. Though they make no mention of Talcott Parsons, their discussion of illness and its relationship to the wellness command reads like an updating of this American Establishment sociologist's structural-functionalist analysis of the "sick role". Parsons (1985, p. 149) famously argued that the sickness is a social role and that, like all roles, it is governed by a set of social norms that are internalised and establish shared expectations of behaviour. Physical illness and psychological strain on individuals lead some to enter the sick role, which exempts them from the responsibility for performing "normal social obligations" such as going to work (Parsons, 1985, p. 149). It also absolves them of responsibility for the process of getting well (Parsons, 1985, p. 150). Instead, the responsibility falls to the physician-therapist whose social role is defined by therapeutic norms entrenched within the institutions of Western medicine.

Cederström and Spicer note that the sick person can be excused from the obligations of work and everyday life. But unlike the 1950s, when Parsons began to write about sickness, there has been a turnaround in the sick role. Incumbents are now no longer excused from getting well due to how "the ill individual is dragged back into the imperative to become well again" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 122). There is another change too, one that Cederström and Spicer fail to draw out. Parsons is concerned to show that the physician's role has an inherent element of psychotherapy; there is an "essential continuity between the art of medicine and deliberate psychotherapy" (Parsons, 1985, p. 153). The status of the medico-psychological professions was unassailable in the United States at the time he was writing. Today, however, responsibilising discourses that promote the self-management of

well-being challenge professional power. The so-called do-it-yourself therapies such as mindfulness meditation level the hierarchy of knowledge between psych professionals and laypeople (Barker, 2014).

Despite leaving their implicit update of Parsons' account of the sick role half-complete, Cederström and Spicer retain the sociologist's infamous cultural determinism. The critique by Wrong (1966) of Parsonsian sociology's "over-socialised conception" of the individual is well-known. To be sure, Cederström and Spicer's use of the Freudian concept of superego, via Žižek and to a degree also Lasch, helps them avoid making a sociological blunder of Parsonsian proportions. As Wrong (1966) puts it in his classic paper, "… in psychoanalytic terms to say that a norm has been internalized, or introjected to become part of the superego, is to say no more than that a person will suffer guilt feelings if he fails to live up to it, not that he will in fact live up to it in his behaviour" (p. 89). Doubtless Cederström and Spicer's response to anyone accusing them of being closet Parsonsians would be to play up the Freudian element of internalised norms causing internal conflict and provoking guilt, rather than shaping actual conduct.

The power Cederström and Spicer afford to internalised cultural norms becomes apparent when they press into service Dean's (2009) study of "barebackers"—gay men who, by deliberately not donning condoms while having anal sex, willingly seek to expose themselves (as "bug chasers") and others to HIV. Cederström and Spicer are comfortable with Dean's (2009) quasi-sociological description of barebacking as a subculture; likewise they agree that its norms brush against the grain of the dominant norm of wellness. Yet, in the barebacking behaviour Dean carefully documents, Cederström and Spicer find other culturally derived norms to which the barebackers conform: "Pursuing authenticity, expressing one's own individuality, distinguishing oneself from others and developing one's networking skills – these are all vital aspects of the self-work that we find in the wellness syndrome. It is the labour on ourselves that, in spite of being pitched against wellness, risks tying us closer to the very ideology we seek to escape. While barebackers present an intriguing resistance to health imperatives, they may be struggling to escape the demand to actualize themselves, a demand which rests on the pernicious illusion that one day we will win our true authentic selves" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 127).

In other words, by deviating from one dominant norm (wellness), the barebackers are conforming to another (authenticity) that typifies the wellness syndrome. Notwithstanding the authors' all-too-common equivocation ("risks" and "may") in the above quotation, the reader is left with the impression that the wellness syndrome is inescapable. Given Dean (2009, p. 69, emphasis added) unambiguously says "bug chasing represents a way of *eluding* super-egoistic imperatives", it is difficult to see how the barebackers are acceding to social demands. If evidence from Dean does not challenge the wellness syndrome's strength and pervasiveness, one wonders what could. Cederström and Spicer come dangerously close to constructing a self-sealing argument.

Nonetheless, I want to follow their line of reasoning a little further along. If the wellness syndrome is real, mindfulness training in school can inoculate schoolchildren against the development of resistant subjectivities. This implication—call it a

vaccination effect—arises because the authors contend that wellness ideology shuts off not just the pathway to radical politics but any political action with the goal of social transformation. The picture they paint is bleak: "As authorities lose faith in structural reforms, they become more interested in small-scale behavioural interventions. In place of politics, we are left with corporeal babble and increasingly invasive lifestyle tweaks. As a result, we abandon political demands. Citizens don't get the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives; they get a mindfulness session" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, p. 133–134).

The authors' reference to mindfulness is more than a throwaway line. For them, the popularity of mindfulness meditation is symptomatic of an obsessional focus on the body that deadens the citizenry's political sensibilities and dulls politics generally.

I want to close this section by cautioning against throwing the baby out with the bathwater. If Cederström and Spicer do not admit of the possibility of a counterexample to the wellness syndrome, their argument is immune to refutation and logically fallacious. I will give them the benefit of the doubt on this point of criticism, but only because they seem to have found out something about wellness being distorted by neoliberal capitalism.

Whether this amounts to a "syndrome", is a matter for clinicians to decide. I will simply treat the distortion as a discovery about something real rather than a conceptual fiction invented by Cederström and Spicer themselves. In consequence, the remainder of the chapter assumes school-based mindfulness training risks transmitting to young people the cultural norm of wellness and its corollary, political stultification.

A Radical Humanist Ethics View of Mindfulness

Radical sounds like the opposite of stunted or dumbed-down politics. But just how radical is radical humanist ethics? If radical means faithfully elaborating the ideas of Karl Marx, as Wilde (1998) sought to do in earlier work, then the perspective is less radical than, say, that of contemporary Marxists who mine a purer Marxian vein (e.g. Hobsbawm, 2011; Laibman, 2015). The difference is that Wilde (2015) champions an Aristotelian reading of Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Marx, 1982), and the resulting radical humanist ethics is more Aristotelian than it is Marxian. Even the textual choice is not uncontentious because the place of the fragmented (and until 1932 unpublished) *Manuscripts* within Marx's corpus has long been a matter of disputation (Reveley, 2013).

The Aristotelian element can be drawn out by noting two points of similarity between Wilde and one of Aristotle's contemporary secular interlocutors—the classicist David Roochnik. The first concerns rationality. What Roochnik (2013) finds in Aristotle is a source of meaning that allows modern persons to challenge contemporary technocratic rationality. Riffing on a note of warning sounded by Marxists in the wake of the global financial crisis, concerning the sheer social irrationality of financialised capitalism (Foster & McChesney, 2012), Wilde channels Marx to

argue for a shift "from the myopia of instrumental rationality to something more like Aristotle's practical wisdom for all, at both an individual and social level" (Wilde, 2015, p. 19). Practical wisdom, as Aristotle (2004) explains in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is precisely what ethics involves. Knowing how to act in line with the good, and actually acting that way, is the key. To be ethical is to develop habits that reinforce the "moral virtues", the "full development" of which is "due to habit" (EN, 1103a.26). Happiness in the Greek sense of flourishing (or *eudaimonia*) requires the inculcation and cultivation of these habits amongst members of the citizenry. Aristotelian ethics prizes practical activity, as "[i]t is virtuous activity that determines our happiness" (EN, 1100b.10–11).

The second point of agreement between Wilde and Roochnik is that flourishing is objective. They could hardly disagree because, as Feser (2008) confirms, this is indisputably Aristotle's own view. Flourishing is not merely a function of one's emotional states at any particular point in time, which would make it purely a matter of subjective well-being, but rather "an objective condition" (Roochnik, 2013, p. 157). This is why Roochnik (2013, p. 157) argues that "happiness" is a poor translation of *eudaimonia*. To flourish is to use one's uniquely human capacities—principally rationality. Habitual behaviour, far from being the opposite of using reason, is an expression of reason when reason is understood as two-faceted in the sense that we can both *have reason* and *obey reason*: "the development of habit is the actualization of the 'obeying' component of our rational capacities. Acting habitually is thus a low-level manifestation of rational activity" (Roochnik, 2013, p. 161).

A person may think they are happy, but in fact they are not happy if they are not "hard at work doing what human beings are uniquely and naturally suited to do" (Roochnik, 2013, p. 158). In Wilde's hands the Aristotelian emphasis on rationality as the highest good is combined with Marx's materialism to suggest that "rational planning" in the sense of the "propensity for planned, social production" is the human essence that must be fulfilled for human flourishing to be objectively achieved (Wilde, 2015, p. 14). This undergirds an argument for changing society so that people can flourish and, in so doing, create a society in which "social rationality" supersedes the instrumental rationality of profit-making (Wilde, 2015, p. 20).

It is at this point that Wilde makes an interesting move from Aristotelian virtues to objective human potentials. Interestingly though, he does so in a manner that does not lead him back to Aristotle's treatment of final causes, the ethical implications of which Feser (2013) elaborates in the Aristotelian-Thomistic natural law tradition. Wilde seems unaware of this version of neo- Aristotelianism. Instead he takes a detour that brings him into the orbit of the stellar contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum who constructs a list of ten "central human capabilities" (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 76, capitals omitted). Now, Nussbaum (2007, p. 74) explicitly grounds the political demand for capability development—with the achievement of social justice as the goal—in Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. I make this point because despite Wilde disagreeing with Nussbaum's Rawlsian liberalism, and substituting the concept "core potentials" for "central capabilities", his (Wilde's) list is, in essence, Nussbaumian.

The potentials that must be fulfilled for flourishing to be objectively achieved are fourfold: "rationality, compassion, productiveness…and cooperation" (Wilde, 2013, p. 118). Having already remarked on rationality, I will concentrate on productiveness and compassion as these have an emotional component into which mindfulness meditation can tap Nussbaum (1996) in fact refers to compassion as the most 'basic social emotion'. The question I seek to answer is as follows. Can school-based mindfulness training help members of the younger generation to develop an emotional repertoire that (1) is congruent with productiveness and compassion, and (2) supports oppositional political action aimed at creating the type of society in which social rationality and cooperation can be fulfilled? If so, the mindfulness training, in a loose sense, has an ethical foundation.

Let me begin with concept of productiveness which has a distinct meaning in Wildean parlance: "Productiveness has nothing to do with productivity in the technical economic sense. As a potential, it refers to the ability to develop skills and interests in ways that affirm our sociability, reaching out to others and fostering empathy" (Wilde, 2015, p. 26). Empathy is something that mindfulness training in schools can elicit (Hyland, 2016). When supplemented with Solomon's philosophical (existentialist) take on emotions, Hyland's work on mindfulness education helps to illuminate its emancipatory potential. The idea of learning to evoke and reflexively work on our emotions so that we can empathetically engage with others is central to Solomon's modified Sartrean approach, the key tenets of which are not hard to grasp. Emotions are not head-bound, fleeting sensations, or uncontrollable energetic surges emanating from deep within the unconscious, but rather strategic and sustained ways of making intelligent judgements about—and thereby deliberately engaging with—the world and the people in it (Solomon, 2007). Expressed with an existentialist inflexion, emotions are choices, and we are responsible for them (Solomon, 2003). The idea that there is intelligence within emotions themselves, as forms of judgement, puts Solomon in the self-described "cognitivist" camp within the philosophy of emotion, members of which include Nussbaum (Solomon, 2006, p. 225, n. 10). Nussbaum's (2008) *Upheavals of Thought* is a cognitivist tour de force. Solomon and Nussbaum share the view that emotions have intelligence and that our capacity to reflect on emotions means emotions have their own inbuilt forms of rationality. Like Nussbaum (2013) in another regard too, Solomon regards emotions as central to politics. Reflecting on, evaluating and redirecting our emotions is not just possible; it is required for self-understanding. This understanding, in turn, is a prerequisite to transformative social change. This perspective gives both philosophical depth and direction to the seemingly trite epithet, "We must change ourselves before we change society" (Solomon, 1977, p. 8).

Hyland (2014) demonstrates that mindfulness training is an effective means of teaching emotion management strategies to young people in school settings. Mindfulness training is a way of inculcating the capacity to probe, assess, reflect upon and label emotions of all kinds (Hyland, 2016). For Solomon (2007, p. 168), "managing our emotions is not an issue of control…but literally a matter of intelligence and good sense". This sense does not always just come naturally. Though Solomon refrains from talking much about education, good (emotional) sense

and empathy can be acquired by learning to reflect upon one's emotions. Schools are prime sites for this personal learning. There is an inherent element of reflection involved in mindfulness practice that can be developed and refined in school settings through teaching easily learnable techniques: "Mindful strategies—non-judgemental, present-moment awareness of our mental states developed through stillness, breath meditation or mindful movement—can help to develop the reflective skills through which self-knowledge and empathy become embedded in the curriculum" (Hyland, 2016, p. 113). Simply put, as a human potential, productiveness requires empathy, which in turn mindfulness can develop. I turn now to consider compassion.

A recent study suggests that mindfulness-based stress reduction programmes in schools provide a platform for activating the "natural capacity for compassion" that everyone has (Lavelle Heineberg, 2016, p. 286). Undoubtedly, as a means of achieving social justice, compassion is a highly politically useful emotion (Nussbaum, 2013). But it has a downside too. Rousseauian compassion can turn into the pity of the "reluctant spectator" who, far from being moved to act to ameliorate the unfortunate other's situation, is simply glad not to be in their shoes (Boyd, 2004). Slippage is a risk inherent to any emotional strategy, as one emotion shades into another. Righteous anger about social inequalities, for example, is neither inherently hasty or friable, nor is it irrational; and it is important for changing the world (Solomon, 2007). For it to remain rational, however, righteous anger must not be allowed to dissipate or deteriorate into destructive rage blindly directed at innocent authority figures. By the same token, if, compassion is to be useful as a force for social change, it must not be allowed to slip into pity and, in so doing, passivity. Forestalling slippage of an active politically useful emotion into a politically uncongenial or passive one is precisely where the heightening of activists' conscious reflection on their wilfully chosen "emotional strategies" (Solomon, 1977, p. 420), a reflexivity achieved through mindfulness training, pays off.

Training in mindfulness is a set of "beginner practices" (O'Donnell, 2015, p. 196). It starts the process of developing an emotional repertoire that those who make the transition to activism can find helpful. By preparing young people for the emotional demands and challenges of activism, mindfulness training as a method of teaching emotional self-reflection and self-awareness underwrites acts of resistance beyond the school gates. I call this the spillover effect. Young people equipped with mindfulness training during their schooldays bring to protest a pre-existing capacity for emotional self-reflection—as they are equipped to reflect on, amend or stick with their current emotional strategies. This preparedness helps solve a problem pinpointed by Barker, Martin, and Zournazi (2008). On the one hand, "it is important for activists to deal skillfully with their emotions" (Barker et al., 2008, p. 423). On the other, notwithstanding the efforts of activists acknowledge the importance of emotion management strategies, not infrequently they have "little theory, formal practice, or training in emotions" (Barker et al., 2008, p. 433). The authors present a cogent argument for learning mindfulness techniques in order "to foster desirable emotions, both as instruments for better activism and as ends in themselves" (Barker et al., 2008, p. 433). A key part of transformative self-work is to distinguish

appropriate emotional strategies to sustain activists in their activism. The goal is not just greater subjective well-being, but to transform society so that objective conditions can be established for flourishing to occur in the Wildean sense. Seen this way, mindfulness practice in schools is a hinge point for "the reciprocal relation between subjective and social reconstruction" (Pinar, 2011, p. 100). To the extent that social transformation is supported by radical humanist ethics, and if the spillover effect happens in practice rather than just in theory, then inserting mindfulness training into the curriculum is congruent with radical humanist ethics.

The Ethicality of Curricularising Mindfulness

I now want to bring out into the open a dilemma that has been lurking in the background of this chapter. While there is complementarity between radical humanist ethics, which promotes emancipatory social transformation, and spillover from educational uses of mindfulness meditation, it is more coincidental than deliberate. Mindfulness teaching can be done with the goal of emotionally equipping young people to challenge neoliberal capitalism, and perhaps some teachers do have this in mind, but the influence of psychological discourse on teaching practice means that other motives are likely to take precedence. After all, challenging oppression is not the rationale that empirical psychology typically provides for teaching mindfulness. As a result, just like the wellness syndrome-derived vaccination effect, the spillover effect is an unintended consequence of school-based mindfulness training. Does mindfulness training's intended good outcome (better emotional self-regulation) and unintended good—derivative, second-order—emancipatory outcome outweigh its unintended bad outcome (namely, ideological subordination to the wellness syndrome)? This section goes down some different ethical pathways to see where an answer might be found.

Some further questions are in order. For a positive effect of mindfulness training to be deemed morally justifiable, must it be intended? More precisely, when a good outcome and a bad outcome are possible effects of an action, must the good outcome have been intended? When making moral judgements about the outcomes of teaching mindfulness, are the intentions of educational policymakers and teachers relevant? From a consequentialist standpoint, they are not. For the consequentialist, irrespective of whether they emphasise preferences or rules, what matters are outcomes (Malik, 2014, ch. 12). In consequentialist terms the intentions of the teacher, as a moral agent, are immaterial. As we have seen, by teaching mindfulness in the classroom, a teacher can inadvertently provide schoolchildren with an emotional skill set that aligns with radical humanist ethics, thereby priming them to change society somewhere down the line. Under consequentialism, if social transformation is deemed a desirable outcome, the teacher's actions are morally permissible, even though the teacher did not intend the good they caused. Whether the actions are morally praiseworthy is another matter.

Utilitarian consequentialism weighs positive outcomes against negative outcomes. (For the hard-line preference utilitarian variant, see Singer, 2011.) If the

positive outcomes of mindfulness training outweigh the negative outcomes and are better than the alternatives, such as not providing this training at all, the action can be considered good. Even if we can predict what the consequences of teaching mindfulness meditation might be, using this chapter as a guide, balancing the ledger is a difficult exercise not least because of the lengthy time period required for an assessment of the emancipatory effect of mindfulness training. The latter is a long-run effect, whereas the (positive) emotional self-regulation effect and (negative) wellness syndrome's effect are more immediate. Trying to combine long-run and short-run effects in a utilitarian calculus would entail constructing an exceedingly complex matrix of outcomes. Something like that is well beyond the scope of this discussion.

In any case, I think it wrong to ignore what motivates teachers—when they have a choice in the matter—to provide mindfulness training. Outcomes are important but so too are motives. In Sliwa's (2016, p. 398) estimation, "morally worthy actions" are "not merely accidentally right". By analogy, if a person unintentionally helps their friend win the Boston Marathon, that person is not directly responsible for the win and cannot take moral credit for it. Their helpful action is at best morally neutral.

From a Kantian standpoint, motives are the single most important thing for deciding whether one's actions are moral or immoral. The imperative is to be clear about the need to follow, and then voluntarily follow, one's moral duty (Korsgaard, 1986). In the case at hand, the outcomes of mindfulness training do not matter if the teacher is motivated by the desire to help their students and if that desire aligns with the teacher's universalisable moral duty. Teachers may well fall short of their aims but still be acting in a moral manner, irrespective of the outcome. As Wilkens (1995) puts it: "Even if we do not reach our goals because of unforeseen twists in events, if we act out of an intention to fulfil our duties (or good will), we have met our ethical obligation" (p. 198).

By extension, for the Kantian moralist, even a bad outcome can be morally justified in some circumstances. If teachers intended well but unintentionally did harm to children, the action that caused the harm is not automatically and unambiguously immoral; motives would have to be factored into equation. Conversely, if teachers intended harm but did well instead, the Kantian moralist is likely to deem their actions immoral. One assumes though that teachers are not psychopaths and thus do not deliberately seek to cause harm to their pupils. So let us continue to assume well-intentioned actions.

What if teachers know in advance that providing mindfulness training risks drawing their students into the wellness syndrome? That is, they intend good but know they may cause harm. Does the foreseeability of harm make a difference? This question falls within the ambit of double effect moral reasoning. The double effect doctrine has a deep Christian cultural taproot, having originated from the scholastic theologian and philosopher Saint Thomas Aquinas's discussion of "killing in self-defence" in the *Summa Theologica* (Mangan, 1949, p. 49). As a contemporary moral principle, double effect has many contemporary secular variants (Nelkin & Rickless, 2014). A helpful summary statement is as follows: "… causing

a foreseeable harm is permissible…only when the evil effect is unintended and when it does not function as a causal means to accomplish the good effect. Further, the intended good must be of such reasonable importance as to justify causing the unintended, foreseeable harm" (Lyon, 2005, p. 455).

Consequences matter in double effect reasoning. A moral agent is permitted to do an act causing good and evil only when: "… the agent has proportionately grave reasons for acting, addressing his [or her] relevant obligations, comparing the consequences, and, considering the necessity of the evil, exercising due care to eliminate or mitigate it" (Cavanaugh, 2006, p. 36).

To be clear, this is not simply another form of consequentialism. The process under "which one weighs outcomes and opts for the greatest good" only comes into play after the initial conditions (i.e. the act must not be intrinsically morally wrong, the evil effect is unintended and so forth) have been met (Cavanaugh, 2006: 31). This is why double effect reasoning has "its home in an anti-consequentialist account featuring exceptionless moral norms" (Cavanaugh, 2006, p. 40). Comfortable as I am with anti-consequentialism, the stress on exceptionless moral norms—killing innocent people is what Cavanaugh focuses on—makes the application of double effect reasoning to the mindfulness case at hand somewhat of a stretch.

Double effect reasoning typically is invoked where questions of life or death or major quality of life arise. This is why double effect examples frequently take place in medical or crisis contexts where well-intentioned actions can end a person's life (Boyle, 2004). It is no surprise that the double effect principle features in Fink's (2014) account of medical decision-making resulting in patient deaths at Memorial Hospital in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. This is not to say that the principle is inapplicable in non-emergency medical or therapeutic settings. In the latter, under double effect reasoning, it may be morally acceptable to cause unintended harmful but foreseeable effects but only if the ones being harmed are a small minority and everyone is informed of the risks. So, if a polio vaccine hurts some children, it might still be worth vaccinating children because the negative consequences of polio are so high that the risk is worth it. (This is not a random example; my eldest uncle had polio as a child and still walks with a limp.) Since children can live quite comfortably without learning how to be mindful, and still have a decent quality of life, one cannot make the argument that the positives outweigh the negatives. Bluntly, no one is going to die or become incapacitated if they miss out on mindfulness training at school.

There is also the problem of outcome uncertainty. The good effects and bad effects of instilling mindfulness in young people are less than certain. Under double effect reasoning, one would need to consider "their relative probabilities" (Cavanaugh, 2006, p. 37). Though double effect is not consequentialist, the concern for probabilities takes the wheel full circle, and one ends up trying to weigh consequences—in particular their likelihood—in a manner not dissimilar to utilitarianism. In view of such difficulties, rather than continuing to search for a universalisable moral principle on which to base my assessment of the ethical justification for teaching mindfulness at school, I turn to a type of ethics in which that quest is abandoned: care ethics. Developing an education-centred version of this ethical stance, Noddings (2013) examines morality in its social context. The author eschews an

"ethics of principle"—thereby jettisoning the whole idea that acting morally requires the internalisation of universalisable moral rules (Noddings, 2013, p. 5). Note that I am not going to apply care ethics in a Wildean way, such as bolstering the argument that mindfulness meditation can elicit emotions like compassion that are conducive to social change. Instead, I wish to use care ethics to judge the ethicality of continuing to teach mindfulness in view of the foreseeable good effects and bad effects it can have on those to whom it is taught.

In a discussion of how to instantiate the ethic of caring in schools, Noddings insists teachers must nurture the ethical ideal. Contra Kantianism, this is not about acting out of moral duty to get "moral credit" or to be morally praiseworthy; rather it is a matter of choosing to enact in relationships with students the caring ideal—an ideal that stems from "our memories of caring and being cared for" maternally (Noddings, 2013, p. xvi). Care ethics does not seek praise from others external to the caring relationship, but rather to fulfil the originary caring ideal practically in the daily life of the classroom. Under care ethics the locus of morality is "in the pre-act consciousness of the one-caring" (Noddings, 2013, p. 28). Moral praise is not sought from third-party observers, but the motivation of the one-caring (i.e. the carer, as opposed to the one cared for) should be explicable to such an observer. In short, as teachers we should be able to give an account of ourselves as ones-caring "which would persuade a reasonable, disinterested observer that we have acted in behalf of the cared-for" (Noddings, 2013, p. 23).

Under care ethics, therefore, the orientation, commitment and attitude of the one-caring greatly matter; it is not possible to care in an ethical manner simply by accident. Always we must interrogate our motives when seeking to approximate the ethical caring ideal. Self-reflection is paramount and the following advice is germane: "Ethical caring is hard work that requires continuous reflection on the part of carers. How can I best care for the one before me without damaging other relations in the web of care and without engaging in deceptions that might eventually undermine future encounters?" (Noddings, 2013, p. xvii).

Prime amongst these deceptions is self-deception. Like all carers, teachers must be clear about their motives so as to avoid self-deception. Not to do so would be to risk lapsing into Sartrean bad faith and damaging the caring ideal: "Since the locus of ultimate decisions concerning true-false and right-wrong is in the internal dialogue of the one-caring, self-deception has the potential to destroy the ethical ideal. The one-caring, then, must look clearly and receptively on what is there-in-herself. This does not mean that she must spend a great deal of time self-indulgently 'getting to know' herself before reaching out to others. Rather, she reflects on what is inside as she relates to others" (Noddings, 2013, p. 108).

This discussion provides a rough guide for answering the following question. Should teachers stop encouraging schoolchildren to do mindfulness until the good effects and bad effects can be thoroughly examined à la utilitarianism? As this chapter suggests, a careful balancing up of these effects is no easy thing. Noddings' litmus test is that teaching practices should be postponed when they interfere with the caring ideal. Though we have reason to suspect from Cederström and Spicer's analysis of the wellness syndrome that putting mindfulness into the curriculum can have harmful effects, my view is that mindfulness should not simply be set aside. The

care ideal can be maintained and indeed guide the teaching of mindfulness. The following words of advice can be derived from care ethics. Teachers need to reflect on constantly on why they are teaching mindfulness, to be clear in their own minds about why they are doing it, to be able to explain to others what their motivation is and to have their eyes wide open to the good effects and bad effects of this teaching. Teachers must inquire into those effects, rather than allowing themselves to be swayed by mindfulness hype. By bringing both the positives and negatives of mindfulness training to light, this chapter is a starting point for such inquiry.

Conclusion

This chapter began by conditionally accepting the MAM thesis that children will suffer as a result of mindfulness training if it draws them into the wellness syndrome. But this is by no means a foregone conclusion; the emancipatory potential of this training has a counterbalancing effect. The ethical basis for the emancipation argument was explored through radical humanist ethics. Having contrasted these positions, the problem then came into sharper focus. If children can both benefit and suffer as a result of mindfulness training, what should teachers do? Should they continue to teach mindfulness or simply call a halt to it until all of the unintended consequences of this teaching can be assessed? I have used care ethics to suggest that teachers should not simply stop this teaching. Rather, teachers must interrogate their own motives, think clearly about why they are doing mindfulness in the classroom, and make decisions in light of the potential consequences of their actions. Hopefully this chapter will be of some help to them.

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Part III

Business, Economics and Environment

Co-arising of Ethics, Mindfulness and Truth for Freedom of Action

10

Christopher Titmuss

Introduction

Many Dharma teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition explain the five precepts at the beginning of Buddhist retreats, East and West. Participants will start the retreat hearing about living with virtue through making a commitment to observe ethics, both on retreat and in daily life. Retreats often provide a precious and supportive environment for ethical and mindful activities, while application into daily life ensures a great challenge.

The practice and understanding of ethics/virtue (*sila*) serve as a bedrock for the Dharma. As teachers, we offer the basic five precepts, often with a short explanation of them for 10–15 min at the beginning of retreats. The best of the tradition extols the importance of non-harming with care and respect for all, human and animals alike. Some people have to work deep within themselves to realise a change of heart, a change of attitude and a different intentionality in order to live in accordance with such a virtuous way of being.

Real inner change matches our commitment to uphold and protect the ethical guidelines. For example, some Buddhists commit themselves to the ethics of diet resulting in the decision to refuse to eat anything with a face—animals, birds or fish. Such ethics confirm an austerity. In this case, it is the deliberate refusal to eat certain kinds of food. Ethics and austerity support each other.

In his extensive teaching of around 10,000 discourses, the Buddha only made a handful of references to the five precepts as a single category. He made numerous references to each one of the precepts but very rarely formed them into a group, presumably to safeguard the precepts from being interpreted as commandments. Precepts serve as the most common translation for the Buddha's use of the Pali word *sila*, which combines ethics with virtue. Ethics expands much further in the Dharma teachings than just practice of the five precepts. *Sila* has significance alongside mindfulness, truth and freedom.

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Familiar to many Buddhists, the five precepts consist of the training in not taking of life; not taking what is not given; not engaging in lust for pleasure, including sexual abuse; not lying, nor engaging in abusive and malicious speech; and not becoming heedless through indulgence (in alcohol and drugs).

The Buddha warned that those who violate *sila* would live fearfully, invite anger of others and suffer hell during their lifetime. They will experience dread through the wrath and punishment of others. While those who engage in the ethical training to live respectfully, and in accordance with the same precepts, live at ease with themselves and with others (*Anguttara Nikaya, AN, Book of Fives*). It is a simple evident truth worth remembering.

During my years as a Buddhist monk during the 1970s, we used the word *virtue* as the translation for the word *sila*. In recent years, Buddhists have quietly dropped the word virtue as the translation for *sila* and replaced the meaning with precepts or morality. There is a significant difference between the meaning of virtue/ethics and morality. Western liberal values have become preoccupied with the morality of social, religious, political institutions and creating legislation to uphold morality. Morality, laws, rules, precepts, rights and obligations become a means to control behaviour.

It is important to distinguish ethics from morality. In its Buddha Dharma sense, *sila* refers to an ethos of virtuous action to reduce and resolve suffering through changing the conditions to stop its arising inwardly and outwardly. In common parlance, morality belongs to a code of rules brought about through a collective agreement or personal viewpoint. In Dharma language, the concept of morality represents forms of conduct, cultural agreements and set of rules that may have certain usefulness, as well as limitations. Virtue and ethics in the Dharma supports an action emerging from the depth of our being that stays true to its ethos of empathy, despite any proliferations and reactions from the conditioning that generates self-interest.

Ethics, ethos, ethnic and ethology bear the same root—from the Greek word *ethos* meaning *character*. We develop a clear-minded character through virtuous ethics. Society develops a code of morality (from the Latin *mores*—rules to hold together) through the judiciary, political/social/religious priorities and collective conditioning. While having a useful place in society, morality can easily become a moralising tendency, self-righteousness and intolerant attitudes. In Latin, morality suggests to agree to a proper form of behaviour in conjunction with the mores of society.

Four Major Kinds of Financial Corruption in Business

As Dharma teachers, we may neglect the significance of the practice of *sila* within and beyond the five precepts. We need to uncover the profound significance of ethics and virtuous action in our personal lives, social lives and working lives so that we can respond to the moral issues of our time.

Ethics, values, mindfulness, concentration and austerity cooperate together. Let's say a mindfulness teacher offers a workshop in a major corporation. A team of

managers sit together in a circle. The teacher gives a guided meditation. After the meditation, the teacher asks the group what arose in their mind during the meditation. One of the manager said he became very mindful of a deception that his company deliberately perpetuated on millions of their customers with regard to their best-selling product. He told the teacher and co-managers he needed to speak up about this deception. Other voices also spoke up. Between them, the managers share their concerns about areas of corporate corruption.

The teacher facilitated the discussion rather than move back into formal meditation. Thus, the meeting concentrated on ethics, mindfulness (of corruption), values and an austerity of subject matter through excluding numerous other themes, practices and topics.

Corruption clearly violates ethics, can reduce or deprive millions of people of their hard-earned income and breeds an atmosphere of mistrust in the office and on the factory floor. As the public knows, different kinds of corruption operate widely among the most influential people in society including presidents, prime ministers, ministers, CEOs and members of boardrooms. Corruption reveals itself in the attempt to maximise gain regardless of the widespread suffering as a consequence.

The group of managers explored four major kinds of financial corruption running rife in the business and agreed to hold further meetings to agree upon an action. Areas of corrupt practices are often interrelated. They include deception, bribery, fraud and embezzlement.

Deception Corporations and smaller businesses will overinflate their charges to squeeze as much money out of consumers. It is another form of theft. Corporations will take risks with the savings of clients, engage in reckless gambles to swallow other big businesses and produce sub-standard, poor-quality goods. Corporations will artificially drive up prices for a few weeks then drop prices to announce a sale. Corporations will engage in various marketing strategies to persuade customers to go into debt in the short and long term. Sports stars will take banned drugs to win matches, thus deceiving their competitors, as well as the public. Sports officials, along with sportsmen and women in athletics, football (soccer), cycling, boxing, tennis and other sports have engaged in corrupt practices in the addiction to fame, power or profit or all three.

Bribery Certain corporations will pay significant sums of money to influential individuals in other corporations and governments to win a contract. Bribery also includes payment to elected offices in government to act or vote on their behalf. Such officials place the interests of the corporation before the interests of the public. Bribes also go to public servants to secure a business licence or permit, or corporations pay money to support governments, national or local, to rush through a contract. Gambling syndicates will pay sports stars to lose matches. Lawyers will arrange for large sums of money to be paid to certain individuals or businesses to buy their silence.

Fraud There is a determination to misrepresent facts for personal or corporate gain such as bank fraud or insurance fraud. Corporations engage in fraudulent ways to persuade people to part with their money. Bosses and senior executives will award themselves large salary increases, significant bonuses and five star all expenses paid excursions through fraudulent claims. They operate with a sense of entitlement at the expense of lower paid workers and consumers. Bosses and executives ensure that they receive substantial payouts when they have to resign due to their mismanagement.

Embezzlement Embezzlement is the act of wrongfully appropriating funds entrusted into the care of a business, big or small. Corporate embezzlers deliberately withhold financial assets for the purpose of individual or corporate self-interest. It is a premeditated crime. Embezzlers in corporations steal assets, savings and funds. Corporations and banks rarely report such thefts to the police because of fear of bad publicity. Corporations engage in a form of embezzlement of the public purse through evasion of taxes, sometimes amounting to billions of dollars, year after year. Avoidance of payment of taxes to the public purse shows a deliberate intention to under-report annual income to the tax authorities, employs tax loopholes, uses tax havens, or does all three. Avoidance of payment of taxes would have supported the poor, sick, elderly, single parents, young and the unemployed. These corporations show a cold, heartless determination to maximise profit, no matter who suffers.

CEOs will claim that they have a lofty position, so they cannot be expected to know of corruption in the company. They will find fault with others for not informing them of financial misconduct. The bosses decline to take responsibility and instead refer to misconduct in the corporation as "control failings", "multiple poor decisions", a "system failure" or a "failure of implementation". These are frequently used phrases for financial abuse, gross misconduct and corrupt practices. The employment of such language blocks culpability. By claiming that everybody in the corporation must take responsibility, it means that nobody ends up taking responsibility. The blame then conveniently falls on the system not on the corporate individuals, who manipulate the system for power and profit.

Bankers receive breathtaking bonuses to satisfy their lust for money, and taxpayers see their hard-earned money used to bail them out after their gross mismanagement. Public relation advisors, lawyers and accountants have become masters at passing the buck.

The application of mindfulness includes the development in a company of a sense of personal and collective responsibility, cultivation of empathy for the less fortunate and the application of action to challenge those who wilfully engage in corrupt practices—from supporting wilful tax evasion to harmful commercial enterprises. Sadly, the secular-based mindfulness industry does not address corporate corruption. Such corruption remains firmly entrenched in the unspoken world during mindfulness workshops held in numerous businesses.

The mindfulness industry does not address corporate corruption. Such corruption remains firmly entrenched in the unspoken world during mindfulness workshops. Real change comes when there is the collective agreement to move from the unspoken to the spoken. This is the first step towards ethics, personal responsibility and compassionate action. Employees often know what is going on behind closed doors but fear to become a whistle-blower because of the consequences. Authentic mindfulness practices inspire confidence, fearlessness and a liberated voice.

This is the first step towards ethics, personal responsibility and compassionate action. Employees often know what goes on behind closed doors but fear to become a whistle-blower because of the personal consequences, such as loss of employment and a poor reference. Authentic mindfulness practices inspire confidence, fearlessness and a liberated voice.

Overview of the First Training Rule

Serving as the basic training guidelines, every one of the five precepts stands worthy of reflection and enquiry, as an indispensable feature of lifestyle. Gross and subtle aspects of these guidelines challenge our views, conditioning and attitudes. *Sila* is vital in the practice of waking up and indispensable from a life of mindfulness and wisdom.

Take the first training. "Bad" things happen in this world. There is what is "not good" or "bad", there is "terror", and there are "acts of evil". Our views about others constantly affect our judgement. Our morality can become based on blame, retaliation and retribution or on a passive response. While offering the benefits of reduction of stress and a softer voice, mindfulness meditations and loving kindness meditation can develop at the expense of enquiry, a passion for change and awakening to reality.

Outside of such meditations, the mindfulness practitioner may pursue personal, social or corporate goals that harm others or themselves in the short or long term. Identified with a nationality, the mindfulness practitioner can wholeheartedly believe in the nation's right to attack others and punish their citizens, insurgents, armies and governments. Lacking enquiry and vision, people resort to the implementation of violence upon the other.

"You have hurt me (us), so we will hurt you". This becomes the core morality. "You have used weapons to kill and maim our people. We will use weapons to kill and maim people who live in your region". It is no coincidence that organisations and states in conflict with each other use similar means to cause and generate suffering on their enemies. The organisation and the state share more in common that what separates them. Unable to cope with the hurt and suffering, we want to reduce others to the same condition—each side works to inflict suffering on the other side. Both sides offer their supporters a moral justification for inflicting suffering on the other side. Both sides perceive the other side as evil.

I recall attending a meeting of Dharma teachers. The facilitator for the session gave us 1–2 min each to share our views on war. Some teachers felt war might be necessary at times. Others felt a country had a right to defend itself. Others were not sure what their feelings were about war. Others would only consider non-violent strategies to deal with war. It was clear there was no consensus of agreement. Our discussion lasted an hour before we moved onto another topic. It seems unfortunate that the seniors in the Sangha waver on such a primary issue of life and death, on the significance of the first precept.

For numerous generations, human beings have introduced laws, commandments and legislation. Such legislation, secular or religious, aims to determine people's behaviour. Laws and the religious commandments endeavour to stop what we perceive as bad, wrong or evil. National or international legislation can protect people from suffering or violation of various agreements. Moral codes, religious and secular, ancient and modern, continue to matter with or without general approval. These codes include ancient religious texts, such as the Torah in Judaism or rules of the Vinaya in Buddhism or concepts of human rights, such as the American Constitution for US citizens or the UN charter for world citizen. The Buddha also employed rules for the ordained to develop an austere, nomadic lifestyle.

Rules of morality of religion or the nation state or both can sanction killing and violence. For example, the first precept of the major religions focuses on not killing. "Thou shalt not murder", says the Bible. Religions define this commandment to apply to society but frequently do not apply to the same injunction to the aims of the nation state. This enables a military commander or soldier with religious faith to kill while sustaining his or her religious beliefs.

The military and their political/religious leaders treat warfare as a moral duty. The distinction between morality and ethics/virtue is significant.

The Construct of Self and Other

Many citizens claim to live an ethical way of life based on a superficial interpretation of the five precepts. They may forget the application of ethics in times of strong vested interest or reactive conditioning. They may also forget ethics in areas outside of these precepts. For example, we act in unethical and irresponsible ways when we inflict harm or sanction harm upon others through body, speech and mind, as well as actions. Grasping onto the concept of the good, including grasping the five precepts, becomes a means to judge individuals, perhaps to adopt a name and shame policy, which perhaps distracts from a deeper and wider examination of ethics.

No one is able to keep the precepts or any other code of morality to perfection. No one can observe such a high moral standard. Neglect of one or more of the precepts may arise due to identification with the cultural mood or predisposition of the culture in the pursuit of pleasure, regardless of the cost. Ethics easily depends primarily on a

sense of *self* and *other* with a view that one is right and the other wrong. If uncomfortable with virtuous ethics, we identify with codes of morality of another source such as the Holy Book, a religious Tradition, the Law, Ethics Committees or the UN.

The judge, namely, the self, and the judged, namely, the other, have the potential to learn much from each other to enable mutual understanding to develop. We cannot see clearly the person or the people when we place them firmly in the category of the *other* and different from ourselves. Wise judgement requires exploration of what is in common and what shows differences.

The threefold training for practitioners consists of virtue/ethics (*sila*), meditative concentration (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*panna*). All Dharma teachers need deep commitment to the fullness of this training for their students, so that ethics become explicit rather than unspoken. The inclusion of ethics matters as much as any mindfulness or meditation practice. Yet questions arise around virtuous actions: (1) Are the current teachings of the five precepts addressed in depth? (2) Have the teachers failed to address many issues involved in each of the precepts? (3) Is there a preoccupation around sexual ethics that overshadows the other precepts? (4) Do we use the five precepts to leap on the throne of moral self-righteousness? (5) Have the five precepts become religious laws rather than fields for practice, mindfulness and enquiry? (6) Have teachers failed to point to ethics outside of the five precepts? and (7) What confirms a real expression of virtue/ethics/action?

Teachers/mentors/facilitators of mindfulness and meditation can live in a comfort zone with regard to the five trainings through only offering a simplistic view: "I don't commit murder. I don't rob people. I do not rape others. I do not lie and deceive. I am not addicted to alcohol and drugs. Therefore, I observe sila and only need to develop my meditation practice and understanding".

This interpretation of the five virtues only addresses some aspects of ethics. We need to explore all five precepts in order to shed light on contemporary ethical issues. Thoughtful Buddhists need to engage in deep analysis on the moral issues of our time and learn too from the analysis on ethics by certain Buddhist academics, scholars and activists.

The Buddha compared a tradition to a long line of blind men holding each other and following on from the first blind person who started the tradition *(Digha Nikaya, D 1.240)*. Much energy gets siphoned off to preserve a tradition or an ancient code of Buddhist morality (*Vinaya*), while far too many lay Dharma teachers appear unwilling to offer a view for fear of sounding judgemental, moralistic or coming across in an absolutist manner.

Four common responses emerge from Dharma teachers or practitioners to specific questions on ethical issues: (1) Yes, this is breaking a precept; (2) No, this is not breaking a precept; (3) It depends; and (4) I don't know.

Remember the threefold trainings serve to make us mindful of the major issues of humanity and to reflect any way our actions support ethical priorities or cause suffering or knowingly eventually lead to suffering. Table 10.1 presents examples of ethical issues involving each of the five precepts.

Table 10.1 Examples of ethical issues related to the five precepts

First precept
Is support for the nation state engaging in acts of war a violation of the first precept?
Is an abortion or support for an abortion a violation of the first precept?
Are experiments on animals showing a disregard for this precept?
Is embryonic research a violation of the sanctity of life?
Is eating animals, birds and fish a rejection of a Buddhist commitment to saving all sentient beings?
Second precept
Is the maximisation of profit through investments in unethical stocks, such as the defence industry, destruction of rainforests and harmful pollutants, contributing to the harm of others?
Is the pursuit of wealth a form of stealing from the world's poor?
Is withholding taxable income stealing from the national purse?
Is the illegal copying of software, music and film CDs a form of stealing from those who own the copyright?
Is spending money on luxury goods, gambling or extravagance in lifestyle a corruption of mind at a cost to others who need our support?
Is the abuse of natural resources a form of taking of what has not been given?
Is living beyond our means causing suffering now and depriving future generations of resources?
Third precept
What is sexual freedom and what is sexual irresponsibility?
Is making love inherently between a teacher and a yogi, or guru and disciple, a sexual misconduct?
Does violation of this precept always require harassment or manipulation?
Is taking a lover while in a marriage always a violation of the third precept?
Is three or four people making love together a sexual misconduct?
Is having more than one partner, including several partners, a sexual misconduct?
Is a monogamous relationship with a long-term commitment a Judeo-Christian value or a personal preference?
Is watching pornography showing a disregard for the third precept?
Is using sex to market products an abuse of the precept?
Is working in any capacity in the sex industry an abuse of the third precept?
Fourth precept
Is the selling of goods (a house, car, policies, shares, goods) that knowingly can result in deep distress for the consumer breaking the fourth precept?
Is lying ever justified?
Is secrecy a form of rejection of the fourth precept?
Is going into a country or occupied territory and claiming tourist status when one is going to teach the Dharma lying to the immigration authorities?
Is teaching about renunciation and a simple lifestyle when one is living a wealthy lifestyle a form of deception?
Is using the Dharma to maximise a certain lifestyle acting falsely?
Is secrecy a form of suppression of freedom of speech and a violation of the spirit of the fourth precept?
Fifth precept
Is the taking of mind-altering drugs for recreational purposes a violation of the fifth precept?
Is the taking of mind-altering drugs for spiritual exploration a violation of the fifth precept?
Is the taking of such drugs giving support to the worldwide drug mafia that ignores all five trainings?
Is a problem with alcohol or drugs an abuse of the fifth precept or, if there is respect for the precept, is it an addictive problem, rather than an ethical issue?
Is smoking cigarettes a violation of the fifth perception? Nicotine is the most addictive of all substances with a dangerously high risk of eventually causing cancer as well as much heartache and suffering for oneself and loved ones, while precious land is wasted on tobacco crops.

There is no room for complacency. We inquire into mindfulness of ethics in personal, social and working lives, alone and with each other. Virtue, ethics and mindfulness flow naturally together. The exclusion of ethics inhibits the opportunity for profound realisations of such application of mindfulness. The restriction of teachings to methods of mindfulness and meditation, such as currently taking place in the mind/body/work field, means that mindfulness alone remains trapped in a narrow remit. Mindfulness cannot then serve the deeper needs of society but works as an agent to preserve the status quo and the current conservative application of mindfulness.

The Buddha said those who uphold *sila* make wisdom shine and those who uphold wisdom make *sila* shine. No single precept is more important than the other ones. The practice of virtue in body/speech/mind and our actions works as a liberating force since it liberates others and us from fragmented and distorted perceptions.

Combined with virtue/ethics, mindfulness contributes to the power of the voice to speak up and express concern about issues that violate a virtuous way of being.

The Buddha refused to settle for five precepts as *the* definition of ethics. Here are some examples of the Buddha's teachings on ethics. In the Noble Eightfold Path, he stated that ethics consisted of right action, right speech and right livelihood usually translated as "right", *samma*, literally means to be "properly connected to" the Dharma. The other links consist of right view, right intention, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Ethics as a Force for Change

The Buddha firmly placed our livelihood in the field of ethics, namely, forms of skilful employment clearly in accordance with wise intention, deep values and beneficial results for all. The coupling of virtue/ethics with mindfulness in the powerful committee rooms and corridors of political and corporate power would initiate a revolution. Bosses, management, office and factory workers would find themselves engaged in a depth of sharing to generate a transformation in the values and priorities of a business.

The Buddha also taught *sila* as (a) restraint of the senses (*indriya-samvara-sila*); (b) wise use of food, clothing, shelter and dwelling place (*paccaya sannissita sila*); (c) wholesome action (*kusala sila*) of body, speech, mind and livelihood; and (d) not clinging to ethics, codes of morality, rules, methods of practice and rituals (*silabbata-paramasa)*.

He regarded such clinging as a major block to realisation of the Noble Truths. To break out of a limited view of ethics as confined to precepts, it would open our minds to an exploration of *sila* in its wider sense. There is urgency to the recognition of the co-arising of mindfulness with ethics if we experience concern for the welfare of present and future generations. The practice of mindfulness of *sila* and sila to support mindfulness can take us deep into feelings, thoughts, views and conditioned attitudes. The exploration of mindfulness ethics applies inwardly and outwardly to find the truth of situations. We would then inquire into:

(a) The ego of desire for sense of satisfaction and impact of suppression on our consciousness.
(b) Obsessive behaviour around basic needs, pursuit and ownership of more requisites, as well as the time, money and energy devoted to acquisition.
(c) Neglect of a lifestyle in accordance with deep values.
(d) Private and public moralising around precepts, behaviour, practices and rituals.
(e) The lack of ethics of religious/political/corporate/social institutions who cover up or ignore harmful behaviour.
(f) (f) *Sila* supports healthy thoughts, beliefs and actions.

In religious and secular life, the clinging to the concept of what is right becomes an instrument to slag off individuals or groups. Grasping onto rules generate rules within the original rules and rules within those rules. "Trifling and insignificant are the minor details of rules of morality", commented the Buddha. No wonder he rarely reiterated the five precepts in 45 years of solid teaching. A moralist interpretation of an event inhibits the mindful enquiry into the conditions for what ethical issues arise.

The accusers can violate ethical issues as much as the accused. The one who points the accusing finger can forget that he or she has three fingers pointing towards themselves. Ethics examines our intentions in the treatment of others.

People's lives change through awareness, exploration of suffering and the factors, past and present, influencing behaviour. The application of skilful means and deep insights reveal a movement in the right direction. A capacity for a radical non-acceptance of our socialised mindset has a profound significance on virtue preparing the way towards fearless living.

"Good" and "Evil"

In a major conflict, home or abroad, wise action becomes a public statement of an ethical standpoint regardless of any ridicule, bemusement or doubts of others. To label individuals, organisations or leaders of nation states as evil block the enquiry into causes and conditions that trigger expressions of evil: Are ethics inseparable from our mind's constructs of good and evil? Are there ethical actions not bound to notions of doing good and overcoming evil?

A person who claims to have made up their mind about the other often wants retribution. The dark perception of *evil* endorses the dark force of revenge and the desire to inflict suffering on so-called others. We employ different languages, but the desire to inflict suffering remains the same.

Carrying the arrogance of claims to Western civilisation, we bring to bear on *others* our ideology of liberal democracy, secular culture and consumer values, as the only fit way to live. Imposing our version of what is *good* for others, we act upon the belief in differences between others and ourselves as if the perceived differences revealed true reality. We want to change people to make other countries more like us, a demand for sameness. Right view sees clearly what self and other, us and them, share in common already, as an important step towards virtuous action.

We believe we know what is *good* for an individual, a community and a non-Westernised nation. We split our inner life into two, namely, *self and other* or *us and them* and act on the belief. We make war on others with a view to making them submit to what we want from them.

Words become highly politicised. Take words like *American, Arab, asylum seeker, black person, Christian, European, Jew, immigrant, Muslim or white person.* We cannot see clearly the person or group of people having placed them in the category of *other*. An American is not an American. A Muslim is not a Muslim. A black person is not black, and a white person is not white. "They" are not who we think "they" are. "We" are not who they think "we" are.

Human beings express themselves in infinite ways with infinite presentations. The expression of a particular, black, white, European and Asian, confines human being to the finite and a failure to recognise their diversity. Those who confuse labels with reality miss the opportunity to live in the real world, not tied down to sameness and differences.

Politicians and the media also hide behind the self-delusion that they report reality rather than acknowledge their employment of labels and concepts to describe their version of reality. We experience authentic ethics when grounded in awareness of the contingent factors to whatever situation arises and wise steps to take. Then there is no possibility to inflict deliberately suffering on others in the name of a necessary action. Ethics then moves for expression outside of the mental construct of good (us) and evil (them).

Ethics Beyond Good and Evil

The Buddha has offered wise counsel on a wide range of ethical issues including action; livelihood; judgements; moralising; lifestyle; handling, raising and making money; sensual pleasures; ethical goods; use of resource; diet; travel; codes of morality; upkeep of outdates religious rule; and law and punishment.

That is not the end either to an enquiry into ethics. The Buddha stated "Having abandoned formal practice and actions both '*good and evil'*, neither longing for '*purity nor 'impurity*,' one abides without adhering to either extreme". (Sutta Nipata, SN 900). Ethics include enquiry into the insubstantiality of the ego and the movement towards the realisation of truth. It is the *sila* of the *sila*s—the greatest act of virtue of a human being expresses in his or her determination to find truth.

Through grasping onto identification with any system of thought or form, including formal meditation practice, the self easily becomes bogged down in notions of purity and impurity, right and wrong and progress and regress. Depending on our belief in what is *good*, we then fix what is *not good*. Identification with the *good* precedes the not *good*, the *not right*.

Naively, we believe evil comes from evil or from the unhealthy and destructive influences of the past or present. It is perfectly possible for good men and women who have had loving and supportive upbringing, with caring parents and loving family members, to commit the most obscene evils, especially in war. Why? E*vil* emerges from identification with the *good*. If we project the notion of the good onto the nation state or religion, and political/religious authority figures, then the *evil* of intent can follow.

Fear of *others* obstructs the virtue of ethics. Ethics requires enquiry into the encounter with events. S*ila* thus provides a profound challenge to step outside our conditioned mind and identification with secular or religious ideologies to act from a fresh perspective.

A constricted, fragmented and defined sense of the world confines and determines our limits as humans robbing us of our potential for the immensity of realisations. An enquiry into ethics, outside mental constructs and conditioning of good and evil, challenges us to the very roots of our remarkable existence.

Virtue or Control of Behaviour

The view of breaking rules does not apply to the spirit nor the letter of the meaning of *sila*. *Sila* is a practice, a training (*sekha*) and a development of healthy and wholesome attributes. The infliction of harm, exploitation or abuse of other shows a lack of self-knowledge, unresolved reactivity of the mind or irresponsible obedience to the will of another. In the wisdom of the Buddhist tradition, generosity, kindness, right livelihood, non-harming, sharing and moderation in lifestyle show immense virtue (*sila*) in lifestyle. You cannot legislate for that.

You write up codes of morality and try to force people to submit to them. Authentic virtue and ethics come through love and the wisdom of deeply rooted responses to a noble way of life. The world of *do and do not* imposes upon us a mechanical obedience, but compliance to rules does not confirm virtue. The development of a virtuous way of life ensures respectful action towards others and ourselves.

Rather than slip into a moralising attitude, we practise to develop a language and understanding that pay respect to the diversity of exploration so that virtue, mindfulness and wisdom can develop for all. The five precepts exist in the context of specific situations pointing in the direction of the resolution of suffering. A deep exploration of virtue and insight into the conditioned arising of problem situations dissolves the fears that maintain the gap between people.

Any deep ethic requires the capacity to stay true to an enquiry to realise the infinite amidst the so-called finite. This ethic reveals a clear encounter with any situation to realise the infinite potential of it. Any situation, large or small, personal or global, reveals a range of feelings, perceptions, thoughts and knowledge. This composition carries within it the potential to reveal a truth that develops a faithful response to wise resolution of the encounter. Ignoring this ethic, we become corrupted through settling for something less in life, namely, pursuit of self-interest, the finite and transitory.

The ethic of enquiry offers limitless potential for insights and realisation while putting aside the blind adherence to rules and rigidity of views. Adherence to rules of behaviour belongs to social mores having little or nothing in common with virtue, ethics and a dedicated action. Those who identify most strongly with vows, laws and the social order may restrict the capacity for engaging in the ethical act, an encounter noble in its resolve.

Western culture subscribes to human rights without realising how selective, rather than universal, these rights are. For example, some might consider it a human right to be free to travel anywhere in the world. Such people wish to choose to stay in any country, anywhere in the world, for as long as they wish, whether to work, marry, rest or play. Nations block this right to travellers, pilgrims, migrants, refugees and families searching for a new place to live or spend time in. The demands of the nation state take precedent. The human right to travel anywhere and stay anywhere rests on the principle that the Earth belongs to everybody. Governments block freedom of movement, except for the exceptionally rich, who can travel where they wish and stay in a country for as long as they wish.

The Buddha reminded us that attachment and clinging to views condition the mind resulting in extreme standpoints. If the mind clings to the idea of the *good* as success, praise, gain and pleasure, then the more the mind resists failure, blame, loss and pain. The *good* carries with the shadow of the *not good, the bad, the terrible* thing to happen and the *evil*. Due to the conditioned perception of situations, the *good* becomes the *not good*, the *evil.*

We also name the other as evil so that we feel good about ourselves. Failure in an undertaking can make us feel to be a victim leading to despair. We can drive ourselves harder to try to achieve the *good*. Ethics contribute to the release from clinging to concepts of good and evil to know another kind of knowledge not determined by the personal/social/national and divisive values of the self. Harsh punishment attempts to take away others' sense of self-worth, demonise their character and make them change their mindset. The punishment of other makes us feel that we are better than they are. Others have to suffer because we have grasped the idea of what is good for them. Respect reveals itself through a willingness to stay steady when faced with a challenging encounter.

A Profound Ethic Means to Stay Faithful to Wise Action

Between early 1967 and 1970, I spent years travelling on the road taking me through various Asian countries. While making the journey through southern Thailand, I stopped off at *Wat Suanmoke* (Monastery of the Garden of Liberation), near Chai Ya. I asked Ajahn Buddhadassa questions about life, about Buddhism and so on. After I had been there for some days, I knew I wanted to become a Buddhist monk, practise meditation, explore the Dharma and live in the forest with him as my teacher. He responded coolly to my request. "Anybody who changes their religion does so because they haven't understood their own", he responded to my surprise. He then took down a copy of the Bible and turned to the first pages of Genesis. He then read out a verse "Do not bite off the tree of knowledge of *good* and *evil*".

"If you understand that statement in The Bible, then you have understood the deepest meaning of religion. That is all you have to understand", he added. He looked serious. I could see he meant everything he said. He showed no interest in giving me

any support for ordination and sent me away. I left the monastery travelled northwards into far north of Thailand, crossed the River Mekong into Laos, witnessed features of the war and then with renewed determination returned to the monastery. Ajahn Buddhadasa could see for himself my single-pointed determination to ordain and set in motion the wheels for it. He was right. Non-grasping onto the tree of knowledge of good and evil lies at the heart of human enquiry. Non-grasping is a liberating ethic enabling the capacity to stay true to wise action.

Ethics resist creating an identity of being a victim through feeling sorry for ourselves, no matter what the circumstances. A *victim* experiences a living death. In time, the victim may well become the victimiser, who inflicts suffering on other so they become victims. Insight into the process of feeling sorry for one *self* and insight into the self-making others feel sorry for themselves spring from an ethics, virtuous action and a mindful enquiry into prevailing circumstances.

Application of ethics confirms a power of mind rather than the prescribed morality, obedience to social norms, useful though some might be. The commitment to ethics contributes to eliciting the truth out of a situation. Truth becomes obscure in the belief in the *good* and the determination of what is *evil*. The quest for truth, the real and the authentic endures. A genuine ethic contains a faithful endurance.

The Guardian, a daily newspaper in the UK, reported the story of Ruqia Hassan, a 30-year-old Kurdish woman, who repeatedly criticised ISIS on her Facebook page. Fearlessly, she commented on the brutality of the regime in occupied Syria. "None has shown us any compassion but the graveyards", she wrote. Referring to air strikes from the West, she wrote: "People in the market crash into each other like waves, not because of the numbers, but because their eyes are glued to the skies… their feet are moving unconsciously". On the air strikes, she wrote bluntly: "May God protect the civilians and take the rest". "Today (ISIS police) launched random detentions. God I beg you end this darkness and defeat these people". "Every day, they ban, ban, ban".

Ruqia, a graduate of philosophy, would not stop putting out her messages on Facebook despite pleas from her family and friends. Mindful of the risks, Ruqia continued her Facebook protests exposing the truth of ISIS. She reported the reality of life in Raqqa remaining faithful to the ethics staying true to reality, beyond considerations of self and other, good and evil. ISIS arrested her, imprisoned her and then executed her. Rather than close down her Facebook page, ISIS left it open to trap her friends. They arrested five of her Facebook friends and executed them.

Such mindful and fearless actions require a depth of ethics, sometimes beyond the comprehension of the ordinary mind. The Buddha spoke of the goal of such ethics, to bring about the end of the "birth of deeds" (*karaja*) causing pain and resulting in pain.

Discarding the notion of personal salvation, a common feature of religion, the Buddha, endorsed a fundamental dissatisfaction with the established order of things—secularism, religion and other ideologies that hold consciousness in its grip. A steadfast commitment to that dissatisfaction expresses a lifelong ethic making a significant contribution to a liberated way of life.

Ethics and Truth

Dharma teachings make no claim to truth in whose name we act. For as soon as we adopt that view, that truth becomes the *good*, and those outside the view of the *good* become ignorant, the foolish, the infidels and the terrorists. There is no such transcendent truth to adhere to, but instead we engage with a situation to elicit the truth from it. The wise response triggers a break away from the past, namely, belief in the *good* and the not *good*, to liberate the infinite potential from the apparent limits of the situation.

A commitment to truth offers a potential to uncover anything hidden. The truth emerges via the enquiry into a situation enabling an opening up of the issue. Awakening to the real sets no limits on realisations and the capacity to respond to the real of the situation. Ethics, mindfulness and truth work together to enable deep discoveries, previously hidden from perception. Along with reflection, enquiry and clear comprehension, the invaluable insights enable a genuine breakthrough.

Vigilance ensures that the mind steers away from grasping onto these insights that build up egotism, such as the view "I've got it". Treasures of understanding then end up becoming subservient to the ego. Ego then employs one or two realisations and forgets the infinity of possibilities. The grasping of the mind keeps insights to the finite unable to see more. The same person goes back into a myopic condition of self-delusion based on memory.

The wise attribute significance to the here and now only when a truth emerges from it. The Buddha exposed the emptiness of the here and now, as something of itself, and in itself. We cannot equate truth with the here and now. Ego quickly highlights the *now* as the confirmation of truth, as if abiding in the *now* or *being* meant the same thing as realisation of truth. The ego makes narrow ego-centred interpretations to present being in the moment as truth.

Ethics contribute to the discernment of the truth of suffering *and* its resolution. One stays faithful to it and refuses to cling to an absolute or relative view of a situation. The ethics of commitment to the reality of what unfolds takes priority.

Non-reliance on positive outcome confirms fearless ethics and virtuous outcome. The absence of any ultimate guarantee for actions provides the very condition for the possibility of an ethical act. If we limit ourselves to dependency on positive outcome, we neglect our potential to express what matters.

The Buddha on Mindfulness of the Importance of Ethics

The Buddha's awakening under the Bodhi Tree includes the positive side; his awakening inspired men and women for more than 100 generations to engage in the quest for truth with the willingness to make sacrifices for that deep investigation. On the negative side, seekers pursued a single enlightenment to confirm truth and reality without any subsequent realisations necessary.

The Buddha came across numerous insights during his 45 years of teaching, through reflection, enquiry, meditation and first-hand experiences. Fresh insight, realisations, discoveries and countless treasures emerged throughout his life.

Not surprisingly, he made few references in all these discourses to his night of awakening. He showed the way to wise freedom of being and freedom of action not to the promotion of self through past or present experiences.

The Buddha's expansive teachings on ethics are included in the noble path of awakening. Ethics embrace:

Right understanding or right view explores the nature of suffering, its causes and conditions and its resolution and the way to its resolution.
Right speech, namely, truthful, clear with a wise attitude.
Right action, namely, freedom from any volition to inflict or ignorance about causing harm.
Right livelihood, namely, work and lifestyle, skilful, respectful and sustainable.
Restraint of the senses (*indriya-samvara-sila*).
Wise use of food, clothing, shelter and dwelling place (*paccaya sannissita sila*).
Wholesome action (*kusala sila*) of body, speech and mind.
Warns also against clinging to ethics rules, methods, techniques, forms and rituals (*silabbata-paramasa*) as a block to Noble realisation.

This is an ethic, too.

Ethics influence our thinking, beliefs and actions. In the dynamic of our existence, our ethics have an enormous impact upon our lives. There is insufficient exploration and education around virtue/ethics, either in religion or secular culture.

We make a short journey on this earth before departing this realm. During this journey through arising and passing, presence and absence, what exists and does not exist, we have the opportunity to be mindful at the way we look at the world to find out what matters. We develop the courage to express our voice and act to resolve suffering.

Through enquiry and insight, we realise that ethics can break away from a divisive state. The assumption of difference between others and ourselves easily implies a privileged position of knowing what is best for the other without comprehending what shapes the views and opinions that take up such a position.

The adoption of a position by the self of the other implies that the presentations from the other accurately reflect their underlying reality. Clearly, others may have a different perception owing to the taking up and adoption of a different presentation, or appearance, from the other. The wise approach of the Buddha made it explicitly clear that the *other* bears no essence, no self whatsoever. A myriad number of presentations, and myriad number of interpretations of those presentations, only confirm the emptiness of the self, the voidness of any essence of the other, as well as the perceiving *self*.

If we remain wary of assuming that the other expresses an intrinsic difference to ourselves, this makes for the possibility of the recognition of the commonality of the self and other without exaggerating this unity at the expense of the conventional differences. The heartfelt sense of the commonality between self and the other will release a genuine empathy. Empathy confirms the authentic connection rather than identification with the mental construct of ourselves as the privileged, mindful of the other, namely, the underprivileged or the other way around.

The Language of Choice

The dissolution of divisive views leans towards the repudiation of the idea of the good, of doing good and behaving in a good way. The inflated self can manifest in the dangerous belief: "I had no choice". Such a standpoint, particularly with regard to actions involving harm, shows a mind in its contracted state, narrow and dogmatic failing to explore alternatives to the presiding view with all of the painful consequences imposed upon the other. Yet, the same language "I had no choice" in different circumstances can confirm the deep instinct of virtuous movement that comes from beyond the limits of the self.

In this kind of movement, the self places itself at risk through fidelity to a transcendent realisation or on behalf of the so-called other. The presentations from the *other* may provide inspiration showing a significance unrelated to the differences of presentation of self and other. The expression of this profound movement carries with it a liberating truth.

It might appear that these selfless movements require the drama, intensity of the situation, and enable the expression of this freedom of movement. We sometimes witness such dramatic movements, where the self becomes empty of significance. The mind can easily draw the conclusion that the best of human beings only emerges in the drama of the explicit event where there is a kind of calling to go beyond the limits of the self.

A noble, selfless action becomes available in the subtlest of circumstances, devoid of any drama, that enables the free movement of life, unbound in any way to the restrictive conditioning of the self. Dependency for peace of mind on approval and agitation and hurt due to disapproval consolidates the reactive self.

We think that we cannot imagine living in a world without self and other. In knowing the free movement, inseparable from the unfolding process of life, it becomes hard to imagine any substantial significance to the *self-other* construct. The same principle applies right across the board. There is no substantial difference between life and death, being and non-being, existence and non-existence and presence and absence. The capacity ultimately to remain free from attributing any kind of substantiality between one side and the other side releases this exceptional freedom of movement.

The self gets impregnated and then composed of corrupt thought, proliferation of certain tendencies and a motley collection of assumptions and a warped perception of reality, as if these warped perceptions give an authentic sense of reality. This impregnation obscures the real. Yes, there is the truth of what obscures, the stress and numerous problematic conditions of life, but it would be foolish to ascribe too much of the real to the various manifestations of the unresolved issues in the mind. There is the potential to see these diverse expressions of internal life, often impacting upon the body as well, without ascribing the real to these presentations.

A noble ethic sees the emptiness of a single claim upon a presentation and acknowledges the possibility of infinite presentations and the far-reaching discoveries to enable noble action.

The primary task of a conscious human being requires faithfulness to fearless action through suspending our tedious preoccupations with ourselves and projections onto others. These preoccupations get in the way of the apprehension of deep insights shedding light on situations. Ethics, mindfulness and concentration require a certain austerity to stay focussed on the essential priority. The emptiness of essence of any self-existence makes it possible for genuine freedom to respond.

The Need for and Nature of Buddhist Economics

11

Michael Lucas

Introduction

Increasingly, concern is being expressed from a number of quarters about the shortcomings of modern capitalism. On the other hand, the command (i.e., centrally planned) socialist economies have apparently not been a success, resulting in the widespread view that there is no alternative to the current shareholder value capitalism model. This model, intellectually grounded in neoclassical economics, still dominates business school education, thereby shaping future business leaders and economic policy makers, and at least implicitly informs much popular discourse, including that of the popular press. Given the very serious shortcomings of modern capitalism, which will be discussed in this chapter, there is a need to reconceptualize economics to transform our societies for the better. This chapter, therefore, considers how Buddhist philosophy and the ethical principles derived from it can provide an alternative system of thought, to inform the development of an improved economic system that works for all.

The Shortcomings of Contemporary Capitalism

"The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist" (Keynes, 1936, p. 383). This quote captures the important point that economic paradigms, such as that of the currently dominant neoclassical economics, have a huge influence on popular, everyday thinking and discourse. Such paradigms create the

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conceptualization (both academic and popular) of what *ought* to be—the conventional wisdom concerning what is best. Thus, neoclassical economics is implicated in maintaining the current capitalist system, despite its very serious shortcomings.

Contemporary capitalism has been subjected to increasing criticism from a number of quarters in recent years. Shortcomings identified include the rampant materialism and consumerism on which the system depends and massive and increasing inequality of income and wealth: globally, the richest 1% now own more than the other 99% put together. The richest 100 individuals own more than the bottom 50% of the world's population and the gap is widening. In addition, there is the failure to provide satisfying jobs, providing instead, for example, low-paid, insecure work in call centers—and often failure to provide any jobs at all—and communal decay resulting from exclusion and lack of social cohesion. Environmental destruction is an additional product of this unfair, unjust, and inefficient system. Given the apparent failure of the socialist planned economies, however, there has emerged the widespread view that there is no alternative to the current shareholder value model of capitalism.

Why, given the increasing realization of the shortcomings of modern capitalism, does the system persist? The notion that shareholder value capitalism is the only feasible option, given the failure of communism, is in large part the result of university (and other) business schools propagating this idea. Business education is overwhelmingly dominated by the neoclassical economics paradigm, which sees shareholder value maximization as the right and proper role of business in society.

The Neoclassical Economics Paradigm

The neoclassical economics paradigm appears to demonstrate that a system of private enterprise and competitive markets, with individual enterprises pursuing the objective of profit maximization, will lead to a socially desirable outcome: the optimal allocation of society's resources among the competing demands on them. This proposition concerning what is socially desirable and optimal, however, rests on a particular social ontology and narrow conception of "optimality" adopted by neoclassical economics, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Profit maximization can only be achieved, it is argued, by the business enterprise producing what consumers want and in the most technically efficient, i.e., cost-minimizing, manner.

The application of the *marginalist calculus* ensures that resources are channeled into the production of each particular product or service up to the point at which the value placed on it by consumers, indicated by the price per unit they are willing to pay, is equal to the cost per unit, in terms of scarce resources, incurred in producing the product or providing the service. As the output of a particular product is increased, the cost per unit will eventually start to increase due to diminishing marginal productivity—the so-called law of diminishing returns. Eventually a point is reached where the cost of production per unit is equal to the value placed on it by consumers, as reflected in the price they are willing to pay. Output of the product should be increased up to this point but not beyond it. Up to this point the value

Fig. 11.1   Price and output quantity for a profit-maximizing firm
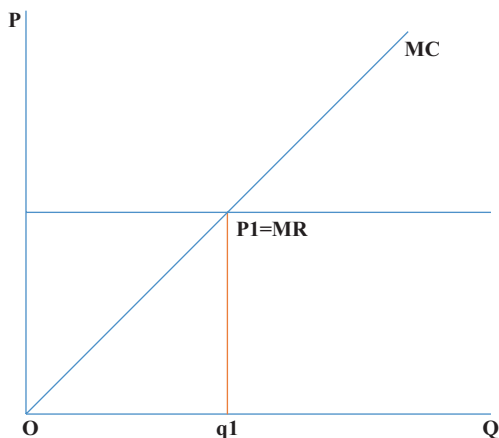
placed on the product by consumers is greater than the cost of producing each unit, so expanding output increases total consumer utility by more than the costs incurred. Beyond this point, the cost of producing each unit is greater than the increase in utility gained by consumers; from society's point of view, therefore, the optimal output for the product is the quantity at which price per unit = marginal cost per unit.

The neoclassical economics model demonstrates that a system of competitive markets, with firms pursuing the objective of profit maximization, will reach equilibrium at this point for all products and services.

Figure 11.1 shows the price and output level for a profit-maximizing firm in a system of competitive markets. The range of possible prices for the product concerned is shown on the vertical axis (P) and the range of possible output levels on the horizontal axis (Q). The price (P1) = marginal revenue (MR) curve shows the price per unit the consumer is willing to pay, and this represents the marginal revenue (i.e., the extra revenue earned from the sale of each unit) for the firm. The marginal cost (MC) curve shows the marginal cost per unit (i.e., the additional cost incurred by the firm for each successive unit produced). This is assumed to rise as output increases due to diminishing marginal productivity. The firm maximizes profit by producing the level of output q1, at which MR = MC. Below this level of output, the additional revenue earned from the sale of each unit sold exceeds the additional cost per unit incurred in producing it, so total profit can be increased by expanding output. Beyond q1, however, the cost of producing each additional unit is greater than the revenue earned from its sale. Expanding production beyond this point therefore reduces total profit.

By maximizing its own profit, therefore, the firm also produces the socially optimal amount of each product, where the value placed on it by consumers (= price per unit) equals the cost in terms of resources used. At a lower level of output, utility obtained by consumers exceeds the cost in terms of scarce resources used, so a net gain in social welfare is obtained by increasing output. At a higher level of output, the cost, in terms of scarce resources, of producing each unit exceeds the value placed on it by consumers, resulting in a net reduction in social welfare. Net social welfare is maximized

where price = marginal cost, and this is the level of output that will be produced by the profit-maximizing firm. It should be noted that, in this view of the world, society's welfare is assumed to be equivalent to the total utility obtained by consumers.

Thus, a system of private enterprise, based on competitive markets, appears to solve the economic problem of how society's limited resources should be allocated between the unlimited demands placed on them in an efficient manner unlike, it is argued, any known alternative system. This conception of the *best* economic system, however, is predicated on the view that society consists, in its entirety, of rational, self-interested individuals, with their given preferences. Given this ontological position, an economic system is to be judged on the basis of how well it enables the individual to satisfy his or her wants.

Now there are (at least) three major objections to the above argument that a system of private enterprise and competitive markets (i.e., capitalism) achieves an optimal allocation of resources.

First, there is abundant evidence that real market economies, and the individual business enterprises within them, don't actually operate in the way assumed by the neoclassical theory of the firm. There are, for example, widespread market imperfections, i.e., markets characterized by monopoly and oligopoly, rather than perfect competition, which result in a non-optimal allocation of resources. In monopolistic and oligopolistic markets, firms can maximize profits without producing a level of output at which price = marginal cost. In fact, in such markets, firms will maximize profits by producing a lower than optimal level of output at which price is greater than marginal cost rather than expanding to the point where the two are equal.

There is, in addition, substantial evidence that supports managerial theories of the firm, as opposed to the neoclassical theory, which suggest that the objective of many real enterprises, especially larger companies, is the maximization of senior managers' utility rather than profit/shareholder wealth maximization, again leading to divergence from the optimal allocation of resources.

Second, there is the widespread existence of *externalities* that, likewise, result in a non-optimal allocation of resources, even in the unlikely event of a competitive equilibrium being achieved. The production and consumption of goods and services often has a significant impact on third parties who are not involved in this production or consumption. The market price of the product or service concerned only reflects the private marginal cost to the producer and the valuation placed on the product or service by the consumer, not the wider costs imposed on society or the environment by, for example, noise and pollution. An optimal allocation of resources, even given the narrow definition of "optimality" employed by neoclassical economics, would require that price = marginal social cost which is often much higher than marginal private cost.

An efficient market economy, i.e., one that allocates resources in accordance with society's preferences in the most technically efficient manner, would require prices to reflect the wider social costs incurred in the production or consumption of the product or service concerned, which they often do not do! An instructive example of this is provided by former World Bank economist Raj Patel (2009) in his hypothetical *$200 hamburger*. Patel has estimated that the real social cost of

producing a "Big Mac" is about $200. The reason Big Macs don't cost $200 (plus a profit markup!) is that their price does not account for their real costs, including the carbon footprint, impact on the environment in terms of water use and soil destruction, and the healthcare costs of diet-related illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes. If prices in a market economy reflected social marginal cost, rather than just private marginal cost, it seems highly probable that far fewer scarce resources would be allocated to the production of hamburgers and such resources would be reallocated to the production of products and services which consume less social and environmental capital relative to the benefit obtained by consumers.

Third, even to the limited extent that real-world market economies and individual enterprises within them do operate in accordance with the assumptions of neoclassical economics, the outcome is not necessarily a socially desirable one if one rejects the social ontology of neoclassical economics, as Buddhists, among others, do. The Buddhist perspective sees a competitive economy dedicated exclusively, or at least primarily, to the achievement of a narrow definition of economic efficiency as seriously defective in terms of serving the needs of human development. "Laissez-faire" capitalism is based on the pursuit of self-interest, greed, desire, rampant materialism, and consumerism, treating workers as what Marx and Engels (1975, p. 41) called "mere appendages to the machine" in pursuit of minimization of labor costs, resulting in a lack of meaningful jobs, job satisfaction, and personal development. Growing inequality and exclusion threaten social cohesion, solidarity, social justice, and ultimately the perceived legitimacy of the system.

In summary then, the ontological position adopted by neoclassical economics is one of society as atomistic, self-interested individuals: effectively Hobbes's (1651) "war of all against all" reconciled through Smith's (1776) "invisible hand of the market." The moral implications of this position have, understandably, been criticized by, for example, Lux (1990) who observed that Smith inadvertently (as a moral philosopher himself) abolished the problem of morality by arguing that it is only necessary for each individual to pursue their own self-interest and the outcome will be a socially desirable one for all!

Modern capitalism has demonstrated repeatedly the folly of this argument sanctioning unconstrained pursuit of self-interest—that "greed is good"; one need only to think back to the prolonged global financial crisis starting in 2008, caused by greedy bankers, for an example.

The Buddhist Ontological Position

Buddhism rejects the ontological position which underlies the neoclassical economics criterion of what constitutes the best economic system and indeed asserts that it is this false conception of the individual self as an enduring, separate entity, and the behavior that naturally tends to follow from it, that is the cause of much of human suffering, discontent, and unhappiness. The neoclassical ontology implies and indeed sanctions economic behavior, which is antithetical to the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path to deliverance from suffering: the pursuit of self-interest, greed, and desire.

> In recent times many books have been written on the subject of economics and economic theory, all of them either from the Capitalist or Socialist point of view. Neither of these systems pays attention to, nor considers the inner development of man as an important factor in the growth of society. Hence there has been a rapid deterioration in human values and standards of behavior in all classes of society. Science and technology have taken gigantic strides forward to send man to the moon, and it will not be long before he visits other planets. But fears are expressed that if the present trend towards moral degeneration continues, before long it would be impossible to differentiate human action from that of the animal. This fear is not baseless. It would be a great tragedy indeed were man to turn beast even in one of the many bestial aspects of behavior belonging to the lower animals. Thus what the world requires today is a socially stable economic system which yields the highest place to man's moral development and cultivation of human values." (Ven. M. Pannasha Maha Nayaka Thera, 2007)

Thus, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize economics, to develop an economic system that works for all and reconnects economic activity with society's moral core. Buddhist economics can provide a conceptual framework for reinventing economics.

Buddhist Philosophy

The Buddha taught that suffering is a fundamental characteristic of life for all sentient beings. The prevalence of suffering is the first of the Four Noble Truths, which capture the essence of the Buddha's teaching. The term suffering "covers pain, ill health, disease- physical and mental- including such minor forms as disharmony, discomfort, irritation or friction, or, in a philosophic sense, the awareness of incompleteness or insufficiency. It is dissatisfaction and discontent, the opposite of all that we mentally embrace in the terms well-being, perfection, wholeness, bliss" (Humphreys, 1981, p. 81).

The second of the Four Noble Truths is the cause of suffering: ignorance. Ignorance concerning the nature of the world and of oneself, i.e., the perception of oneself as a separate, enduring entity—the "individual" as conceived in neoclassical economics—leads to desire: the craving for sensual pleasures, to satisfy the desires of this individual. The individual is, in fact, a constantly changing bundle of attributes with no essence that constitutes a "self." The "person" consists of five parts— the *Skandhas*—comprising material form/body, sensations, perceptions, mental formations (ideas, volitions), and consciousness. There is no enduring separate entity, only a constantly changing combination of physical conditions, sensations ideas, and states of consciousness, each of which is conditioned by other external phenomena which are also constantly changing and, likewise, have no separate unconditional existence.

By not understanding the true nature of the world and of ourselves, we tend to behave in a way that supports and promotes "me" at the expense of "you" and everything else. The result is attachment to objects and people and negative emotions such as anger and envy. Our false view of the world and of ourselves thereby

Right Views	Wisdom
Right Resolve	
Right Speech	Morality
Right Action	
Right Livelihood	
Right Effort	
Right Attention	Concentration of Mind/Mindfulness
Right Meditation	

Fig. 11.2 The Noble Eightfold Path

gives rise to selfish desire; desire includes both the wish to feel pleasant sensations and to avoid unpleasant ones (i.e., feelings of aversion). However, this desire cannot ultimately be satisfied and the attempt to do so causes frustration and discontent. The objects of our desire are impermanent, as are the states of mind, which create the desire for them. In short, the delusion of self creates desire, but due to impermanence this desire can never be satisfied. Unsatisfied desire is then the cause of discontent, frustration, and unhappiness.

The third noble truth is that the elimination of desire will remove the cause of suffering. The fourth noble truth is the way that leads to the elimination of desire and deliverance from suffering: the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path

The Path consists of a program of mental training and moral action, designed to overcome the false conception of "self" and thereby eliminate man-made suffering, as shown in Fig. 11.2.

The following elaboration of the Noble Eightfold Path is adapted from Humphreys' (1981) exposition.

Right Views Means having a thorough intellectual grasp of the teaching of the Dhamma (Buddhist teaching), including the Three Signs of Being, the Four Noble Truths, the nature of "self," and the law of Karma (i.e., cause and effect).

Right Resolve Means, in effect, having the motivation and determination to follow the Path and stay with it in times of difficulty.

Right Speech Means exercising control so that what we say is polite, true, and necessary. We should never be discourteous, lie, or engage in idle gossip.

Right Action Is the essence of the Path and indeed the element most impaired by the modern capitalist system, as will be discussed later in this chapter. It includes

the five precepts: vows to abstain from killing sentient beings, stealing, sensuality, lying, and intoxicating liquor or drugs. The teaching also contains regular positive injunctions: cease to do evil, learn to do good, and cleanse your heart. In addition to the five precepts, right action includes Dana: charity, love and good works, and a kindly, helpful attitude to all that lives. Bhavana, the injunction to "cleanse your own heart," requires the disciple to purify the mind by its deliberate control and exercise. This also relates to the last two elements of the Path (discussed below) that comprise concentration of mind/mindfulness.

Right Livelihood Consists of following a trade or occupation compatible with right action. From a Buddhist perspective, modern capitalism, even to the extent that it satisfies the criteria of neoclassical economics for an optimal economic system, makes right livelihood difficult or impossible to achieve for many people, as will be explained later in this chapter in the discussion of the nature and purpose of work in Buddhist economics. It is thus far from optimal from a Buddhist perspective.

Right Effort Means the right use of one's energies, to strive diligently to (a) prevent new evil entering one's mind, (b) remove all evil that is there, (c) develop such good as is in one's mind, and (d) acquire still more unceasingly.

Right Attention/Concentration/Mindfulness (Guarding the Senses) Having, via steps 1–6 above, acquired a degree of moral and physical control, the Buddhist approaches Bhavana, the control and evolution of the mind, i.e., controlling our thoughts. Mind control is a key element of the Path to which modern capitalism can be a major barrier. As the Venerable Ajahn Sumedho (1987) has observed:

> In modern capitalist societies, the pressures on us are fantastic – it pulls your senses out. Your attention in modern consumerist society is pulled into things you can buy, constantly renewing your sensory experience. The materialist society tries to arouse greed so you will spend your money and yet never be contented with what you have. There is always something better, something newer, something more delicious than what was most delicious yesterday…it goes on and on pulling you into objects of the senses like that…." (p. 19)

In the words of the Dhammapada (1973) "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded upon our thoughts, it is made by our thoughts" (p. 35), hence the necessity of learning the art of concentration and control of thought. As Brazier (2003) observed, "Our minds are conditioned by the things to which we expose ourselves. Nobody exists in isolation from a context, and, as we have seen, that context contains the objects that we use in building a mentality. Our perception is colored by our pre-existing mentality…the environment we inhabit and the activities we participate in condition our mental state" (p. 254). Capitalism is based on arousing/stimulating sensual desires and hence a major barrier to mindfulness.

Consequently, an economic system based on Buddhist principles, as well as being conducive to right action/right livelihood, including the nature and purpose of work, must also be conducive to concentration and control of the mind, not constantly presenting sensory distractions.

Right meditation means achieving "a state of mind in which the waves of confusion aroused by thought are stilled…it is awareness of the still center of the turning world" (Humphreys, 1981, p. 117). It consists of a series of exercises intended to stop the agitation of the mind. "The aim is the complete suppression of all thoughts belonging to our ordinary state of consciousness in order to uncover the depths of the mind which these thoughts conceal from us. The objective pursued is to make contact with the subconscious…… The suppression referred to here is that of the operations of the mind which fabricate the ideas, the suppression of the fantasies of the imagination" (David-Neel, 1978, pp. 85–86). In this final stage of the Path, a peaceful, tranquil state of mind is achieved. Desire—the urge constantly to grasp, form attachments, or, conversely, to feel aversion to that which we don't like—is eliminated.

The Path, then, can be summarized as consisting of three dimensions: wisdom, morality, and mindfulness. The beginning of the Path is the acquisition of wisdom: a profound understanding of the nature of the world and of oneself in it. Equipped with this understanding, one practices an enlightened morality and mindfulness.

Such, then, is the Noble Eightfold Path to deliverance from suffering. What is needed is an economic system conducive to treading the Path rather than one that presents major barriers to doing so. In particular, we need an economic system that is conducive to right action, right livelihood, and mindfulness (i.e., right concentration and mind control), not a system that presents major barriers to following these steps (in particular) of the Path. Such a system will require reconceptualizing the nature and purpose of production, consumption, work and the role of competition versus cooperation.

Buddhist Economics

It has been suggested in this chapter that the nature of economic activity under modern capitalism is antithetical to treading the Noble Eightfold Path to deliverance from suffering. What is wrong with the capitalist approach to economic activity and what approach to economic activity is consistent with the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path?

The term Buddhist economics is believed to have been coined by Schumacher (1974), an influential German economic thinker in his famous book *Small is Beautiful*, the subtitle of which is "Economics as if people mattered." In this book, Schumacher provided a powerful critique of Western economies and neoclassical economics, arguing against the obsession with economic growth, materialism, and consumerism and proposing instead self-sufficient, human-scale intermediate technologies and communities.

Just as contemporary capitalism draws on neoclassical economics for its intellectual and popular support, so an alternative economic system will require a conceptual framework for guiding its development and providing legitimacy in the eyes of society. A conceptual framework is a set of principles that can be used to guide detailed decisions about production, consumption, and exchange: the central

concerns of economics. The role of a conceptual framework is to provide a structure for thinking about how economic activity should be organized and indeed the purpose of economic activity. It is a theoretical framework with the practical aim of clarifying the objectives of economic activity and how alternative practices are likely to help achieve these objectives.

The rationale underlying Buddhist economics is that the approach to economic activity implied by the precepts of neoclassical economics is, as noted above, antithetical to pursuit of the Noble Eightfold Path to overcoming suffering. In an economic system based on Buddhist principles, the purpose of production, consumption, work, and competition must all be reconceptualized.

Consumption and Production

In neoclassical economics, the consumption of goods and services is the ultimate purpose of economic activity; the objective is for consumers to maximize their utility, hence the more consumption the better. Buddhist economics, on the other hand, prescribes moderate consumption: the "middle way" between the extremes of asceticism and overindulgence. A distinction is made between "right consumption" which is conducive to genuine well-being, for example, the maintenance of a healthy body, and "wrong consumption" for sensual gratification or for indicating status. Modern capitalism effectively depends on over consumption, necessarily involving much "wrong consumption" and hence unnecessary production.

The primary indicator of economic well-being in neoclassical economics is gross national product (GNP) exemplifying the view that, since the purpose of production is to enable consumers to gratify their desires, the more production, the better. In Buddhist economics, production involving the use of scarce resources is only justified if it increases true well-being, i.e., enables "right consumption." Moderation in consumption therefore implies moderation in production and use of the Earth's resources.

The Purpose of Work

Our lives are shaped in large part by our work. Work can be a curse, a drudge, or a pleasure and a means of personal development toward overcoming the delusion of self. The last of these is that advocated by Buddhist economics, which sees the purpose of work as fourfold: (a) to provide a vehicle for us to realize our creative potential; (b) to provide a vehicle for us to work cooperatively with others, thereby helping to free us from our innate egocentricity; (c) to provide necessary, socially useful—as opposed to frivolous—goods and services; and (d) to enable us to earn a livelihood to provide for our needs.

As discussed above, the aim of the Path is, through the practice of wisdom, morality, and concentration of mind, the overcoming of the delusion of self: the false belief that "I" am an enduring, separate entity, different from "You," and the egotistical behavior that inevitably follows from such a belief, which is the cause of our sorrows. However, a deep understanding and realization of the true nature of

things can only be achieved by direct experience, rather than mere intellectual acceptance of the abstract idea of the "delusion of self." Our work, at which we spend a large proportion of our life, should, therefore, from the Buddhist perspective, provide a vehicle for such direct experience. Buddhists see the goal of right action as the purification of human character, and character is formed, in large part, by our work (Lessem & Scheiffer, 2010, p.168).

In neoclassical economics, work is a necessary evil, for which compensation is required, the sole purpose of which is to produce goods and services for consumers. The Buddhist perspective, in contrast, sees work as facilitating human development through cooperation, thus helping in the "letting go of self" which is the ultimate cure to the ailment of suffering. In modern capitalist societies, many jobs preclude such development, or make it very difficult due, in large part, to the narrow division of labor principle guiding job design and work organization, in order to maximize productivity and minimize cost, i.e., the principles of "scientific management!" Other examples include jobs involving frivolous activities such as advertising or marketing, persuading people to buy things they don't want or need, low-paid insecure work on flexible shifts or zero-hours contracts, and cold calling from call centers. This is often inevitable when the objective is profit maximization.

The Role of Competition

The social ontology underlying neoclassical economics is one of atomistic, self-interested individuals whose human nature is to compete. An economic system comprised of individuals competing in the market place is therefore inherently natural and hence best! The Buddhist social ontology suggests that this misunderstanding of the nature of society and the individualistic behavior that follows from it is the ultimate cause of much suffering. Consequently, an economic system based on Buddhist principles would place much greater emphasis on cooperation than on competition.

The Need for Alternative Ownership, Financial Intermediation, Governance, and Accounting Systems

New Corporate Ownership and Financial Intermediation Arrangements

If an economy were to be run with the majority of enterprises pursuing Buddhist economic principles, it is likely that the financial system would also need to be radically reformed. The current system of capital markets allocates funds among different enterprises primarily on the basis of the expected long-term profitability of the enterprise concerned, and investors provide funds on the basis of maximizing their wealth. Consequently, enterprises pursuing objectives greatly at variance with profit/shareholder value maximization may find it difficult or impossible to obtain funding to grow or even survive.

However, there are signs that the system will adapt itself to the wider needs of society. Gleeson-White (2015) suggested that, if only on the grounds of enlightened self-interest, corporations and institutional investors are recognizing the need for a more socially inclusive and environmentally friendly capitalism. This is predicated on the view that there is growing awareness among businesses that the costs to the planet and to social cohesion of current business approaches cannot be sustained. She notes that corporations, rather than governments, are making most headway in quantifying the impact of global commerce on the environment and society.

The system may, however, have to be more radically changed along the following lines. First, a new legal form of corporation may be required along the lines of the "benefit corporation" in order to allow enterprises to deviate significantly from maximization of shareholder wealth. Pioneers in the USA have developed the concept of the "benefit corporation," the key distinguishing characteristic of which is a new legal form of corporation which enables business enterprises to pursue wider social and environmental goals without the risk of being deemed to have failed in their fiduciary duties to shareholders: the principal to whom corporate decision-makers are the agent. Although rather a gray area, company law has sometimes been interpreted as requiring that the primary duty of corporate decision-makers is to maximize the wealth of shareholders. There have been a number of cases in the past where shareholders have successfully persuaded the law courts to enforce their interests against corporate management who have been deemed to have deviated too far from furthering these interests in pursuing wider social goals. The benefit corporation is a newly recognized form of legal entity whose legitimate objectives include a positive impact on society, workers, and the environment as well as providing a fair return for providers of capital.

Senior managers/directors of the benefit corporation are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on society and the environment, not just shareholders. In terms of accountability and hence accounting, the corporation's performance is to be evaluated based on social, environmental, and financial performance. An Annual Benefit Report must be published indicating social and environmental performance based on an independent and transparent third-party standard.

Second, a new system of financial intermediation with new financial instruments (e.g., "community bonds" replacing equity shares) may be necessary. The Centre for Integral Finance (CIF) in London is currently working on this project (see section below for fuller discussion of the work of CIF), a prerequisite for a reformed market economy operating according to the principles of Buddhist economics.

Another important contribution to consideration of how enterprises can free themselves from the shackles of the capital market, and hence preoccupation with profitability at the expense of wider social and environmental goals, has been Jeff Gates' *The Ownership Solution*. Jeff Gates (1998) advocates widespread employee ownership via the creation of new shares: employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs). Fundamental to Gates argument is that, if businesses were owned by the people who work in them, whose concerns would likely include producing socially valuable (rather than frivolous) products/services and meaningful/satisfying jobs that

facilitate personal development, not just profits, many of the problems associated with shareholder value capitalism could be overcome.

New Corporate Governance Arrangements

In addition to a reformed system of financial intermediation, different corporate governance arrangements will be required. The current system is primarily concerned with guarding the interests of providers of financial capital; in an enterprise based on Buddhist principles, a much wider range of interests will need to be protected. In the neoclassical economics world view, corporate management are seen as being the agents of the shareholders, and corporate governance arrangements are primarily concerned with ensuring management acts in accordance with the interests of shareholders rather than their own interests. In a system based on Buddhist economics, a much wider range of interests—employees, local community, wider society, and the environment—will need to be reflected in corporate governance arrangements.

A New Accounting System

Running enterprises in accordance with the principles of Buddhist economics will also require a new accounting model to capture the enterprise's wider contribution to society, the social and environmental impact, rather than just the financial impact on shareholders. Historically, the purpose of corporate accounting was stewardship: accounting was used to keep track of what had been done with the financial resources entrusted to managers by owners/shareholders.

The International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) conceptual framework, which now dominates corporate reporting, requires that facilitating investor decision-making, in pursuit of efficient capital markets, is to be considered the primary purpose of the financial statements and corporate report. This framework makes it clear that stewardship is now secondary to investor decision-making as a general aim of corporate accounting (Britton & Waterston, 2006). The primary purpose of the financial statements, the centerpiece of the corporate report, is, according to the IASB, to help investors assess the amounts, timing, and certainty of future cash flows (Van Mourik & Walton, 2014). Equipped with this information, investors in capital markets can channel funds into the potentially most profitable enterprises, thereby contributing to the economy achieving "allocative efficiency," i.e., the allocation of resources in accordance with society's (i.e., consumers) preferences.

In normative terms, then, the IASB framework is consistent with the neoclassical economics perspective that the social responsibility of business is to maximize profit/shareholder wealth. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, there emerged the contrary view that businesses had a wider social responsibility than simply maximizing shareholder value. This implied a wider social accountability and role for accounting. Interest in profits was balanced by rising concerns about satisfying jobs, stable

communities, pollution, and natural resource use (Parker, Ferris, & Otley, 1989). These concerns gave rise to the social accounting movement.

Given the fundamental differences in the conceptualization of economics, the right and proper role of business in society is very different in neoclassical and Buddhist economics. This implies a fundamental difference in corporate accountability and reporting to society. Buddhist economics, therefore, implies a wider and more radical approach to corporate reporting in comparison with the rather limited prescriptions of the Western social accounting program. Some examples of things that would be considered worthy of reporting, given this expanded perspective, include (a) how much socially useful production has taken place (impact on environment); (b) to what extent have satisfying jobs/meaningful work enhanced human development (impact on employees); and (c) to what extent has true social well-being been increased (as opposed to revenue earned, indicating how much someone is prepared to pay for something) (impact on community). At the very least, these factors should be disclosed using narrative reporting; finding performance indicators facilitating some sort of quantification for these things is a major challenge for the embryonic discipline of Buddhist accounting (rooted in Buddhist economics) in contrast to conventional Western accounting, rooted in neoclassical economics.

For the purposes of this chapter, it is only possible to give a brief outline of the implications of Buddhist economics for accounting/corporate reporting. For a more in-depth discussion of Buddhist economics and its implications for social accounting, see Dillard (2009).

The Centre for Integral Finance (CIF)

The Centre for Integral Finance (CIF), based in London, is one of a number of international centers established by TRANS4M, a Geneva-based research and education institution dedicated to social and economic transformation. In particular, the CIF is dedicated to developing new corporate ownership, financial intermediation, corporate governance, and accounting models that will be necessary to transform our economic system for the better. Although not specifically devoted to propagating the practice of Buddhist economics, the CIF is developing models, which are consistent with the principles of Buddhist economics and would certainly be applicable to enterprises attempting to operate in accordance with such principles. TRANS4M has developed a "four worlds" framework, which is consistent with the holistic Buddhist worldview, that recognizes four broad dimensions of human society, rather than just the single individualistic materialism recognized by neoclassical economics and neoliberal politics.

The underlying philosophy of TRANS4M is that Western thought, rooted in possessive individualism, and which is increasingly dominating the world, has much to learn from other cultures, which TRANS4M classifies broadly as the South (e.g., African and Indigenous Peoples) with its emphasis on community and nature, the North (e.g., Northern Europe) with its emphasis on science and technology, the East (e.g., India) with its emphasis on consciousness and spirituality, and the West (e.g., USA/UK) with its emphasis on finance and enterprise. Only the last of these is

recognized in the intellectual perspective underpinning the current capitalist model. A psychologically and emotionally healthy—and sustainable—economy must meet the needs of all four "worlds" (dimensions of human society), building and sustaining communities, having reverence for the natural environment, promoting human development, and raising consciousness to overcome egocentricity.

In addition to the four worlds, each society has a moral core from which the current model of free market, shareholder value, and capitalism dominating the world economy has seemingly become detached. The CIF mission, as part of the wider TRANS4M movement, is to develop an alternative economic approach that serves all four worlds and reconnects the economy with society's moral core. The ultimate objective is to develop the "integral enterprise": a business enterprise that integrates the economic, social, and cultural spheres of life and whose actions are conducive to environmental sustainability.

Implementation of Buddhist Economics in Practice

Can Buddhist economics work in practice? The fact that it can work is demonstrated by, among others, the examples of Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka and Canon Corporation in Japan, successful enterprises following Buddhist principles.

Sarvodaya This is a network of local communities operating as self-sustaining small economies. Founded by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne in 1958, Sarvodaya's objective was (and is) to support the economic transformation of rural communities in Sri Lanka. The movement now has over 15,000 villages throughout the island.

The Sarvodaya approach to economic transformation starts with a program of education and training aimed at the transformation of human consciousness, in accordance with Buddhist principles, through spiritual, moral, and cultural awakening, and deepening societal commitment to non-violence. Each business enterprise is effectively owned and run by the local community—they are not just one of the stakeholders, they are the enterprise! The ultimate economic goal is the creation of a full engagement economic system that creates sustainable village economies, which meet the ten basic human needs: (1) a clean environment, (2) clean and adequate water supply, (3) minimum clothing requirements, (4) balanced diet, (5) simple housing, (6) basic healthcare, (7) simple communication facilities, (8) minimum energy requirements, (9) total and continuing education for all, and (10) cultural and spiritual needs.

The Sarvodaya approach is relevant outside the villages of Sri Lanka, for example, to engage the disconnected, excluded urban "underclass" in the developed economies. It has been noted previously in this chapter that exclusion and alienation are among the many problems of contemporary capitalism; the Sarvodaya project is an example of how Buddhist economics can address the problem!

Canon Corporation An example of a large corporation applying Buddhist economics is Canon, the Japanese maker of cameras, photocopiers, and printers. Canon was founded by a devout Buddhist, and its ethos has always been serving society rather than maximizing shareholder wealth, the latter being the assumed right and proper role of business in society from the neoclassical economics perspective. Canon's approach to running the business exemplifies, in particular, the Buddhist emphasis on cooperation rather than individual competition: the holy grail of neoclassical economics.

This is reflected in the organization structure and operations. Canon pioneered the concept of the Japanese style "one family" system: every employee is of equal importance, a member of the Canon "family." Indeed the word "employee" is not appropriate; "member of the firm" would be more accurate: people are not hired and fired with the ups and downs of the business cycle in order to minimize costs! The essence of the approach is people working together for the common good. This philosophy is also reflected in relations with customers, suppliers, competitors, and the natural environment.

A notable manifestation of the Japanese style "one family" system is that senior executives don't pay themselves the huge salary multiples of ordinary employees that large Western, in particular, US and UK, corporations typically do. There was for many years a strong social convention in Japan that the CEO earned no more than ten times that of ordinary workers. Even as recently as 2010, *Businessweek* reported that this is now 16 times, but this still compares very favorably with UK and US companies: the average Japanese CEO earns less than one sixth of his/her UK/US counterpart! The disparity between Western and Japanese CEO earnings' has tended over many years to be accompanied by Japanese corporations achieving many multiples of their Western counterparts' productivity—so the argument that Western senior executives' salaries reflect the value they add, drawing on the neoclassical economics discourse, is not plausible!

Space here does not permit a fuller discussion of Sarvodaya or Canon's application of Buddhist economics; interested readers are referred to Lessem and Schieffer (2010) for a fuller discussion.

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An Ethic of Interdependence: Environmental Crisis and the Case of Water Scarcity in the American West

12

Janine Schipper

Introduction

> Centuries of individualism and competition have brought about tremendous destruction and alienation. We need to reestablish true communication–true communion—with ourselves, with the Earth, and with one another as children of the same mother. We need more than new technology to protect the planet. We need real community and cooperation.
>
> ~Thich Nhat Hanh (Hanh, 2014).

What might an ethic of interdependence offer a world where environmental problems like climate change, species extinction, and deforestation are occurring at unprecedented rates? Specifically, what might an ethic of interdependence offer a world where one billion people live in water-scarce regions with an expected 3.5 billion people facing water scarcity by 2025 (World Resources Institute, 2016)?

In this chapter I explore how an ethic of interdependence informed by Buddhist principles and mindfulness practices may help us address environmental crisis. Using the case of water scarcity in the American West, I suggest that ethics based in interdependence may serve as an antidote to the individualistic ethic that currently drives destructive environmental practices in the USA and in many postindustrial countries.

This chapter begins with an overview of water scarcity in the American West, exploring how an ethic of individualism underlies the West's water crisis. This is followed by an examination of how an ethic of interdependence may shift our approaches to environmental crisis and, in this case, to water scarcity. Ethics and mindfulness go hand in hand. Ethics offer guidance for wise conduct, and mindfulness offers tools to

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cultivate and deepen ethical principles. Thus, I next offer a water meditation, a mindfulness practice designed to cultivate an ethic of interdependence. The chapter concludes with applying an ethic of interdependence to other environmental crises.

Water Scarcity in the American West

> The river that sustains 40 million Americans is dying. (Lustgarten, 2015, para. 1)

A "perfect storm" may be building in the American West as water scarcity, the long-term unsustainable use of water resources, and drought, a lack of water due to long-term climate variability, persist in the region. The Colorado River Basin, which supplies the West's water, has faced over 16 years of decreased water inflow from rain and snowmelt. Populations and cities continue to grow, while lake levels of the major reservoirs fed by the Colorado continue to drop. Agriculture uses between 70% and 85% of the water, several times more water than all municipal, domestic, and industrial users combined. Much of that water escapes from irrigation channels or evaporates. On top of normal variability, human-induced climate change may create a more permanent shift in the environment. As several have indicated, "dry" may be the new normal (NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 2015; New Scientist, 2014; Hundley, 2009).

The lower Colorado River is now a bare trickle and ceases to exist in areas where it once flowed and nourished an abundance of life. In 1922, AldoLeopold (1966) canoed the Colorado's verdant delta and described a "milk and honey wilderness" (p. 155) where up to 400 plant species and a plethora of birds, fish, and mammals, including the great jaguar, once lived. When Leopold wandered the Delta, it spanned nearly 3000 square miles; now it covers 250 square miles. Biologist José Campoy remarked, "Every drop of water goes for cities, for farms. There is nothing left for nature, nothing for the river itself" (quoted by Warrick, 2002, para. 4). Today fifteen major dams and hundreds of diversion channels to irrigate farms and supply cities divert the Colorado River from villages and farms traditionally sustained by the river's flow. The water is diverted to Southern California's Imperial Valley, the wheat and onion fields of Northern Mexico, and major metropolises including Denver, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Tucson.

Colorado River water is now used to provide 15% of the USA's food supply and sustain over 30 million people within seven states. Yet, climate experts predict that the Colorado River's flow will decline due to rising temperatures, expecting that by the middle of the century, evaporation from rising temperatures alone will reduce the river's flow between 5 and 35% (Vano et al., 2014, p. 73). NASA scientist Cook, Ault, and Smerdon (2015) highlighted population growth, widespread depletion of nonrenewable groundwater reservoirs, and higher temperatures as "presenting a major adaptation challenge for managing ecological and anthropogenic water needs in the region" (p. 5). Others point out that mismanagement of water resources and overconsumption account for water scarcity throughout the West (Lustgarten, Kirchner, & Zamora, 2015).

Water and an Ethic of Individualism

"'Every man for himself' is a doctrine for a feeding frenzy or for a panic in a burning nightclub… A society wishing to endure must speak the language of caretaking, faith-keeping, kindness, neighborliness, and peace." (Berry, 2005, p. 11)

Ethics guide our personal and collective behaviors. These guidelines for human behavior are not always explicit as in "Thou shalt not kill;" rather ethics are often latent, unintended, and internalized so that we are often unaware of them. The widespread internalization of an individualistic ethic drives unsustainable practices throughout the USA and other postindustrialized countries. Through examining the case of water in the arid West, I outline how an individualistic ethic permeates policy, behavior, and actions with regard to water usage.

Individualism is an ideology that views individuals as separate and independent from others, promotes individual ideas, the development of individual self-worth, and the exercise of independence and self-reliance. In its extreme form, individualism promotes greed. The ethics of individualism are the unspoken rules that guide individualistic behavior. For the purposes of this discussion, "individual" refers to a single discrete entity as distinguished from a larger whole. This can be an individual person as distinguished from a larger group, an individual group as distinguished from a greater community, or an individual state as distinguished from an entire region. The term "individual" is also used to refer to the way water is divided up into separate parcels. Several themes characterize the ways that an individualistic ethic drives water practices in the American West.

Individual Rights

For over 150 years, water law in the West has been based on prior appropriation: those who first use the water have a right to it. The doctrine of prior appropriation, established in the mid-1800s during the California gold rush, arose as a response to water disputes. Miners who had effectively used river water to sluice sediment from gold found the water diverted by newcomers (Owen, 2015, para. 9). Additionally, since miners and farmers often needed to move water over distances, water laws based on proximity to water sources (as found throughout the rest of the USA) did not make sense. Prior appropriation appeared to solve these issues.

However, by placing water rights in the hands of the first individual or group to claim it, the law divvies up every gallon of water for use. This might serve the larger collective if there was an unlimited supply of water in the region; however, in a drought- ridden water-scarce region, the "individual right" to water becomes problematic. In fact, Colorado River water claims exceed its flow. While individual states have theoretical rights to Colorado River water (called "paper water"), these claims exceed the actual water that runs through the river (called "wet water"). In brief, this is because the 1922 Colorado River Compact allocated water to individual states based on hydrologist's estimates of water flow during an unusually wet period. The Colorado River simply does

not have as much water as individual states claim rights to. Ultimately, through prior appropriation and over allocation, a picture emerges of a river that has been so broken up, individuated, and delineated that the entire region now faces a water crisis.

Rugged Individualism

While agriculture consumes the lion's share of water in the West, urban development impacts the water supply in critical ways. The American West has some of the fastest growing cities in the USA with Oakland, Ogden-Clearfield, San Diego, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, San Jose, and Phoenix ranking in the top 15 fastest growing cities (Carlyle, 2016). "Impervious surfaces" (roads, parking lots, roof tops, turf), endemic to urban environments, shift river patterns, increasing the speed and amount of water entering rivers, and affect groundwater recharge as rainwater cannot soak into ground covered by these surfaces. This results in increased severity and frequency of floods, destruction, and depletion of water dependent species and decreased water flow in streams and aquifers (American Rivers, 2016). Additionally, urban metropolises have been depleting the Colorado River Basin. Historically, Arizona and the Lower Basin Indian tribes have underutilized their allotted portion of the river, leaving California to use surplus supply; however, this has been changing as populations grow, increasing water demand. Significant shortfalls are predicted as human water use exceeds the supply.

The settlement of the West took place within a context of an extreme version of the individualistic ethic commonly known as "rugged individualism." Rugged individualism, promoted by Herbert Hoover during his presidency, refers to the idea that individuals can take care of themselves and don't require government support. As Berry (2006) wrote, "The tragic version of rugged individualism is the presumptive 'right' of individuals to do as they please, as if there were no community, no neighbors and no posterity" (p. 9). The rugged individualism of the American West arises out of its particular history including the settlement of vast amounts of "open land" by the Homestead Act, which permitted individuals to settle up to 160 acres of land if they cultivated the land within 5 years of claiming it. Those "rugged individuals," who viewed the abundance of land as an opportunity, believed they had the right to do as they wished with the land they settled. Perhaps the most ironic and disturbing is that the mythos of the rugged individual does not account for the millions of acres of land taken away from Native Americans during the Homestead Act and the displacement and forced removal of Native Americans from that land. The ethic of the rugged individual and the maintenance of water as an individual right underlay the perceptions of many living in the towns and cities of the West. This was epitomized in an interview that I conducted with a real estate agent as we walked along her property in Cave Creek, Arizona. Dana and I walk along the part of Cave Creek that runs through her backyard. She glances at the creek briefly and then, frowning, remarks that a land trust wants to purchase, and thereby protect this section of Cave Creek. "I'm perfectly capable of maintaining it as well as they are. I don't build on it and nobody in their right mind would because the next flood would take it all out," Dana explains. "I don't believe you can tell me how to use my land

because you like a desert view so I can't build a house here. And I'm just as capable as the next person of taking care of this creek" (Schipper, 2008, p. 69).

The notion that we as individuals are better suited to care for the waterways that sustain whole communities permeates the mindset of those living in the American West.

Individual Lifestyle

Public calls for water conservation abound throughout the American West. Cities of the West emphasize the importance of individual domestic conservation efforts. For example, the Arizona Department of Water Resources homepage begins, "Practicing a low water-use lifestyle is a way everyone can help ensure a long-term sufficient water supply. Reducing your water use helps meet future needs, results in cost savings, decreases energy use, and helps preserve the environment". Utah's Division of Water Resources Conservation Program also emphasizes individual water conservation efforts. Their homepage features a slide show with such messages as: "Don't think your sprinklers are doing the job? Have a free water check done to measure their efficiency" and "Check the weekly Lawn Watering Guide to know how much you should water" (Utah Division of Water Resources Conservation Program, 2016).

While media discourse analysis has discerned how varying media outlets frame drought, systematic analysis has not been conducted on how water consumption and conservation are framed by conservation programs, public water departments, or media outlets. Yet it appears evident that the primary consumers of water do not receive the majority of public messages and public pressure to conserve water. The focus on lifestyle change and domestic conservation efforts overshadow the main consumers of water in the West: agriculture.

Although a water ethic must extend to our individual consumptive habits, what happens when we place the majority of our attention on lifestyle changes (e.g., shorter showers, low flow toilets, less use of water sprinklers, and so forth) and neglect to address the larger, more complex, systemic social issues at play?

Private Interests

Prior to the Great Depression, the US federal government neither regulated nor subsidized American farmers. President Coolidge summed up the position well, "Such action would establish bureaucracy on such a scale as to dominate not only the economic life but the moral, social, and political future of our people" (Black, 2016, p. 35). This changed during the Great Depression when President Hoover established the Farm Board, enabling the federal government to buy and store wheat and cotton, with the hope of selling it later and recuperating the investment. While disastrous consequences ensued resulting in the government sale of overproduction to the world market at huge financial loss, the Farm Board sets a precedent for federal subsidies of individual crops.

Since the 1930s water-thirsty crops have been heavily subsidized, while those that use less water receives less subsidies. It takes 10,000 liters of water to produce 1 kg of cotton (the equivalent of a t-shirt and a pair of jeans) and 2500 liters of water to produce 1 kg of white rice. In contrast, small grains like oats, barley, and rye, common dry farming crops, receive less federal subsidies. The Environmental Working Group Farm Subsidy Database (n.d.) concluded "Despite the rhetoric of 'preserving the family farm,' the vast majority of farmers do not benefit from federal farm subsidy programs" (para. 2).

This begs the question: do federal farm subsidies in the American West serve the private corporate interests of a few individual crops at the expense of the greater common good? What is the "common good" in an individualistic society? In a society driven by an individualistic ethic, do private interests manipulate the social contract, whereby we entrust government with the protection and service of all? In the case of cotton and rice production in the arid West, we find that powerful lobbies and farmers with historically perceived entitlements drive federal support of water-thirsty crops.

Ultimately, we are left wondering, how can we reorganize our systems and our ways of thinking so as to address the problems that arise out of an individualistic ethic? How may we move toward an ethic of interdependence?

Water and an Ethic of Interdependence

As the Buddha taught, the existence and welfare of sentient beings (human, animals, and others) is interdependent upon and intertwined with the quality of flora and the various elements, including water. As such, Buddhists strive to practice mindful respect and care of the environment in all its aspects—the land, the air, and the sea.

Buddhism offers us another lens through which to understand the individual. Individual phenomena do not exist independently of a larger whole but rather exist as temporary expressions of and in dynamic relation to the whole. Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) coined the term "interbeing" to refer to this relationship, writing, "'Interbeing' is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix 'inter' with the verb 'to be', we have a new verb, 'inter-be'" (para. 1).

Buddhist scriptures have powerful metaphors for elucidating interbeing. Written in the third century within the Mahayana school of Buddhism, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* speaks of atoms, lights, and forms infinitely reflecting and interpenetrating each other.

> In each of those pure lights
>   Also appear various subtle lights;
>   These lights also radiate various lights,
>   Untold, unspeakably many.
>   In each of these various lights
>   Appear wondrous jewels like mountains;
>   The jewels appearing in each light
>   Are unspeakably many, untold.
>   (Cleary, 1993, p. 893)

What would water ethics based on such interbeing or interdependence look like?

Systems Thinking

An understanding of interdependence offers guidance for understanding complex, interrelated systems and helps move us away from binary-type thinking that pits individuals against individuals and "my rights" to water against "your rights" to water. Understanding interdependence offers insight into what scientists and social scientists call "systems thinking." Richmond (1994) who coined the term, defined systems thinking as "the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of underlying structure" (p. 139).

Systems thinking maintains that all systems are composed of interconnected parts. As Capra and Pauli (1995) have written, "The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems – interconnected and interdependent" (p. 2). Systems thinking maintains that systems function based on their underlying structure with a focus on the connections between parts. Systems are furthermore viewed as emergent, nonlinear, self-organizing, and counterintuitive.

Some tentative steps have been taken toward a systems approach to water sustainability in the West. The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) requires California to reduce its carbon emissions below 1990 levels by 2020. The California Environmental Protection Agency (2014) explains that AB 32 is necessary to mitigate climate change as, among other effects, climate change impacts the quality and supply of water to California. AB 32 recognizes that climate change impacts snow pack in the higher elevations, which supplies northern California with its water. The recognition that climate change exacerbates drought along with the passage of a bill to mitigate these affects demonstrates a systems way of thinking, whereby interconnections between systems are acknowledged, and policy is put into place to drive change.

We Inter-Are with Water

Recognizing interbeing reorients our relationship with the Earth, each other, and ourselves. The recognition that we inter-are with all other forms challenges the ethos of the rugged individual that overvalues the individual self often at the expense of others. Saying we "inter-are" with water means that we recognize the way water and beings interact with each other. The documentary, DamNation Knight and Rummel (2014), features the many ways that diverting water impacts fish. As I watched these fish live and die based on how we direct waterways, I began to realize that the water itself is *alive*. The water and the fish inter-are. What are our waterways without fish? And certainly fish do not exist without water. Drinking a glass of water can reveal how we inter-are with water. We might mindfully drink a glass of water, realizing that that water came from deep within the Earth. We can feel the water become our bodies, directly experiencing the interdynamics of self and water. As we observe other beings, bird, insects, our dog, our partner, we can recognize that we *all* inter-are with water.

As we view our lives as intimately connected with all other living and non-living beings, it no longer makes sense to make choices based on what we think is best for ourselves individually. Recognizing our interconnections guides us to consider the impact of our actions on all other beings. If we view water as a resource to be distributed and used, we experience one set of outcomes. What would it look like if we recognized that we inter-are with water?

Multiplicity in Oneness

If we experience our individual selves an "expression" of something greater than ourselves or to bring in a water metaphor—as a wave emerging from the great ocean of awareness—we may begin to appreciate the diversity of forms that emerge from the whole. The part of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* quoted earlier closes:

> The lands, beings, and Buddhas
>   Have infinite distinctions in individuality;
>   As such, past, present and future worlds are boundless:
>   Enlightening beings can see them all.
>   (Cleary, 1993, p. 904)

Buddhism offers guidance for understanding the multiplicity of individual forms arising inseparably from the fabric of the whole. Consequently, each form, here represented as light, infinitely reflects all other lights, boundlessly connected, interpenetrating one another and appearing individuated, yet ultimately interconnected.

Recognizing multiplicity in oneness may help us develop a deep appreciation of the diverse ways water appears on this planet. We can marvel at its language, the gurgling sounds it makes as it tumbles over rocks in a stream; or its great roar as waves plunge over the shores of a beach. Perhaps we marvel as a cloud drifts overhead, appreciating the temporary beauty that arises from its ever-changing form, almost tasting its wetness with a feeling sense that soon it will drop as rain; enter streams; become rivers, oceans, our bodies; and evaporate as clouds once more.

Transitory Nature of Form

From a Buddhist perspective, interdependence and impermanence go hand in hand. While all phenomena co-arise, they are also transitory. An ethic of interdependence recognizes the transitory nature of form, observing that forms interconnect and also change in structure, appearance, and quality. Water can serve as a guide into the transitory nature of form. Perhaps as we gaze upon a stream, we become mesmerized by its always-changing nature. In the arid West, we may also become increasingly aware of just how transitory water is. We do not have unlimited water supplies, and recognition of limits may be critical if we are to avert untenable water crisis.

As we recognize the transitory nature of all forms, we also get sensitized to the preciousness of all forms. Knowing their transitory nature, we may celebrate and delight in the dance of form, and taking anything for granted becomes less possible.

Ultimately, an ethic of interdependence can provide helpful guidance as we consider our relationship with water, particularly in respect to living in the arid West. We may think of ourselves as part of a greater system, learning to "go with the flow" of the water, realizing that we inter-are with water. Every living being is made of water. Water shape shifts, appearing as a cloud one moment, and a river the next, entering our streams and bodies, a beautiful lesson in the multiplicity in oneness as well as the transitory nature of form.

An ethic of interdependence with an emphasis in systems thinking, interbeing, multiplicity in oneness, and recognition of the transitory nature of form would have far reaching implications. As we face complex environmental challenges, sustainability education has shifted from linear models of thinking to more dynamic, holistic ways of thinking. As Karlsson, Nasir, Bergea, and Jonnson (2000) explained, "Today's business and industrial problems are complex and often require holistic, inter and multi-disciplinary systems perspectives for sustainable solutions" (p. 284). Environmental studies and sustainable community programs nationwide have integrated such holistic approaches to learning. Towns and cities must think regionally as they draw together transportation infrastructure, drinking water provisions, and legislative bodies to forge new alliances to address suburban sprawl and other environmental problems. Policies that respond to larger dynamics and systems, like California's AB32, may serve as models for adopting necessary steps to address environmental crisis. Perhaps we would see a growth in the development of acequias—community-owned waterways based in community decision-making processes. Acequias, used by Spain and former Spanish colonies of the Americas, serve as an alternative to industrial scale irrigation and exist throughout New Mexico and Southern Colorado. Valuing the natural route of the water, the unique ecology along and in these waterways, as well as the people who depend on the water, acequias illustrate the possibilities for developing water systems based on an ethic of interdependence.

The benefits of this type of irrigation system stem are not only from the production of crops but also from the cultural, ecological, and sustainable conditions that transform landscape. Due to spatial "bracketing," the acequias extend the riparian corridor of river and streams by the nature of its construction and path of travel. These corridors generate thriving cottonwood bosques, willows, shrubs, and other native plantings that, in turn, provide habitat for a diverse wildlife. The acequias also recharge groundwater aquifers and save energy and resources by avoiding wasteful piped irrigation and providing a "feedback loop" to the water source. *This results in a more conscious ethic toward water conservation*" (Francis, 2004, p. 1, italics mine).

As we can see, acequias result not only in a more "conscious ethic" but also in a more interdependent ethic. Acequias facilitate conservation of riparian streams, native plants, and diverse wildlife, all as part of community, cultural, and ecological sustainability and resiliency, thus illustrating the vitality of an interdependent model and ethic.

Water Meditation

Without mindfulness, even carefully considered and endorsed reflective knowledge is not efficacious in action, just as a carefully memorized score cannot guide a musician's skillful performance—without assiduous practice. Mindfulness, from this perspective, is therefore important because without it no other virtue can be manifest; and because with it, all other virtues emerge (Garfield, 2011).

Mindfulness practices serve as tools for deepening our understanding and awareness of an ethic of interdependence. As meditation teacher Salzberg (2014) wrote, "I consider my own mindfulness practice a practice that disrupts my own habit energy in the interest of increasing my awareness of interdependence and impermanence" (para. 4).

I offer here a water meditation to cultivate an ethic of interdependence. This water meditation is designed to guide individuals into a deep recognition of their interdependence with water and with the Earth as a whole. The four dimensions of interdependence discussed earlier: systems thinking, interbeing, multiplicity in oneness, and the transitory nature of form are integrated throughout the meditation.

Let's begin by thinking like a system. To think like a system, recognize your connections with others. Bring to mind the network of homes all connected through a series of tunnels composed of pipes that deliver water to your home so that the instant you turn on the faucet, voila, water comes pouring into your glass. Now bring to mind all of the services that enable this one public water system to function: the industry that manufactures the water pipes, the construction of water systems, and the shared responsibility of systems of regulation and enforcement that enables one water system to deliver fresh potable water to homes. Even further, reflect on all of the things that would have to shift if this system broke down. If you could no longer receive water in your home, how would you drink, shower, clean your floor, water plants, and so forth? What if your plumbing system, the system of pipes and infrastructure that removes excess water from your home, also broke down? Now the excess water and waste has nowhere to go. The land surrounding your home soon gets saturated with toxins. As we think like a system, we recognize, honor, and embrace the complex networks of beings and structures that support our lives.

Breathe in. Breathe out. As you exhale, you become aware of releasing water vapor into the air. Notice the existence of water in the air in the form of humidity. Even dry environments have some humidity, although when people find themselves in low humidity environments like Death Valley, they find their mouths dry out very quickly. Notice how moist your mouth is right now. That is because you are surrounded by water in the form of humidity in the air. Without water in the air, you would not be able to take another breath.

Your body is also composed of water. Notice any moisture, particularly evident in your mouth but also interacting with your entire body. Feel any "dry skin" and you may further realize that your body is replete with water, from your skin, to the water ways coursing through your system as blood, to the molecules of water that you breath into, and out of your lungs with every breath—you are made of water.

The Buddha liked to make this yet more vivid. When he spoke of the water element, he typically included that which is "water, watery; that is bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil-of-the-joints, urine" (Bodhi, 2009, para. 11) and so forth. Each and every cell in our bodies is composed of 60% water. We are not separated from water. We are water!

Let's now bring to mind a cloud. If your eyes were microscopes, you would not likely perceive a cloud but rather tiny ice crystals, their elegant forms moving among bits of dust. If your eyes were made of electron optical lenses, you would perceive the deeper structures of these crystals. Any one of these perceptual lenses—eyes, microscopes, electron optical lens—helps us perceive particular forms, yet these "forms" depend upon our perceptual apparatus. It is merely convention to call the individual entity that I perceive through my human eyes a "cloud." From another perspective this "cloud" is composed of infinite particles, including our perceptions of "it," changes from moment to moment, condenses, falls as rain, joins in rivers, oceans, temporarily becoming part of our bodies, and so forth. While we may perceive the cloud as an individual entity, it has no separate self. As Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) explains,

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow: and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. (para. 1).

Water shape shifts as it flows, changes form, moves through cycles, evaporates and condenses. We can envision a water molecule as the heat of the sun energizes it, and it rises into the atmosphere, connects with other water molecules, becomes heavy, falls the ground as a raindrop, enters streams, brooks, waterfalls, and eventually gets integrated into our food and our bodies. Spend a moment imagining the infinitely changing experiences that one molecule of water has on its trip into your glass of water or your next bite of food. Reflect on the ever-changing, dynamic, life-serving nature of water, allowing its transitory nature to infuse your understanding.

Applying an Ethic of Interdependence

In this chapter an ethic of interdependence based on an understanding of systems thinking, interbeing, multiplicity in oneness, and the transitory nature of form was suggested as an antidote to the individualistic ethic. It was argued that the water crisis in the West is largely rooted in an individualistic ethic that values the rights of the individual and self-interest over the needs of community well-being and ecosystem function. An ethic of interdependence serves as a counterforce, calling us to redefine our sense of community to include interrelationships among human beings and other species in land, air, and water. Mindfulness practices rooted in recognition of these interconnections may serve to cultivate deep ethical

principles. Through mindfulness practices, it becomes increasingly difficult to take water for granted. As our understanding and the way we relate with water shifts further actions such as shifts in laws, institutions, and the greater culture become possible. We already see an ethic of interdependence operating in climate change laws like California's AB32 and acequias that stress community decision-making and the ecological integrity of waterways. How may we further foster an ethic of interdependence?

While an ethic of individualism dominates the mainstream, here are a few possibilities for fostering an ethic of interdependence:

1. Educate based on systems thinking with a focus on just and sustainable communities and community and cultural resiliency. We see such educational models in environmental studies and sustainability programs. Elementary school garden programs, sprouting up across the country, also emphasize community partnerships, our relationship with the food we grow, and exploration of dynamic natural systems.
2. Teach biocentrism, "rejoining the web of nature, as opposed to anthropocentrism, which places Homo sapiens at the center of the show" (Powers, 2016, p. 51). Powers wrote about "biocentric childing" a way of "getting into our animal limbs" (p. 52). His daughter, Clea, is particularly drawn to the water whose language speaks to her through gurgles, splashes, and gushes. Clea imitates the sounds of the water and joins with the water, tearing off diapers and clothing and tossing off shoes as she gleefully bounds toward the sounds of flowing water. When we interact with our environment from a biocentric point of view, interdependence shifts from cognitive exercise or goal to a felt reality.
3. Focus on local community development. The local food movement, buy local movement, and urban revitalization efforts have been transforming neighborhoods, creating local economies, jobs, and resiliency as global markets fluctuate. Local community development emphasizes the interrelations among community partners, community connections with local producers, and celebration of the unique culture of the region as evidenced by the growing popularity of summer festivals throughout the USA.
4. Emphasize the connections between local and regional areas. Waterways traverse boundaries. They are part of our communities and link community to community and region to region. While our current systems break up and allocate, divvying up water and ultimately overusing our water supply, there are other models like acequias that emphasize community, culture, and sand ecological sustainability. An ethic of individualism is not sustainable, especially in the arid West. We will need to foster a new ethic and tap into other elements of our cultural heritage if we are to ensure a sustainable future.

While water crisis in the American West served as a case study for this chapter, we can apply an ethic of interdependence to other environmental crises. As examples, I briefly apply an ethic of interdependence to species extinction and climate change.

Species Extinction

The Center for Biological Diversity reports that human activities lead to species extinction at the rate of dozens everyday as opposed to a natural rate of 1–5 species per year. An ethic of interdependence invites us to learn about and understand how our human systems interact with ecological systems in ways that drive species extinction. We also recognize that we inter-are with all species and understand that the loss of one species has unforeseen consequences for others. For example, pollution, rising water temperatures, and habitat loss have diminished the global honeybee population, the key pollinators of fruits and vegetables and our primary source of food. We inter-are with the honeybee. As Albert Einstein once said, "Mankind will not survive the honeybees' disappearance for more than five years" (quoted in Solomon & Samantha, 2015, para. 6).

Multiplicity in oneness reminds us to appreciate the diversity of forms that emerge from the whole. The continued human practices leading to dramatic species extinction point to a deep lack of moral imagination, whereby we do not collectively recognize the preciousness of every being that emerges from this dynamic living planet. An ethic of interdependence engages our moral imagination so that we may reach beyond individual perceptions and connect with the greater community of all living beings. Finally, an ethic of interdependence points to the transitory nature of form. We are all ultimately subject to decline, and this makes our existence all the more precious. An ethic of interdependence beckons us to shift our human activities and take all beings into consideration, not just the livelihoods of a few, as we develop just and sustainable communities.

Climate Change

Scientific consensus indicates that climate warming trends are due primarily to human activities (NASA Global Climate Change). An ethic of interdependence guides us to place our attention on the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, transportation, electricity, industry, and agriculture, and ask how we are all implicated in maintaining systems that hasten climate change. Systems thinking suggests that shifting our individual lifestyles is not enough. We must think critically about the dynamics that maintain destructive societal systems and do what we can to collectively transform these. Additionally, we recognize that we inter-are with the planet and shifts in weather patterns affect us all. The shrinking of the polar ice caps and rising oceans do not only affect low lying island countries and communities around the arctic circle; we are all subject to the disastrous effects of global climate change. In the American West, this means drought and desertification. Multiplicity in oneness honors our uniqueness while recognizing our common humanity. Those advocating climate change action recognize that their actions to shift the underlying structures on which our societies stand are essential for averting ecological crises that affect all life on Earth. Finally, recognizing the transitory nature of form calls on us to recognize the dramatic

affects our actions have upon others. We live in a delicate symbiosis with all life. Being mindful of this delicate balance is foundational for developing an ethic of interdependence that guides our actions in ways that honor our membership in the community of all beings.

To conclude I raise this final question: How may we shift from an individualistic to an interdependent ethic? Leopold (1966) has written, "No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions" (p. 246). Mindfulness practices facilitate these inner transformations. If we observe with gentle effort the dynamic, transitory, and intimately interconnected nature of all phenomena, we become subject to the possibilities of the type of inner change that Leopold calls for. As Salzberg (2014) has written, "The practice of interdependence means really knowing in our bodies that we are not separate from that which surrounds us. Meditation is a start on this path" (para. 5).

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Sacred Groundlessness: Deepening the Ethics of Mindfulness in the Midst of Global Crisis

13

Lama Karma

Introduction

All around us, the world is dying. From moment to moment, our own lives are also slipping away. We are in a sort of free fall, and it is not clear whether this is occurring inside of us, in the world outside, or both. And in the midst of this uncertainty, knowing what to do is even less clear. At the same time, the imperative for taking action only continues to grow more desperate. But perhaps if we take a step back from both acting and refraining from action, to both reflect on and fully feel the situation that surrounds and pervades us, we might be able to see the situation differently and to then act in ways that are presently beyond what we have imagined.

Trungpa (2004) once remarked, "The bad news is, you're falling through the air, nothing to hang on to, no parachute. The good news is, there's no ground." If we can learn to rest with this good news of groundlessness, then perhaps the free fall we feel might be the very ground of ethical action. In this chapter, I am proposing that methods of secular mindfulness can not only facilitate this acknowledgment but can also be a powerful force in cultivating a sustainable and sacred world that rests upon it.

It is important to engage in incisive critiques and thoughtful corrections of the way mindfulness is being implemented in secular society—in schools, hospitals, the military, and so on. It is also important to consider and resist the ways mindfulness is being used to serve the interests of unsustainable social ideologies and to perpetuate economic inequality. And, it is crucial that we always learn how to think inconceivably as we participate in the transmission of foreign contemplative traditions into our various local and global cultures, secular, and religious.

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But these ethical considerations are all, in various ways, related to a more fundamental dis-ease and crisis facing the whole world. This is a single and yet polyvalent ethical crisis—a danger and an opportunity—that might be called the global crisis. It is a crisis of one earth, of our connection to common ground, and to groundlessness. It is a social crisis of global injustice and a global crisis of ecology. It is an individual crisis of the anxiety, despair, and alienation that are the personal risks of being alive on this earth at the end of linear history. What role might mindfulness play in addressing the underlying causes of this global crisis? Given that the ramifications of this crisis pose an immediate threat to the existence of human life itself, mindfulness needs a response; otherwise, mindfulness is not what the world needs right now.

In this chapter, I offer critical observations on the ethics of the global crisis and make suggestions for how mindfulness may productively intervene. In particular, I will focus on (1) the emerging trend of compassion within mindfulness theory and practice and (2) how to acknowledge and harness groundlessness as the basis of globally sustainable ethical action, i.e., a groundless ethics of wisdom and compassion. In offering these observations, I may tangentially comment on debates within the critical literature surrounding the mindfulness movement, and there may be various points of connection with traditional Buddhist formulations. My intention is to articulate lessons learned in my roles as a teacher, practitioner, community leader, and member in both the traditional Tibetan Buddhist and secular mindfulness traditions, a role which provides a unique perspective into the critical tensions that mindfulness is attempting to navigate. For example, there are tensions between tradition and adaptation, between the secular and the sacred, and between fact and value (which paralyze most attempts at fluid and authentic ethical responses). In addition, there is a larger question of how to take ethical action in a world of relativized ethical norms and the resultant hesitancy to invoke the notion of universal ethics.

If these tensions were to be successfully navigated, mindfulness could productively address the global crisis. It could provide a unifying yet heterogeneous framework for resisting and responding to the institutionalized forces of selfishness and injustice that are propelling the world toward self-destruction. For it is only through the emergence and action of a true beloved community, based on a common ethic of care—individually, communally, and environmentally—that the current trends can be sustainably redirected.

In many ways, the claim that a culture of mindfulness can save the world is a grossly exaggerated optimism. But, it is also true that the unsustainable trajectory of the Anthropocene era is human-created, and behind these actions are humans, acting on individual and collective intentions. Intention is the application of mind, leading to action. If the practices of mindfulness have any relationship to intention, then they may have an important role to play in the formulation and cultivation of an ethics of global sustainability and care for our common home, much like what Pope Francis (2015) is proposing in his recent encyclical. This is not simply an application of good intentions. Rather, anchoring mindfulness to include deeper intentions related to death, fundamental contingency, and the illusory nature of phenomena has the power to transform one's very *being* and relationship to the world. In this way, a transformation of intention has the potential to completely redirect social critiques and social systems.

Deepening Mindfulness

But there are several significant obstacles to this deepening. Accounting for intention is central for understanding the way mindfulness works (or fails) (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). And, as Shapiro et al. have stated, outcomes can be correlated with intentions in a dynamic continuum from self-regulation to self-exploration to self-liberation. The mention of liberation is important here and evokes critiques of mindfulness related to soteriological aims and traditions.

It *should* be plausible to anchor mindfulness in deeper intentions. Studies have indeed shown that mindfulness facilitates the development of "calm, fitter, healthier, and more productive" members of society (Yorke, 1997). Similarly, many corporations have embraced mindfulness because it is linked to increased economic productivity of their employees. It is less clear, however, whether such uses of mindfulness are contributing to global sustainability or, in some ways, the exact opposite. Deepening the intention of mindfulness practice in the interest of moving "towards self-liberation and compassionate service" (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 376) in the context of global sustainability is precisely what is needed, though the most convincing objective evidence for this may simply be the retrospective survival of our species and preservation of the biosphere.

There is a tension here: to the extent that anchoring mindfulness in deeper intentions depends on objective verification through research studies, it will be linked to the intentions of researchers and those who are funding them. This is a complicated issue in itself, and it is also unclear whether a materialist scientific paradigm is capable of accounting for subjectivity enough to meaningfully assess something as rationally inconceivable as liberation or nonduality.

A second obstacle in anchoring mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) to deeper intentions is that liberation and any matter of ultimate concern oftentimes runs contrary to what attracts many to mindfulness, i.e., that it is perceived to be a largely secular practice (Lindahl, 2015). This has implications in many of the secular environments where a deepened mindfulness might be implemented. But perhaps the narrow version of secularism in America (at least) will be willing to accommodate matters of ultimate concern when it is recognized that all of its other concerns will be irrelevant in the face of environmental and social upheaval of biblical proportions. A third and more radical obstacle is that anchoring MBIs to deeper intentions would plunge us directly into the personal, collective, and global despair that we are in all other ways doing our best to avoid.

In this chapter, instead of defining self-liberation or liberation as a metaphysical goal, I hope to relate liberation to the possibilities of sustainable responses to the global crisis and to assess how MBI's might effectively facilitate them. Global sustainability is directly connected to individual and collective flourishing; liberation in this context signifies the flourishing of life on earth, and an acknowledgement that life and our world is sacred, an idea which can be shared in both secular and religious contexts.

Admittedly, this deepening of intention is beyond the comfort zone of many people. What I am proposing is therefore not without serious risks and uncertainties. But, at a certain point, it may be clear that we have nothing left to lose, and the proposition of risking everything is simply acknowledging that we are always and already in midair. At that time, if we can meet one another, falling, without a parachute, in full recognition of the sacredness of being alive at this time, we might discover all around the ever-present groundless ground of a sacred and flourishing world.

Toward a Groundless Ethics of Wisdom and Compassion

Nihilism and the Crisis of Being: In Mourning for Lost Ground

The deepening of our intention is existential in nature. It is a question of *being*, and before proposing a "groundless ethics of wisdom and compassion" to address this crisis of being, it is important to first give time and space for fully experiencing the nature of the crisis itself.

With a typical and delightfully sinister twist, Žižek's (2011) mapping of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' five stages of grieving onto the various dimensions of the present global crisis is both poignant and prophetic. The world as we know it is dying, and we may deny this, resist it, bargain with it, resent it, or rest in full acceptance of the fact. The question is this: how do we mature to be able to grieve in full acceptance, while at the same time devoting our very life to its preservation?

When I consider the enormity and pervasiveness of the interrelated factors underlying the present crisis, it is overwhelming to the point of reticence. It opens a deep mourning, a feeling of being suspended in a circling arc that oscillates between passionate, ineffectual intensity and apathetic resignation. I am saddened to see so many in states of denial, to witness the manifold resistance of the warning signs, and to watch the attempts to bargain with it through the use of technology or through desperate liberal programs of social justice. It is not that technology and social justice do not have an essential role to play in addressing this crisis but rather that, without full recognition of the depth of the problem, their application amounts to a materialist bargain that provides shallow assurances and temporary solutions and ultimately fails to address the underlying causes.

And it is even more saddening to feel my own resentment and the resentment of many around me, fully aware of the global situation and the present and future suffering of countless beings around the world, but in a state of moral paralysis, unable to act. It is a sadness that would "swallow the whole world." The global crisis is, in many ways, reflective of these states of existential crisis that are both personal and collective.

Underlying all of these is the common malaise of nihilism, symptomatically diverse, yet singular in its essential inability to come to terms with consequences of losing ground. Following Norbu (1992), nihilism is the "habit of only seeing and believing what is apparent and observable" (p. 26). In this sense, nihilism can be seen as related to versions of naturalism, rationalism, and scientific materialism that

equate the limits of knowledge with the limits of what is observable and reasonable (McMahan 2008). Elsewhere, Norbu (1992) also defined nihilism as the denial of the continuity of awareness. This aspect of nihilism is familiar to anyone who has experienced a state of despair in the face of the ineluctable nature and finality of death. For the nihilist, death represents absolute annihilation into an essentially random universe. The contrast to this perspective is what Norbu (1992) has called "eternalism," which is the habitual belief in the continuity of mind, grounded in the acknowledgment of "the permanence of eternal, continuous gods and the continuity of existence beyond death for those who have faith in those gods" (p. 8). In this sense, eternalism is a form of absolutism and can be seen as related to versions of religious fundamentalism.

True absolutists are rare these days, those Žižek (2001) called "authentic fundamentalists," such as the Amish who are comfortable in their own world and do not bother with what goes on around them. Much more common are nihilists who have reverted to fundamentalism or those who, as a result of globalization, are "Moral Majority" (2001) fundamentalists, have been exposed to the moral chaos of the whole world being present to itself for the first time in history, and are haunted by it.

In using the term nihilism, then, I am including the whole interrelated matrix of despair that includes the modern discontent inherent in scientific rationalism and certain types of religious fundamentalism (including Buddhist versions). To this, I would add the aspects of nihilism that reflect the personal and collective despair inherent in modern life in general, with all the aspects of relativity and groundlessness that this implies.

Modern life has intensified self-consciousness to the point that many experience themselves as a fiction, intimating that their identity is contingent, constructed, and without any essential meaning. Oftentimes, this is accompanied by painful experiences of recursive self-reference and despair. This despair is highlighted in many films and books that question the objective validity of "the real world," comparing it to the illusory experiences of dreams and virtual realities. And, when combined with powerful virtual and augmented reality technologies that become more real than real, many fall into a painful experience of not knowing where the ground of "the real world" might lie. Left to construct one's self-image and social relations in virtual spheres, the anxiety and depression inherent in the intimation that the self is a lie and that we are therefore essentially alone is amplified and desperately supplemented with more virtual images and relationships. This is compounded by our increasing alienation from the natural world, both in terms of a grounded sense of place and the natural biorhythms that guide it.

All of this leaves the modern individual susceptible to endlessly self-referential concepts, pathologically disembodied, ungrounded, and alienated from a definite sense of place. Cut off from the ground in this way, the earth is flattened and becomes nothing more than a repository of resources for exploitation. Time is growing ever more accelerated, fundamental values are being lost, and the future has meaning only in reference to the interests of immediate gratification. Ours is a culture of consumption driven by despair and ignorance by and large unconcerned with sustainability for future generations.

The underlying despair of nihilism is then enacted in systems of power and economics that preserve and accelerate its momentum, providing all manner of immediate sensual gratifications for those with the power and means to buy them. While the majority of humans are left in poverty, the privileged minority is free to buy always almost enough fake plastic trees, safari hunts, psychedelic experiences, dolphin rides, mindfulness retreats, heart orgasms, and organic produce to remain comfortable, happy, healthy, and with solid footing on the deck of a sinking ship.

Despair of course takes many forms, its nature being to proliferate endless versions of its internal conflict. These portraits are only intended to give an impression of the modern symptoms of groundlessness and the crisis of being that accompanies it. But far from being a problem, nihilism may actually be a partial step in the right direction. We are in free fall, and the earth is in an accelerating crisis because of it. But instead of denying it, resisting it, bargaining with it, or resigning ourselves to a state of resentment, perhaps full acceptance of the situation opens up a space for authentic response. What is the nature of a continuity that beckons from the far side of annihilation yet gives no metaphysical crutch or ground to stand on? What would a mindfulness of groundlessness feel like?

To authentically and thoroughly pass through the grieving process for the losses of the earth and the loss of ground many of us experience as modern individuals would mean facing our fears directly. As Macy (2007) noted, it would mean overcoming the cultural pressures to anesthetize those fears into a false optimism, it would mean surrendering to uncertainty and a complete loss of control, and it would mean recognizing that our personal grief is not just a personal pathology but is connected to wider social and global dimensions of despair. But, as is said, these fears may be dragons guarding our most precious treasure. Just as is the case with the process of dying and grieving, in facing these fears and standing in full conscious acceptance, not only do we unleash untold resources of compassion and wisdom, we awaken to the sacredness of life itself.

Sacredness naturally emerges in experience when self and world are seen nakedly, just as they are, free from the superimpositions of the conceptual mind that is continually trying to substantiate itself and find ground where there is only stainless groundlessness. Only by facing groundlessness individually and collectively can the sacredness of life on this planet be universally appreciated and honored. The encounter with death and its loss of ground is unavoidable, but as a global rite of passage, the sooner we accept what is dying, the better. In passing fully through the process of grieving the loss of our personal and collective ground, we shed our despair, hesitation, and indifference and open up the space of acceptance. This naked and fearless acceptance encounters the sacred directly and is fully empowered to protect and honor it. There are many doors to this passage, both secular and religious, and it is our duty to explore them. In the context of mindfulness, I am proposing the door of groundlessness, addressing the despair of relativity directly, normalizing it and guiding it to its full expression as an ethics of wisdom and compassion that answers an existential crisis of being.

And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out

I am using "relativity" as a placeholder for the insight that subjective, intersubjective, and objective truths are situated in dependence on contexts, which are themselves unbounded and relative to other contexts, endlessly. In terms of "essence," there is nothing to hold on to, and any grasping to substantial essences is futile. The crisis of being that arises in recognition of relativity is an indication that the habit we have of grasping to substance is being disrupted. Following Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), I propose that this disruption is part of a larger process of acceptance that is the basis for authentic ethical conduct:

> Let us restate why we think ethics in the mindfulness/awareness tradition, and indeed, the mindfulness/awareness tradition itself, are so important to the modern world. There is a profound discovery of groundlessness in our culture—in science, in the humanities, in society, and in the uncertainties of people's daily lives. This is generally seen as something negative—by everyone from the prophets of our time to ordinary people struggling to find meaning in their lives. Taking groundlessness as negative, as a loss, leads to a sense of alienation, despair, loss of heart, and nihilism. The cure that is generally espoused in our culture is to find a new grounding (or return to older grounds). The mindfulness/awareness tradition points the way to a radically different resolution. In Buddhism, we have a case study showing that when groundlessness is embraced and followed through to its ultimate conclusions, the outcome is an unconditional sense of intrinsic goodness that manifests itself in the world as spontaneous compassion. We feel, therefore, that the solution for the sense of nihilistic alienation in our culture is not to try to find a new ground; it is to find a disciplined and genuine means to pursue groundlessness, to go further into groundlessness. (p. 253)

Furthermore, following Nishitani (1982), Varela et al. (1991) stress that this ethical movement cannot simply be a reiteration of various traditional Buddhist notions, but it must arise from within our own familiar cultural premises. Kabat-Zinn (2013), speaking of selflessness, makes a similar point: it cannot be stated as a fact, but must emerge out of personal experience. The deeper intentions in which I believe mindfulness must be anchored are influenced by traditional Tibetan Buddhist examples, but for them to give rise to an authentic culture of sustainable global ethics, they will have to inspire new iterations, collaborations, and ways of thinking, relative to a diversity of contexts in addition to and including traditionalist contexts.

We are in the midst of a process of dying, a dying to a conventional, substantial view of ourselves and our world, and it would be premature to speak of a rebirth until acceptance has permeated every dimension of the life world as we know it. To fully uproot the personal, cultural, and systemic aspects of materialist-nihilist habit, the relativism that is behind the various aspects of the global crisis must complete its deconstructive movement and open into "stainless" relativity. Stainless means freedom from conceptual superimpositions.

When relativity is subject to conceptual fixation, the subject grasps what is open and fluid and therefore falls into a recursive regress, as if they were trying to grasp the flowing water of a river. This results in anxiety, depression, hedonistic compensations, and ethical paralysis. When conceptual fixation is suspended,

then anxious need and depressive withdrawal are liberated into a space which I call "stainless relativity," i.e., a state in which the river can simply wash through us, and we are free to delight in its refreshing beauty. This suspension can then form the basis of authentic ethical conduct. An exchange from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* illustrates this:

> Mañjushrī: What is the root of good and evil?
> Vimalakīrti: Materiality is the root of good and evil.
> Mañjushrī: What is the root of materiality?
> Vimalakīrti: Desire is the root of materiality.
> Mañjushrī: What is the root of desire and attachment?
> Vimalakīrti: Unreal construction is the root of desire.
> Mañjushrī: What is the root of unreal construction?
> Vimalakīrti: The false concept is the root.
> Mañjushrī: What is the root of the false concept?
> Vimalakīrti: Baselessness.
> Mañjushrī: And what is the root of baselessness?
> Vimalakīrti: Mañjushrī, when something is baseless, how can it have any root?
> Therefore, all things stand on the root which is baseless. (Thurman, 1976, p. 58)

The ability to rest evenly and stand in a grounded way on "the root which is baseless" might seem like a risky foundation. In fact, it is the only foundation from which one can see clearly that the nature of everything is an expression of stainless relativity: a boundless, dynamic, and radiant interdependence that encompasses both subject and object as one taste. This in no way removes the existence or functioning of subjective and objective phenomena, rather it is the very nature that allows them to function infallibly. Constructed reality is therefore grounded, yet spacious. The full allowance of this grounded spaciousness vitiates the root of grasping at substance, for there is nothing substantial to pull or push against nor anyone that needs to do so.

In this analysis, good and evil are unmoored from any metaphysical basis (above or beyond stainless space) and are expressed provisionally in accordance with intention and circumstance. In this way morality (or notions of good and bad) is easily differentiated from ethics (ways of living that facilitate human flourishing) (Batchelor, 2012), and the individual is intimately connected to the universal.

It is important to stress that this acceptance must emerge out of one's own culture and out of one's own personal experience. It is intensely personal and therefore culturally constructed, but it is also universal and common, because everyone is alike in existing only as a contingency. Recognizing oneself as a mere contingency, it is recognizable in and by others who have also touched this place of groundlessness. There is no limitation to the doorways of recognizing this, or the ways it can be expressed. It may be expressed somatically, philosophically, rhetorically, or artistically; subjectively, intersubjectively, or objectively; through unity and through diversity.

Intention is relative to circumstance yet is universalizable. When one who is free of a particular habit of fixation sees someone who suffers because of his or her

own fixation, ethical action is a natural expression of compassion that sees the actual groundless nature of that fixation. The ethics of this compassion does not revolve around goodness or badness but is determined by whatever means are necessary to relieve another of their fixation. This is why it is often said in Mahāyāna Buddhism, "emptiness is essentially compassion." So, although there is no necessary basis for inherently good or bad actions, the ultimate baseless base of compassion is concerned with benefitting others—relieving their suffering by helping them to understand that the things to which they cling are ultimately empty. Traditionally, this is called "aimless great compassion." This may seem like a contradiction. How can ethics be aimless yet precise? How can the foundation of compassion be empty of any essential foundation? Perhaps the most basic claim of this chapter can be distilled into this one insight: the true nature of compassion is groundless emptiness.

How do we understand this statement? "Emptiness" means empty of limitation—i.e., "unlimited." We can see this through experience. When someone that we love dearly is in distress, rather than acting impulsively to relieve their anguish, it is often more effective to first relate to their situation with unconditional presence, free of judgment, and free of any limited goal. In full empathetic resonance, we avoid our ego getting in the way and detach ourselves from any particular outcome, regardless of how the situation is ultimately resolved. In this open space of full presence, our capacity to respond has access to the full spectrum of possibilities and is therefore full of immediacy, ingenuity, and compassion. In the absence of any self-interest, aimless compassion most effectively achieves its groundless goal of relieving suffering.

The efficacy of aimless compassion is directly linked to the extent to which its essence is groundless. Why? Because suffering itself is also groundless: it is not inherent to the mind. One who suffers does not abide as a single persistent entity but rather as a site of flux through which emotions, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are in a perpetual and dynamic dance. In order for uncontrived compassion to arise from a bottomless source, the compassionate person must not fall into the same trap of thinking of themselves as a substantial and persistent entity.

"Good" actions are those that express this openness, recognizing the dynamic and interconnected nature of everything. This leads to a relaxed and openhearted state of mind in others that is more likely to recognize its own fundamental groundlessness. "Bad" actions are those that stem from a failure to recognize the dynamic interconnected nature of everything. They lead to more persistent habits, a stronger belief in a self that is independent of its interdependent circumstances and overall alienation from basic groundlessness. "Ethics" is a way of approaching our lived experienced which leads us from "bad" actions to "good" actions, ultimately taking us altogether beyond the domain of ethics and deliberate action. As Khyentse (2003) is fond of saying, "Remember, as Chandrakirti said, 'Those who have ignorance will engage in bad karma and go to hell. Those who have ignorance will create good karma and go to heaven. Those who are wise will go beyond karma, and attain liberation'" (pp. 396–397).

Ethics as Method

The ethics which arise from compassion and the wisdom of groundlessness show how wisdom and compassion mirror one another. Compassion is a path to wisdom, and it is also the expression of wisdom. Compassion is a type of method: compassionate actions linked to social justice, environmental activism, or any channel that attempts to bring harmony and sustainability into the world constituting a sort of "ethical method." Method is always paired with wisdom. This dynamic interplay between wisdom (the recognition of groundlessness) and method (expression of wisdom in the phenomenal world of appearances) is fundamental to authentic ethical action. Method makes use of every aspect of our embodied experience, including sensory perception, language, conceptual thought, emotions, and intuition. Method includes any of the infinite details of personal and shared phenomenal experience, which can be directed into formal methods of mindfulness practice. An ethics of groundlessness is the pairing of the recognition of groundlessness and the way that recognition is approached and then expressed through all of these methods of contingent phenomena and experience.

Methods can be both skillful and unskillful. On the one hand, skillful methods refine elements of human experience into sublime experience; the idea is then to go beyond experience altogether and rest in pristine groundless awareness. Along the way, skillful methods are continually applied to express groundlessness in myriad forms. For example, openhearted goodness, expedient and provisional truths, and artistic works of sublimely transparent beauty can all be employed to lead others to stainless groundlessness. On the other hand, unskillful methods are stained by a grasping that reinforces the very conceptual fixations they intend to liberate.

A hallmark of skillful methods is that they progressively exhaust themselves in their own work, i.e., as the method harmonizes and refines the elements of experience, the method itself is transformed along the way until the point where it is no longer substantial. The way one works and what one is working on are interdependent and therefore locked in a perpetual dance. Like a knife being sharpened on a rock, both the sharp edge of the knife and the rock find their effectiveness through a process of mutual exhaustion. Similarly, whatever tools one uses along the path toward global sustainability must eventually be transformed or exhausted; otherwise, they risk becoming another object of fixation and clinging. In using a tool, we become habituated to it, and it must ultimately be relinquished. But, because we cannot let go of it directly, we are given another less substantial tool to hold on to. The new method liberates the clinging developed in the previous method, and grasping to gross substance is replaced with grasping to more subtle substance. As our substantial habits of holding on become less and less strong, the methods we use become less substantial until we are able to go beyond tools altogether. At that point, methods and tools are creatively reemployed to benefit others according to the way that others are holding on to themselves and their world. The ethics of wisdom and compassion is therefore progressive: it transforms itself continually in a process that leads to a state of compassionate engagement that is free of concepts of the one who is compassionate, the recipient of that care, and the compassionate action itself.

If the methods one uses are not eventually exhausted, they will become fossilized, and their effectiveness in facilitating openness will be limited. This is the risk of any ideological solution to the global crisis. Along the same lines, if personal and collective experience is not opened and released into groundless awareness, the method is superficial. Both method and experience must be liberated. In this way, method is a means of deliberately refining one's relationship to experience in order to move beyond deliberate action and substantial experience to rest in groundlessness. But, then again, if groundlessness itself is held to as a final method, it relapses into an incurable form of nihilism, as Nāgārjuna says (Garfield, 1995). Following Žižek (2009), this would be a "fetishization" of groundlessness, a distortion of an ethics of wisdom and compassion.

Groundlessness is not an isolated metaphysical reality, entity, or experience. It is the wisdom of the abiding nature of self and the world, always present and full of knowledge, power, and compassion. Ethical methods offer a way to approach this wisdom, to recognize it and connect with it. But ethical methods are not separate from wisdom. In every moment of using the tools of method, one is ideally aware that they are merely expedient and provisional, i.e., a helpful trick that is permeated with spaciousness, humor, and play. Key is an understanding that the method itself, the one using it, and the result are equally transparent to one another: open, groundless, and without fixed points of reference. And, because of this openness and transparency, the methods are more precise and more effective, and ethical action is authentic in its intimacy with the infinite interdependence of phenomenal experience. For method to be of any use, it must be an expression of pristine groundlessness itself, as the ethical appearance wisdom takes in order to reveal and celebrate itself.

In this view, ethics is a method, and ethical conduct is both the means to wisdom and the compassionate expression of wisdom. Fully resting in groundlessness, all of the tools one has left behind or exhausted are taken up again and employed in whatever way is necessary to benefit beings relative to their different capacities and dispositions. The infinitely diverse habits of fixation can be met with appropriate expressions, actions, and concepts that refine and release those habits into openhearted groundlessness. In this way, nihilism turns itself inside out, becoming the very basis of ethical action. The gap between objective fact and subjective value that plagues ethical discourse is simply the arrested movement of groundlessness, held up by subjective and objective nihilistic habits of substance.

Acceptance of Lost Ground

In the same way, when we approach an ethics of global sustainability, we must be very clear that the methods we are using and the world we are sustaining are essentially groundless, i.e., groundlessness in fact forms the very ground of global sustainability. This is a radical and challenging imperative and in many ways bares resemblance to Kierkegaard's (1985) "teleological suspension of the ethical" in which the goal of global sustainability (or even survival) is suspended in the acceptance

of groundlessness, with a quiet confidence that this is precisely the ground of an authentic and effective ethical response. And, as Žižek (2001, 2009) and others have repeatedly pointed out, any alternatives that seek to either establish a foundation or fetishize groundlessness only reinforce the very causes of the global crisis.

How best do we understand groundlessness? It is essentially interdependence—a recognition that the intrinsic essence of anything ultimately only arises from its web of interrelationships with everything else. Much has been said elsewhere about the connections between Buddhist notions of interdependence and ecological ethics. In this chapter, I have deliberately avoided the rhetoric of interdependence and instead have privileged the aspect of groundlessness because it provides a corrective to the ongoing discussion of ecological ethics. Traditionally, the concept of groundlessness is as important as that of interconnectedness, and they operate in a dialectic. Much of contemporary Engaged Buddhist discourse does not take the groundless nature of the earth or of subjectivity into thorough consideration and therefore is biased toward materialism (even if it is fully relativized with systems theory, deep ecology, etc.)

There is ultimately no ground, inside or out, and this is an important insight if we are going to be able to effectively respond to the global crisis. Repeatedly stressing our interconnection with all beings on the planet, and the substance of the planet itself, may effectively extend the circle of concern, but only at the point when one completely lets go of the dualistic framework of self and other, self and world, can the action necessary for lasting benefit arise.

The mourning associated with the global crisis is much the same phenomena as what happens in the dying process. The acceptance of death (either for ourselves, or our loved ones), in all of its ineluctability and anguish, is the space of openness that allows for appreciation of the very life we have surrendered. Acceptance of groundlessness allows us to rest suspended yet grounded in the fullness of nature herself, and sustainable ethical action becomes immediate and intuitive.

At this point, mindfulness is provided an open space in which we can deepen our intentions. If individual nihilistic habits can be fully liberated into groundlessness, it may be possible to form wider communities where groundlessness is a shared common value that can galvanize social change. Signs of this can be seen in the development of mindfulness and compassion as an emerging discourse.

Mindfulness and Compassion

Compassion has become a buzzword in mindfulness discourse. In some ways, this reflects mindfulness' need for more robust ethics. It also reflects the increased dialogue with and contributions from the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which has taken longer to emerge in secular domains.

There are many wonderful initiatives integrating compassion theory and practice into secular contexts, and it is also encouraging to see researchers presenting their findings in such a scrupulous and passionate way (e.g., Singer & Bolz, 2013). What I would like to add to this is the element of groundlessness. In several cases of

secular compassion initiatives, most prominently the Compassion Cultivation Training program at Stanford University and Emory University's Cognitively-Based Compassion Training, much of the theoretical background comes from the Tibetan *Lojong* or "mind training" tradition. This tradition is indeed full of resources to offer to the deepening of secular mindfulness through compassion. What is interesting, however, is the reluctance of these programs and others to attempt to integrate the theory and practice of groundlessness that permeates the Mahāyāna source tradition of mind training.

Mind training begins with what is called "ultimate bodhichitta," the ability to rest in groundlessness that includes the natural expression of compassion. There are many aspects of mind training that continually remind the practitioner of the illusory nature of themselves, the world and those who are suffering, and which have the potential to turn nihilistic habits into altruistic ethics.

Why haven't these groundless aspects of mind training been introduced, if the need is so great and the appropriateness so apparent? There are many reasons. Foremost is perhaps that this is not why people are drawn to mindfulness practice in the first place. Many people are suffering and torn to such a degree that what they need most are very straightforward instructions on how to become more at peace. Another reason is that this approach is potentially even more destabilizing than what is already being taught in mindfulness contexts, and there are already enough situations where individuals are being overwhelmed by their inner experience without introducing groundlessness. Further, given the increasingly unregulated and ad hoc proliferation of mindfulness facilitator trainings, there are few facilitators who are qualified to guide practitioners through deeper waters, and to open these doors would itself be unwise and potentially harmful.

And, it must be said that, just as has been shown in the last 50 years of contemplative practice in the west, the need for a stable and healthy ego structure is mostly recommended before attempting to look beyond the self and the "real" material world. To prematurely deconstruct self and phenomena may risk psychological decompensation and can also lead to what Welwood (2000) has termed "spiritual bypassing," one aspect of which is to use a partial experience of groundlessness to avoid or deny psychological pain or developmental issues. Despite all of these concerns, there are a significant number of people who are deeply in need of practices and guidance that not only normalize their increasing sense of groundlessness but gives them tools to guide the turn of nihilism "inside out" to actually unlock the tremendous resources and compassionate actions that are its spontaneous expression.

Proposals for Mindfulness Interventions in Facilitating an Ethic of Wisdom and Compassion

As Marcuse (1991) noted in the 1960s, long before Žižek (2001), the therapeutic function of something like mindfulness can serve to neutralize critical alternatives to the predominant conformist ethic of (consumer-technological) society by

folding them back into its own totalizing agenda. However, an ethic of groundless compassion retains a radically critical and self-critical edge, while it also addresses the causes of nihilism that modern society engenders. The notion of groundlessness has the potential to liberate the very nihilistic pathologies that society represses and obsessively medicates, transforming them into causes for social resistance and change. Familiarity with groundlessness benefits us both personally and collectively.

Resting in groundlessness cuts through the polarized tension inherent in the subject-object dichotomy: it helps us to familiarize ourselves with a state of suspension, fully present to the variety of experiences, and yet unmoored from any necessary identification, unattached and without fixation. Groundlessness therapeutically liberates us from the haunting experience of recursive self-reference (e.g., a hall of mirrors or the video camera turned back on its own monitor (Hofstadter, 1980)). It also liberates the infinite regress of endlessly nested objective contexts (a dream within a dream within a dream, or the maker of a map of the universe who must finally include himself making the map, and this mapmaker is making another map within a map and so on). Fully able to rest in groundlessness, we need no longer fear the constructed fictions of subjective and objective realities and can freely create within them for the benefit of others.

To give an example from within the secular mindfulness world itself, the work of psychologist Daniel Siegel provides a good illustration of this turn. In his many books, lectures, and online programs, Siegel (2007, 2010, 2011, 2012) has pioneered an extensive, nuanced, and interdisciplinary theory of mind that is also practical. As a psychiatrist, his work is both theoretical and therapeutic; its explicit aim is to help relieve people's suffering. In his presentation, the worlds of "mindfulness" and therapy continually overlap, and much could be said about these pairing and other aspects of his approach and view, but I would like to highlight one particular practice that shows the way in which "mind" and "mindfulness" are reaching the limits of their current meaning and are flirting with deeper intentions.

As a way of strengthening the faculties of attention and awareness, Siegel (2010) teaches what he calls "the wheel of awareness," in which the patient or mindfulness practitioner imagines their subjective awareness at the center, or hub, of a wheel. The outer rim of the wheel is imagined as the various objects of that awareness. The spokes of the wheel, extending from the hub to the rim, are the various sense consciousnesses (with the addition of a few beyond the six senses, including interoceptive, somatic sense), creating a subject-object polarity. With bare, nonjudgmental attention, one notices various occurrences of sense objects and thoughts, a practice that strengthens executive functions and trains the faculty of perception to be free of distraction, bias, or partiality. This strengthening of the qualities of the "hub" of awareness provides a greater spaciousness and freedom from habitual emotional and harmful cognitive patterns. All of this is familiar territory to mindfulness teachers and practitioners.

What he does next, however, in the rare cases that he does it, is a radical departure. He then includes the instruction to turn awareness on itself, where the hub takes itself as its own object. He usually prefaces this instruction as something advanced, and does not give much guidance as to what one might find, and only

tangentially remarks on why this might be a good idea. In my view, this is precisely the direction mindfulness should take in order to transform itself into a practice that is able to bridge the gap between fact and value articulated above, and it is precisely the groundless "view from nowhere" to use Nagel's (1986) phase that is capable of illuminating the disease of modernity's nihilistic shadow.

This might seem like a rarefied quirk of self-consciousness, but it is in fact central to the shamatha-vipashyanā system of instruction that forms the preliminaries to Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen meditation. It is my hope that a discussion of these methods will give some inspiration to mindfulness facilitators and practitioners for deepening the practice and opening the question of ethics to a more authentic and sustainable foundation.

Shamatha and Vipashyanā: Calm Abiding and Insight

Shamatha and vipashyanā meditation methods are common to many lineages of Buddhism. Here I am using the terms in the Indo-Tibetan context of an integrated practice that leads the practitioner to an unmistaken recognition of the groundless nature of mind and phenomena. It can be seen as a two-step process in which one first learns in shamatha (calm abiding) to "aim and sustain attention" (to use Siegel's language). On the basis of this, one then turns awareness on itself and uses the stability that was developed in calm abiding meditation to sustain an investigation into the groundless luminous nature of mind. This is called vipashyanā, or "higher vision," or simply "insight." Shamatha-vipashyanā can also be seen as a circular process, as it is taught in many lineages of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, where the ultimate object of calm abiding meditation is space or awareness itself, without support or reference point. This is the essence of insight meditation, with stability and investigation mutually reinforcing one another. With a deepening of calm abiding, the groundless and luminous qualities of mind shine forth more saliently, with increased depth of recognition of groundless clarity, stability expands.

Much of contemporary mindfulness practice would fall under the rubric of calm abiding. Calm abiding instructions, such as "do not review the past, do not pursue the future, rest open and relaxed in the present moment without judgment or elaboration" would not be out of place in most secular mindfulness contexts and include most operational definitions of mindfulness. This would include many techniques of self-regulation, attention training, and awareness, e.g., practices such as Siegel's wheel of awareness. It is rare, however, to enquire into who is being aware or into the essential nature of that awareness itself. Even more rare is to enquire deeply into the nature of external phenomena and how their true essence may or may not cohere with our habitual perceptions of them.

Moving from calm abiding meditation to insight entails a sharpening of the perceptive faculty of mind, along with a seemingly paradoxical relaxation of focus. These two aspects begin as a sequence of investigation and release, but eventually they become a single gesture of awareness recognizing itself in-as-through vivid spacious groundlessness.

One common method is called "abiding, moving, and awareness" (*gnas 'gyu rig gsum*) which belongs to the first level of Mahāmudrā practice called "single point-edness." In this practice, one investigates both the mind at rest and the moving mind and inquires into its nature. Looking just at the nonconceptual mind, the practitioner asks, "Does it have a color or shape?" "Where does it abide, is it inside or outside?" "Is it something or nothing?" "Where does it come from, where does it go?"

One can then apply a similar analysis to the conceptual mind asking, for example, from Tāranātha's (2016) Instructions of the Threefold Natural Settling:

> What is the difference between the emergence of a thought and the resting mind? Are the two the same thing or not the same? When a thought arises, investigate in detail: How does it arise? After a thought arises, for as long as it does not cease, how does it exist? When a thought dissolves, what is the way in which it ceases?" (p. 11)

Then one moves to awareness and asks, "Who is analyzing the mind in these ways?" "Are the moving mind and the resting mind the same or different?" "What is the difference between the mind at rest and the mind searching for its nature?" The questions of stillness and movement uncover the common nature of both as the nature of awareness. The investigation of awareness in itself removes any vestige of reference point to the one who has been investigating. One can then move to investigating the nature of the mind that perceives sense phenomena:

> When the eyes see a form, what is the essence like of the clear seeing of the form? Between that form and this lucid and dynamic cognizance, scrutinize whether they are one or different things. Apply similar observations to the hearing of the ears and the other sense fields. (Tāranātha, 2016, p. 11)

Each question is followed by a period of nonconceptual resting, and one becomes familiar with resting evenly in a state of not finding anything:

> After having perfectly examined mind, rest in the state of "just that" free of any identification. Through searching many times there emerges an experience in which it seems that there is nothing whatsoever to grasp, yet it is not nothing. While being empty, a variety of experiences arise of a bare empty awareness, clear, brightly lucent, and vividly alert. Without knowing how to express it, completely rest in that. (Tāranātha, 2016, p. 13)

These are not mere mental curiosities; they constitute a direct method for pacifying confused nihilistic habit. In analyzing and resting in this way, practitioners begin to loosen the habitual mental constructs that uphold a naïve and fixated view of mind and matter, familiarizing themselves with groundless presence. The conventional world is buttressed by unexamined assumptions about the way things are, based on the way they appear. For things to actually exist in the way they appear, they must appear, remain, and pass away. Arising, ceasing, and abiding (Tibetan *skye 'gag gnas gsum*) are the three defining dimensions of dualistic appearances and thoughts. But, under analysis, the practitioner comes to experience that inner and outer phenomena are "unborn" that there is no basis for designating the "appearance" of anything. Nor is there any place that phenomena go when they cease, and looking closely at the way they remain, there is nothing

substantial or essential to be found. In the Mahāmudrā tradition, these insights are gained by looking at mind itself, rather than seemingly substantial phenomena "out there." When mind itself is seen to be groundless, phenomena are more easily recognized to be equally as groundless.

These are just a few examples of the methods available in the first step of the four yogas of Mahāmudrā. Skillful practice in these yogas results in "freedom from elaboration" (*nisprapañca, spros bral*), a calm and abiding insight in which the elaborations of dualistic mind are completely released into the space of awakened presence.

Embodied Groundlessness

I would like to present a few more methods that have evolved out of the Mahāmudrā tradition that incorporate a more explicitly somatic approach, highlighting how groundlessness can inform an ethic of compassion and wisdom.

The wheel of awareness and the traditional methods of calm abiding and insight discussed above can appear to have a cognitive bias, which may actually exacerbate some of our common existential anxieties. This can lead to a denial of feeling, of somatic wisdom, of sensuality, and of the material world. There is a risk that insight into groundlessness remains "in the head." The Mahāmudrā tradition presupposes a natural degree of embodiment, and many of its preliminary practices are designed to cultivate an intimate connection with the body. It is important that the experience of groundlessness is fully embodied, i.e., grounded in the open spacious presence of somatic awareness. The same principle can be extended to our relationship with the earth: the fact that the earth is the ground of our life-world cannot be denied, yet the essence of our foundation in the earth remains open and empty. That the somatic sense of grounded spaciousness is both rootless and suspended is an important part of training in insight meditation. It parallels the global ethic that arises when one rests suspended yet grounded in the fullness of the earth.

The contemporary meditation teacher Reginald Ray has developed a host of protocols for training practitioners in this type of somatic insight into groundlessness. A blending of Qi Gong, Tibetan yoga, and his own inspiration, Ray's (2008) "earth breathing / earth descent" practice illustrates these connections well.

There are several variations, but when I lead this practice, I generally direct the practitioner to begin by connecting with his or her body and then to release somatic fixation into the earth by relying on the outbreath. They then begin to breathe through the perineum, the root of the body's connection to the earth, drawing breath through this point of contact into the belly. After a period of breathing in this way, one drops awareness down through the perineum into the earth and breathes from below the body into the body. This process continues gradually, with awareness sinking further and further into the earth, descending hundreds and then thousands of feet. Awareness is finally released into a free fall. At this point the reference point of awareness is released and one rests suspended in the grounded, spacious, embodied, and groundless emptiness of the earth.

The seeming paradox of somatically grounded groundlessness is a completely accessible and intuitive experience that bypasses the dualistic conceptual mind and connects directly with nonconceptual somatic awareness. When combined with traditional methods of calm abiding and insight, these practices can inform and enrich one another.

Another meditation protocol I have adapted from Ray was presented in his "Sevenfold Bodhicitta" training. When I lead this practice, I direct the practitioner to begin by bringing awareness to the center of the chest at the level of the heart, noticing with open presence what they find there, whether it is positive, negative, neutral, or nothing at all. They then begin to breathe into this region of the heart, slowly developing an attunement to the somatic texture of this region. The somatic "felt sense" of the heart is then slowly expanded with every breath until it gradually fills the entire chest. One continues to breathe directly into the heart while expanding its sphere of awareness. This then continues to fill the entire body and then goes beyond the boundary of the body into the environment. This is slowly continued until the practitioner reaches the practical limit of their awareness. The boundaries of this awareness are then investigated: "What is the boundary like? What lies beyond it?" One rests in an expanded, spacious awareness that is grounded in the body. Finally, one turns one's awareness back on itself, looking into, feeling, and sensing the center of the heart while simultaneously maintaining an expansive spacious presence. The simultaneity of this experience cannot be accommodated by the habitual dualistic conceptual mind, yet it is undeniably clear and present. The practitioner is encouraged to rest, evenly suspended in this way of being.

This meditation is a powerful way to illustrate the common essence of groundlessness (or the lack of any fixed reference point) and heartfulness (the full and open qualities of an awakened heart, free of referential limitations). This gives an intimate experiential taste of the way groundlessness and compassion are of the same empty essence.

Conclusion

There is great potential for these introspective methods to be adapted and presented in secular contexts, without explicit dependence on the source traditions. But, as always, this unbundling must proceed with great care and is not an exempt from theoretical and methodological challenges.

Having taught these methods in various secular contexts, I do not believe they pose any obstacle to secular sensibilities, apart from challenging the nihilistic habit patterns within modern minds and society that ultimately cause a separation between the secular and the sacred. My own experience teaching groundlessness in this way seems to normalize the pervasive experience which many in our culture suffer, i.e., of vertiginous "relativity sickness," and the psychosomatic "dizziness" that Kierkegaard (1980) refers to as an analogue to the sickness of the spirit. In many ways, this is a genuine insight, shared by many, that phenomena are not as solid or real as they appear; that we live in a world of dream, illusion, and digital simulation;

and that between and beyond these streaming ones and zeroes, there is a tremendously vast groundless space with no top and no bottom into which we might infinitely regress. At first blush, this might not seem to be such comforting news. Those whose capacity for introspection has not been entirely overwhelmed by media and technology find "themselves" to be essentially a patchwork of anxieties and depressions—a set of conflicting emotional possibilities and transient Facebook post traces, all suspended over and around nothing at all.

But the good news is, this is all okay. It's all rather normal, actually, and this good news can be a source of great relief. Not only is this all normal, but it is also a doorway to great joy. This empty groundlessness can form a very strong foundation of our connection to one another and our inborn intimacy with all things. "Emptiness (groundlessness) has the heart essence [of compassion]" (Tibetan: *stong nyid snying po can*). Resting in groundless relativity opens the world to the sacred, to the basic goodness of each person, and to the possibility of realizing an enlightened secular society on this earth, at this time. It is the source of true sustainability and vital flourishing. This dynamic rest is enacted through globally sustainable ethics emerging from a groundless ground, without reference to transcendental norms or external and temporary sources of inspiration. In the face of destructive forces that batter it on all sides, this foundation is strong. It is made from the same empty essence as the forces that would appear to challenge it but with the unlimited advantage of resting with stability and in openhearted ease in recognition of its own groundless nature.

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Madness and Mindfulness: How the "Personal" Is "Political"

14

Hugh Willmott

Introduction

"When we lose control over our minds through *hatred, selfishness, jealousy, and anger,* we lose *our sense of judgment*. Our minds are blinded, and at those wild moments, anything can happen, including war. Thus the practice of compassion and wisdom is useful to all, especially to those responsible for running national affairs, in whose hands lie the power and opportunity to create the *structure* of world peace" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 250, emphases added).

The theme of this chapter is the institutionalization of unreason, taking the form of practices that engender and endorse "hatred, selfishness, jealousy, and anger"; and the role of meditation, including meditative mindfulness, in disarming and deinstitutionalizing unreason. Meditative awareness can enable critical reflection and transformation, as contrasted with unreasoned reactivity, on practices that diminish our "sense of judgment." The needless suffering associated with hatred, jealousy, anger, and other ego-building, and defensive emotions is manifest in contemporary expressions of sectarianism and fanaticism in corporations as well as in society.

I explore the de-/institutionalization of unreason by considering the connection between what Mills (1959) has termed "private troubles" and "public issues" and what Hanisch (1970), relatedly but not synonymously, has identified as "the personal" and "the political." We may think, for example, of how ostensibly private or personal feelings of resentment, such as those resulting from the divisive impacts of neoliberalism and neocolonialism, are reflected and reinforced in the public issue of populism and its wider political reverberations.

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In the absence of critical reflection, fear is assuaged and contained by identifying with something (e.g., a sect, the nation) that is assumed to provide security. Forms of populism involve "symbolic participation" by people who readily identify with, and defer to, the slogans of religious, corporate, and/or national leaders promising solutions to their problems—often by veiling or trivializing the problems while presenting themselves as possessing the strength to implement the solution (Freire, 2005, p. 78). Increased opportunities for self-actualization or an expansion of self-determination are promised, but as Freire (2005) has argued, freedom can only be *lived*; it cannot be bestowed; and this requires "risking life" in a demanding, liberating process of *continuously becoming.* Freedom is an expression of *praxis*; it is not something that can be gifted by others.

To explore the institutionalization of unreason and the mystification of freedom, I interrogate two texts. The first is Mills' (1959) *The Sociological Imagination* which considers the dis-/connection between "private troubles" and "public issues." Addressing the context of postwar America, Mills argues that many US citizens had been turned, largely by big business, into superficially contented conformists or "cheerful robots" (Mills, 1959, p. 189). As producers and as consumers, the "robots" are seen to have fallen prey to the unreason and unfreedom of an affluent society. Racked by a sense of "uneasiness" and "indifference" (Mills, 1959, p. 18), they lack the capacity to connect their "personal troubles" to the "public issue" of a divisive and dysfunctional "structure"—to invoke the Dalai Lama's (2011) term cited above. In the context of the USA in the 1950s that, arguably, continues today, this "structure" is the medium but also an outcome of dehumanized, alienating processes of production and consumption.

A contemporary manifestation of the malaise of alienation and self-absorption identified by Mills is, perhaps, the "robotic" practitioner of mindfulness who, by engaging in continuous self-surveillance of his or her inner state, has little interest in, or awareness of, its connection of "private troubles" to "public issues"—that is, to "the regime and circumstances that are making people anxious, miserable and sick" (Purser & Forbes, 2017). For Mills, the key to addressing and correcting the malaise is the development and dissemination of a *sociological imagination* capable of converting "the personal uneasiness of individuals…into involvement with public issues" (Mills, 1959, p. 12).

My second text is a chapter by Carol Hanisch (1970) titled *The Personal Is Political*, a celebrated feminist work that appeared in an anthology *Notes from the Second Year*: *Women's Liberation*. Hanisch's focus is upon how, in her experience, members of the women's movement address(ed) the realm of the "personal." Hanisch agrees with Mills that fostering a sociological imagination is necessary to disarm unreason and diminish unfreedom, but that it is insufficient and is potentially counterproductive for achieving women's liberation—an assessment that she illustrates by reference to the attitude of many women's movement members toward non-activists. Specifically, Hanisch takes issue with how non-activists are dismissively described and effectively written off, as "apolitical." In the Dalai Lama's (2011) terms, Hanisch considers this disrespectful attitude, which effectively dismisses non-activists as "cheerful robots," to lack "wisdom and compassion" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 250); and she commends greater openness to, and curiosity about,

Otherness, including the stance of non-activists. When the political quality of the Other's consciousness is appreciated and examined, Hanisch contends, it can stimulate critical (self) reflection on movement members' disinterest in, or dismissiveness of, non-activists.

The Sociological Imagination and *The Personal Is Political* are texts that address aspects of the postwar era. During this period, the conformity of the 1950s examined by Mills mutated, in the 1960s, into forms of rebellion that included the emergence of the women's movement as well as an emergent interest in non-Western spiritual traditions. Despite the intervening decades, their themes and analyses have continuing relevance for progressive practices and movements. Among these, I include critical management studies (CMS) in which I have had a close involvement (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Willmott, 2013), and also the mindfulness movement that, for me, has resonances with a 40-year commitment to a Tibetan Buddhist (Kagyü) tradition of meditation practice.

Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* commends an emancipatory vision in which, to quote, "the end product of any liberating education is simply the self-educating, self-cultivating man and woman; in short, the free and rational individual" (Mills, 1959, p. 207). Despite containing some noxious traces of chauvinism and macho individualism, *The Sociological Imagination* commends processes of learning as a means of "self-cultivation" that can mobilize and expand reason and freedom. Hanisch's "*The Personal is Political*" also prizes "self-cultivation" but focuses more directly upon its lived practicalities.

The educative impulse evident in Mills' and Hanisch's texts is central to a third text, Freire's (1970/2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* on which I draw more selectively when unpacking the dynamics of unreason and unfreedom. When read in conjunction with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *The Sociological Imagination* can be seen to lean more toward what Freire terms a "banking approach" to personal and social development that conceives of learning primarily as a matter of acquiring the deposits (e.g., the elements of a *sociological imagination*) that comprise a field of knowledge. People are conceived as vessels into which enlightening knowledge—such as the connectedness of personal troubles and public issues—is poured. When this approach to development is adopted, resistance to its application tends to be ascribed to deficiencies in its intended recipients, rather than to the inherent limitations and performativity of its passive and conception of human beings as "objects of assistance" (Freire, 2005, p. 83).

In contrast, the pedagogy informing Hanisch's *The Personal Is Political* more closely resembles Freire's "problem-posing" approach which "affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality (sic)" (Freire, 2005, p. 85). This open, becoming condition applies no less to the educator than to the educated. Dialogical problem-posing learning is embedded in experience; it enables people to "see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2005, p. 84). In the context of mindfulness practice, the problem-posing approach resonates with an orientation that, in the words of one practitioner, enables him/her "to be respectful and compassionate, rather than pursuing my own agenda or being trapped in my ego needs" (Sinclair, 2015, p. 9).

This chapter is organized as follows. It begins with a brief sketch of my understanding of meditation as this informs the reading of the contributions of Mills, Hanisch, and Freire that follow. Since meditation forms the core of any coherent theory and practice of mindfulness, its discussion serves to connect this chapter with other contributions to this volume. Reprising *The Sociological Imagination* and *The Personal and the Political*, I then consider their relevance for the development of progressive, emancipatory theory and practice in which I include the role of meditation in facilitating the disclosure of a more awakened state of being wherein the destructive energies of "hatred, selfishness, jealous, and anger" are transmuted into those of "compassion and wisdom" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 250). Finally, I expand briefly upon the idea that meditation offers a potent means of addressing the deficit in reason when attending to the problem of un/freedom.

Meditation and Mindfulness: A Brief Overview

My understanding of *meditation*, its relationship to mindfulness as a practice and to mindfulness as a movement, is summarized as follows: moments of meditative awareness, or mindfulness, arise when there is a sense of oneness, of being in the here and now (e.g., in flow) that is experienced as a "calmness and presence of mind" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 250): such (embodied) awareness is comparatively uncluttered by a preoccupation with maintaining a (self-securing) sense of separateness. This awake awareness may occur spontaneously at any time in any place. It is not confined to any specific activity, such as meditative sitting or walking. Meditation practice may also be more concentrated - when it is the equivalent of taking a language class, as contrasted with speaking the language.

Meditation practice is concerned with dispelling the illusion of ego and discarding its armor in everyday life. Its effect is to debunk, reduce, and ultimately eliminate sources of unnecessary suffering associated with preserving ego. The dispelling of ego occurs as the processual, impermanent nature of everything is disclosed- experientially as well as cognitively. Mindfulness as a movement tends to de-couple meditation from spiritual traditions (e.g., by positioning it within a medical or mental health logic), and so it more readily endorses, or permits the adoption of, mindfulness as a new armor that, for example, fosters a sense of invincibility by "building resilience," "boosting emotional intelligence," and "enhancing creativity" (Seppälä, 2015)—all for the strengthening of ego rather than its debunking.

Schematically, meditation can take the meditator in three possible directions, all of which have political consequences for the reproduction or transformation of the self and social relations.

First, meditation practice may do little to disclose and disrupt habitual patterns of being-in-the-world: the meditator may fall asleep or become completely carried away by, rather than become more aware of, the normal stream of consciousness. By default, the ostensible normality of the status quo is undisturbed. The primary obstacle   to   meditative   awareness   is   distracting—ego-threatening   or

alluring—thoughts or sensations. Unless this obstacle is recognized and removed, meditating makes little difference, except perhaps to provide a spiritual or "cool" badge of identity.

Second, meditation practice may have the rather paradoxical and perverse effect of strengthening or inflating the ego and, in this respect, is continuous with therapeutic culture that is indebted to ego psychology (see Rakow, 2013). As it is possible for virtually anything, including spirituality, to become a vehicle of ego inflation, the illusion of separation and sovereignty may be magnified rather than diminished by meditation practice. Meditation as mindfulness may, for example, feed arrogance and self-deception by regarding it as a source of achievement—as exemplified by a sense of being "holier than thou" or of being better equipped than others to manage stress or perform better in the workplace or elsewhere (Good et al., 2016). This sense may be short-lived, or it may intensify feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, thereby undermining rather than building personal capital and associated capacity (Grant, 2015). I associate this "dark" outcome with the direction of meditation practices, including forms of mindfulness that promise to increase the person's capacities of adjustment, resulting in performance improvements being celebrated as a *personal* achievement that must then be safeguarded and defended, rather than simply registering them as unremarkable outcomes of meditation.

Just as forms of meditation embedded in spiritual traditions (e.g., Buddhism and Christianity) may be misapplied in ways that are "spiritually materialistic," practices commended by mindfulness may diminish, rather than strengthen, the illusion of separation and sovereignty that supports and sustains a sense of egohood. In Buddhist traditions, such as the Tibetan Kagyü school, the motivation for meditation practice is the development of compassion toward all beings that is most fully realized by undertaking practices whose outcome is enlightenment. Secular practices, including many forms of mindfulness, lack this ethical underpinning and animation, and instead favor secular "self-identified values or cross-culturally recognized virtues and character strengths," and they, it is argued, "have stronger theoretical and empirical foundations in psychological science" (Baer, 2015, p. 966). Nonetheless, secular meditation practices, such as those that are promoted or engaged as a means of increasing resilience to work pressures, may also have the (unintended) consequence of drawing its practitioners toward another state of being as they are inadvertently taken in a different, third direction. As Sinclair (2015, p. 6) notes,

> Although it is true that practicing mindfulness often helps people to cope with stress, to just treat it as a tool would be to miss many other profound opportunities that arise from being mindful. Rather than lashing ourselves to the mast of life, driving ourselves harder, mindfulness can open the door to being in the world and in our lives differently, without being hounded by the relentless drive to change ourselves and others.

The third direction of meditation practice is one of a greater *openness* [to the Other]: "a state of open expansive awareness, able to notice—and appreciate—more of what's there" (Sinclair, 2015, p. 5). The meditator's sense of separateness and sovereignty in relation to the Other—natural and social—is unsettled and dissolved,

rather than affirmed or strengthened. As the desire to defend ego weakens, the prospects for "figuring out" the Other, in Hanisch's (1970) words, are improved, though never guaranteed. There is no certainty because an inclination, or impulse, to defend one's sense of identity or selfhood—by disregarding or being dismissive of the Other, for example—is liable to reappear.

Where personal transformation involves increased openness to the Other, and reduced defensiveness in securing an established sense of self, it is progressively, if not intentionally, political in its expression and consequences. One significant outcome is the greater likelihood that the Other will be respected, listened to, and learned from. Increased openness fosters an agonistic and engaging orientation, as contrasted to one that is antagonistic and dismissive. Antagonistic relations to the Other tend to involve, but also obscure, a rather cowardly, defensive stance. In order to avoid scrutiny by the Other, its proponents avoid meaningful, substantive engagement—for example, by invoking procedures. An agonistic orientation, in contrast, requires courage as well as considerable patience to communicate more directly and respectfully with the Other (which is often, but not necessarily, reciprocated).

Before moving on, it can be acknowledged that advocacy of meditation as a means of connecting the personal and the political may strike some readers as incongruous, if not ridiculous. That, I suspect, is because meditation tends to be associated and conflated with inward-looking passivity that eschews public or political involvement. As noted earlier, meditation may be inconsequential when it has minimal effect on the practitioner, or it may be hijacked by ego to develop a more comfortable, spiritually accomplished, sense of separation that changes little or nothing except the further solidification of the ego. Meditation practices, including those associated with mindfulness, may be seized upon as a means of escaping from, rather than attending to and examining, whatever is experienced by ego as threatening and/or painful: "We want to escape. We want to run away from pain rather than regard it as a source of inspiration. We feel the suffering to be bad enough, so why investigate it further? Some people who suffer a great deal and realize that they cannot escape their suffering really begin to understand it. But most people are too busy attempting to rid themselves of irritation…" (Trungpa, 1973, p. 162).

In meditation practice, as in everyday life, the three orientations outlined above may arise and circulate in the space of a few minutes or seconds. Distractedness and daydreaming are commonplace, as is the desire to escape from vulnerabilities, become better adjusted, or elevate oneself over the Other. Such desires, and associated enslavements to them, are media and outcomes of unfreedom and unreason. In the next section, I outline how, in *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills (1959) argued that the key to revealing and overcoming unreason and unfreedom resides in addressing and transforming the relationship between "private troubles" (the personal) and "public issues" (the political).

Only Connect…Private Troubles and Public Issues: *The Sociological Imagination*

The Sociological Imagination is concerned with the dulling of reason and trivialization of freedom in postwar America. Published in 1959, it has over 13,000 citations on Google Scholar. What makes *The Sociological Imagination* a classic that continues to be referenced, including by students of organization and management, is its identification of a practical and theoretical disconnect between personal troubles and public issues. It continues to resonate in contemporary advanced capitalist societies where, to invoke another binary coined by Galbraith (1958) in the 1950s, private affluence (or greed) is accompanied by public squalor (or disadvantage). That said, *The Sociological Imagination* is not without flaws. For example, Mills repeatedly uses the term "man," and there is an associated absence of any reference to the problems and issues addressed by feminists.

A key figure in *The Sociological Imagination* is the "cheerful robot"—a trope that identifies people who, in Mills' imagination, become social robots radiating an air of contentment that veils their growing "alienation" (Mills, 1959, pp. 190–191). As workers/consumers/citizens, "robots" compliantly execute instructions within modern, "rationally organized" institutions where they feel helplessly trapped and morally insensible, and are increasingly incapable of taking responsibility for their actions. For Mills, politics and the political are not confined to government or electoral processes. Politics refers to all forms of power relationships, including those within workplaces. A society of "cheerful robots" is, for Mills, "the antithesis of the free society—or in the literal and plain meaning of the word, of a democratic society" (Mills, p. 191):

> Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of *traps*…Even when they do not panic, men often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of *moral crisis*. Is it any wonder than ordinary men feel that *they cannot cope with the larger worlds* with which they are so suddenly confronted? That they cannot understand the meaning of their epoch for their own lives? That—*in defense of selfhood*—they become *morally insensible*, trying to remain altogether *private men*? Is it any wonder that they come to be possessed by a sense of the trap? (Mills, 1959, p. 9, 11, emphases added)

In the contemporary context, it is not difficult to appreciate the continuing relevance of Mills' references to a sense of being "trapped" by larger forces—of nuclear annihilation, financialization, immigration, and globalization. Indeed, the sense of "uneasiness and indifference" that he identifies as "the signal feature of our period" (Mills, 1959, p. 19) has, arguably, become amplified in the face of global warming, geo-instability, and mass migration. Today, the indifference associated with feelings of "moral insensibility" and being "trapped" has morphed from the fanatical mass consumerism of the late twentieth into the unreason of moral sectarianism and populist fanaticism of the twenty-first century. Mills' concerns about moral insensibility are echoed inter alia in warnings and appeals, including those that urge us to be "mindful of McMindfulness" (Purser & Forbes, 2017), because in the contemporary

corporation, yesterday's "robot" is invited to become a "mindful zombie" (Purser & Forbes, 2017; see also Goto-Jones, 2013). When the latter's "personal troubles" (e.g., anxiety) are tackled (narcissistically)—by encouraging an "obsessive self-monitoring of one's inner state" as a means of performance enhancement or productivity improvement—any "wider vision of the outer world" is displaced (Purser & Forbes, 2017). More generally, Mills (1959) cautions that: "Rationally organized social arrangements are not necessarily a means of increased freedom…In fact, often they are a means of tyranny and manipulation, an expropriation of the very chance to reason, the very capacity to act as a free man" (p. 187).

Today, the impersonality and soullessness of the rationally organized workplace is supplemented and renewed, but not replaced, by post-rational elements that extend the forms of unreason and unfreedom. Novel elements extol strong culture, fun, and/or freedom, including commercialized packages of mindfulness adopted by major (e.g., social media) companies. By facilitating greater groundedness through relaxation and embodied awareness, mindfulness initiatives may appear to mitigate, and perhaps reduce, the traps of rationalization (Mills, 1959, p. 9). To that extent, they seek to address "alienation" (Mills, 1959, pp. 190–191), taking the form of mental absenteeism and stress. However, when remedies for "alienated man" (Mills, 1959, p. 190) are geared to, and justified by, the quest for productivity improvement, they are an example of the traps to which Mills made reference, not a release from them. They offer an ineffective, if not "futile, attempt to shield us from the various sufferings and vulnerabilities of daily living" (Purser & Forbes, 2017). In the form of corporate mindfulness programs, they tend to invite a slavish dedication to a "hypervigilant" (Purser & Forbes, 2017), self-absorbed mindfulness. Such mindfulness may promise to harness the full range of employees' productive capabilities, but it is deafeningly silent on the role of collective self-determination in addressing institutionalized alienation.

In Mills' terms, alienation and needless suffering are perpetuated when a "public issue"—such as collective estrangement from the means of production where the creative powers of labor are commodified and disempowered—is framed as a private trouble, conceived as stress or psychological absenteeism. Far from being passé, Mills' (1959) observation that "in the big-scale organization…[t]here is rationality without reason… *Such rationality is not commensurate with freedom but the destroyer of it*" (p. 189, emphasis added) has a contemporary resonance. This is especially so when freedom is conflated with forms of self-expression in the workplace that are considered to contribute to productivity (e.g., by reducing stress-related absenteeism), and so counteracts any inclination to associate unfreedom with the operation of established structures of ownership and control in which employee well-being is equated with successful performance management.

Diagnosing the Modern Malaise

It is not hard to understand why, when finding that they cannot cope with the larger worlds, desperate people are drawn to "solutions" that rely upon unreason and perpetuate unfreedom, often in the name of freedom and rationality. These solutions frequently cast their adopters as beneficiaries of change delivered by authoritarian, messianic demagogues for whom the domains of business, sport and management consultancy, and religion and politics are alluring and rewarding. Masquerading as the champions of "the little guy" or the "downtrodden," they emerge and thrive in circumstances where the capacity of people to organize collectively to make changes, rather than robotically lend their trust and support to ostensibly benevolent leaders, is underdeveloped or weakened.

Unfreedom is, for Mills, symptomatic of societies where citizens are unable "to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions" (Mills, 1959, p. 11). *The sociological imagination* is conceived by Mills to enable its possessor "to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (Mills, 1959, p. 11). It thereby mitigates the moral insensibility of the robots, dissolves their false consciousness, and so facilitates their release from—or, better, the removal of—the "traps" (Mills, 1959, p. 9).

Sixty years after its publication, many insights of *The Sociological Imagination* remain relevant. Yet, Mills offers little commentary—beyond an occasional, teasing reference to "the defense of selfhood"—on how to overcome resistance to the release of consciousness from its "falsity." What, it may be asked, can enable citizens to "possess," as Mills puts it, "the *quality of mind* essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biology and history, of self and world" (Mills, 1959, p. 10, emphases added)?

Despite his thesis that modern institutions foster "rationality without reason" and may become "a means of tyranny," Mills places much faith in the power of reason, as exemplified by the demystifying capabilities ascribed to social scientists for whom "one of our intellectual tasks [is] to clarify the ideal of freedom and the ideal of reason" (Mills, 1959, p. 198). The example is given of teaching that helps students "to turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues and problems *open to reason*" (Mills, 1959, p. 206, emphasis added), thereby enabling students to become "*reasonable* and free" (Mills, 1959, p. 206, emphasis added). The aim of the teacher, guided by sociological imagination, is commendable "to combat all those forces which are destroying genuine publics…or put as a positive goal, his (sic) aim is to help build and to strengthen *self-cultivating publics*. Only then might society be reasonable and free" (Mills, 1959, p. 206, emphasis added).

I fully subscribe to the enlightenment ambition of exercising the power of reason to debunk and remove unfreedoms (e.g., slavery and bigotry). Reason can play a key role in challenging knowledge claims and associated practices that institutionalize suffering, including structured social inequalities of class, gender, ethnicity, disability, and so on (see Renault, 2010). To this end, it is crucial to connect "'the personal troubles of milieu' with 'the public issues of social structure'" (Mills, 1959,

p. 14)—such as connecting contemporary feelings of uneasiness with a reluctance to take political irresponsibility for how "rational organizations … systematically regulate [our] impulses and aspirations" (Mills, 1959, p. 189, citing Mannheim).

The exercise of reason can disclose the structural conditions of actions, including "impulses and aspirations." While necessary, this is, however, an insufficient basis for attaining "freedoms *to*" that include engagement in practices of (collective) self-determination. Tellingly, when Mills commends *The Sociological Imagination* as an antidote to "false consciousness," he has very little to say about the contents of such consciousness beyond its manifestation in the disconnection of "private troubles" from "public issues." Mills is silent on how to address and overcome indifference or resistance to the acquisition of a sociological imagination, his favored antidote. He simply repeats the "only connect" mantra and insists that "Above all, do not give up your moral and political autonomy" (Mills, 1959, p. 248) that, on Mills's own account, the "robots" have either never developed or have largely discarded.

Even if, *contra* Mills, the "robots" retain a measure of autonomy, and have imbibed some of elements of Mills' sociological imagination, the courage and conviction to act with greater "political responsibility" (Mills, 1959, p. 195) may well be wanting. As we shall see, the obduracy of that deficit is an example of how, for Hanisch (1970), "the personal is political." What is personal, including our private troubles, is not only disconnected from public issues, as Mills' sociological imagination shows. Additionally, the contents of the personal are political as they impact upon the latter's reproduction or transformation. It is why the injunction to become mindful or "just be mindful"—as a recommended means of addressing the private trouble of stress, for example—is a "commodification" and "instrumentalization" of meditative mindfulness (Purser & Forbes, 2017). It is also why such criticism of mindfulness is politically and personally coherent, rather than misdirected or misconceived. The potency of the criticism resides in its disclosure of how, when mindfulness practice is privatized, its restrictive focus on continuous, obsessive, self-surveillance acts to narrow, rather than expand, awareness.

"The Personal Is Political"

It would be presumptuous to claim that there is an easy or fully compelling way to act with greater "political responsibility" (Mills, 1959, p. 195), but *The Personal Is Political* (Hanisch, 1970) offers some valuable pointers. The phrase "the personal is political" is widely attributed to Hanisch but she credits it to her editor. As an aside, I confess to a nostalgic interest in the 1960s that, for me, was a formative period. I was considerably influenced by countercultural ideas, especially those that draw no firm line between political activism and personal experimentation in processes of challenging convention and seeking to change the world.

For Hanisch, as for Mills, the challenge is to diagnose and repair the disconnect between the personal (private troubles) and the political (public issues). When reflecting upon her involvement in the women's movement during the 1960s, she shows how, in everyday life, the personal and the political *are* practically fused, yet

ideologically become disconnected. Hanisch illustrates this contradictory relation when she examines how members of the movement identified and dismissed non-activist women as apolitical: "What is happening now is that when non-movement women disagree with us, we assume that it is because *they* are 'apolitical,' not because there might be something wrong with *our* thinking" (Hanisch, 2006, emphases added).

Hanisch's reflections, I want to suggest, have broad applicability for facilitating processes of progressive change. Instead of dismissing the Other (e.g., non-activist women), Hanisch is sufficiently curious to examine the contents of their ostensibly apolitical consciousness. Apolitical consciousness, she argues, is endemically political. Disinterest in, or hostility toward, non-activist women is, Hanisch contends, the expression of a different politics. To characterize non-activists as apolitical is, from this perspective, politically illiterate. It is also self-deceptive and self-defeating in terms of expanding the membership of the women's movement. That is because processes of normalization that construe such politicization as apolitical contribute to the systemic disadvantaging and oppression of many women. Hanisch insists that the growth and effectiveness of progressive movements and practices depend upon an awareness of *what is "political" in the "personal."* This awareness, she argues, was undeveloped in the women's movement of the 1960s where, notably, its members were disinclined to address their complicity in "othering" non-activists, thereby restricting the appeal, growth, and influence of the movement.

Expanding on this theme, Hanisch contends that "there are things in the consciousness of 'apolitical' women (I find them very political) that are as *valid* as any political consciousness we think we have" (Hanisch, 2006, emphasis added). I interpret this claim as an acknowledgment of how every political stance is partial; it is valid from its own limited standpoint, and it therefore merits both respectful attention and constructively critical examination. Practically, it means nurturing curiosity in respect of the position of the Other, rather than presuming to know the Other and/or engaging in their casual dismissal.

To recognize the consciousness of the Other as valid is not equivalent to saying that "anything goes," with its implication that challenging any view is pointless or groundless. Instead, it is to argue that productive dialogue depends on striving to appreciate *how* the views of the Other are rendered valid *for them*, and equally how my interpretation of those views is rendered valid for me. As Mills argues, cultivating a *sociological imagination* can play a valuable role in this process, albeit one that is partial and contingent in illuminating the sense of validity. Only by respectfully appreciating how the Other's (political) consciousness is valid for them is it possible to begin a dialogue. Openness to the Other is also, I suggest, a precondition of democratic interaction and debate. A commitment to openness expresses how, in my endeavor to recognize the Other, I strive to resist any self-securing urge to reframe Otherness in terms of my sameness (e.g., I am political, *ergo* the Other is apolitical). Recognizing and then disarming the egotistical impulse to negate the Other, and thereby prioritize self-confirmation and self-elevation, is congruent with Hanisch's willingness to learn from the Other (e.g., women hostile to the women's movement), rather than labeling and dismissing the Other as beyond engagement.

The Personal Is Political is of direct relevance for addressing "the Mills question": how to expand freedom by mobilizing reason. Hanisch's analysis suggests that, politically and personally, a readiness, and especially a *preparedness,* to pay respectful attention to and thereby improve the prospects of a dialogue with the Other, is critical for effective politicization. How, then, might such preparedness be facilitated? Hanisch's answer is that it *requires a reduction of complicity in inhibiting and avoiding such engagement.* Specifically, when recommending that "We should figure out why many women don't want to do action" (Hanisch, 2006, emphasis added), she reflects that "Maybe there is something wrong with the action or something wrong with why we are doing the action or maybe the analysis of why the action is necessary is not clear enough in our minds" (Hanisch, 2006, emphasis added).

In Hanisch's assessment, the liberating effects of the women's movement will be limited, and will not develop into a genuinely radical mass movement, so long as its members deny, and do not work harder to overcome, the restrictions of their own consciousness—restrictions that might, invoking Mills (1959), be ascribed to *the robot within*. This way forward requires respectful curiosity, rather than know-it-allness, about the Other that is based upon humility concerning the adequacy of our understandings of self in relation to the Other. To the extent that participation in a movement is motivated and governed by a desire to differentiate and elevate the self ("liberated or enlightened woman") over the Other ("apolitical"—ignorant? naïve?—women), the outcome is predictable. Involvement is impeded because, from the outset, the Other is presumed to be beyond engagement. Potential insights into the limitations of movement members' activism, and the opportunity to learn how activism might be more effective, are then denied.

Only by paying closer, respectful attention to the Other is there a prospect of advancing sufficiently relevant and appealing ways of showing how private troubles are instructively illuminated and fruitfully addressed by appreciating and (re)framing them as public issues.

The Robot Within

Defenders of the women's movement have, unsurprisingly, taken issue with Hanisch's analysis. To her critics, "the personal is political" signifies an unwelcome preoccupation with the personal that is regarded as a distraction from, rather than a contribution to, the political mission and impetus of the movement. Paying attention to "private" issues (e.g., the "subjectivity" of women's movement members) is considered to be an individualizing or psychologizing diversion from actively tackling and changing their political conditions.

Hanisch (2006) recalls that, in the 1960s, leftist radicals might sometimes admit that women were systematically oppressed and would support demands for equal pay for equal work and some other rights. They would thereby make a partial connection between personal troubles (e.g., women's grievances about inequalities, especially those external to what is considered to belong to the private or personal

sphere) and public issues (e.g., the necessity of campaigning for changes in legislation). Even so, "…they belittled us no end for trying to bring our so-called 'personal problems' into the public arena—especially 'all those body issues' like sex, appearance, and abortion." Our demands that men share the housework and childcare were likewise deemed a personal problem between a woman and her individual man…. What personal initiative would not solve, they said, "the revolution" would take care of if we would just shut up and do our part" (Hanisch, 2006). More determined action, not introspection about something wrong, is commended. As Hanisch recollects, activists regarded her participation in "consciousness-raising groups to discuss their own oppression" as "'navel-gazing' and 'personal therapy' – and certainly 'not political'" (Hanisch, 2006).

It can be readily conceded that endless navel-gazing ushers a retreat into subjectivism, and so it is highly unlikely to advance the aims of a social movement. Social movements require activism, but their continuing existence and influence are conditional upon members' capacity to attract and retain new members. Building this capacity requires a release from the confines of a self-referential "circle of certainty" (Freire, 2005, p. 39) in which, for example, it is presumed that causality (and blame) for "personal problems" is fully attributable to "the system." For Hanisch, this attribution is not just facile; it is counterproductive for the radical mission of disarming unreason and debunking unfreedom. She doubts that problems, such as childcare and housework, are simply personal and so are to be resolved by being more assertive or taking greater personal initiative. Receptiveness to the Other, Hanisch argues, requires critical reflection upon, and as transformation of, the consciousness of the members of the women's movement; and she illustrates this by reference to her own experience:

> As a movement woman, I've been pressured to be strong, selfless, other oriented, sacrificing, and in general pretty much in control of my own life. To admit to the problems in my life is to be deemed weak. So I want to be a strong woman, in movement terms, and not admit I have any real problems that I can't find a personal solution to (except those directly related to the capitalist system). It is at this point a political action to tell it like it is, to say what I really believe about my life instead of what I've always been told to say. (Hanisch, 1970)

Hanisch (1970) notes, or confesses, that being a "movement woman" came at a price: she felt pressured to present herself publicly as a persona—"strong", selfless, other oriented—that she did not recognize privately. Movement membership was, she claimed, defined by an outward appearance of seeming to be "in control of my own life." In this confession, there is more than an echo of Mills' conformist robot—perhaps a less cheerful, gendered automaton but one that is no less willing to comply with an alienated condition (Mills, 1959, p. 189). The comparison also suggests an occlusion of reason by rationality: *The Personal Is Political* demonstrates how the institutionalized disarming of reason to suppress the disclosure and analysis of "real," experienced "problems" (e.g., insecurity and inadequacy) is not confined to "big-scale" organization.

As Hanisch became aware of the oppressive aspects of her membership of the women's movement, she developed the view that acting politically encompasses speaking out about "what I really believe about my life instead of what I've always been told to say" (Hanisch, 2006). She resisted pressures to manage the *impression* of being "strong" and shed the *self-deception* of being "in control." To remain silent was, for Hanisch, to be complicit in the movement's oppression of its members and to weaken, rather than improve the prospect of attracting new members. Instead of continuing to collaborate in the fantasy of the movement—notably, that its members, herself included, were "strong, selfless…"—Hanisch resolved to traverse this fantasy by speaking the truth, as she believed it to be. Hanisch's openness acted to debunk, and threatened to destroy, the superhuman (robotic) pretense of being capable of handling all problems except those ascribed to the workings of the capitalist system. However, I do take issue with Hanisch's seemingly uncritical endorsement of the idea that it is only the capitalist system to which we ascribe limits or barriers to our capacity to find personal solutions. In everyday life, we routinely identify, scapegoat and blame many "others" or "systems" as we contrive to escape acknowledgment of the extent of our own involvement and complicity in the reproduction of what Mills (1959) terms "public issues."

Beyond Complicity

Hanisch relates the inhibition of "telling it like it is" to the ideology of the movement. Members of the women's movement were disinclined to acknowledge that they had any "real problems" that could not be solved by themselves "except those directly related to the capitalist system." Likewise, Mills contends that at the root of the problem of "personal uneasiness" (Mills, 1959, p. 11) and feelings of "being trapped" (Mills, 1959, p. 9) is a cognitive deficit (Mills, 1959, p. 10). This framing is, I suggest, broadly echoed in the assessments of (women's) movement members that characterize non-activists as apolitical. The implication is that they lack "the quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves" (Mills, 1959, p. 11). This "information" is what, on Hanisch's account, members of the women's movement sought to provide, or bestow, and thereby enable their sisters to acquire or "develop reason" that will penetrate false consciousness and thereby disclose "what is going on in the world" and "within themselves." It is the limits of this information, and its capacity to connect with what is going on within the movement's members, that Hanisch sought to expose and challenge.

In endorsing Hanisch's challenge to the capacity of The Sociological Imagination to debunk forms of unfreedom and unreason, I do not question its capacity to connect "self and world" (Mills, 1959, p. 10) and to appreciate the social conditioning of ostensibly "private troubles," including feelings of "personal uneasiness" (Mills, 1959, p. 11). In the absence of such critical reflection, there is a tendency to individualize, psychologize, and pathologize both troubles and issues (e.g.,

unemployment, war, divorce, to uses Mills' examples), perhaps "in a pathetic attempt to avoid the large issues and problems of modern society" (Mills, 1959, p. 19). However, it is one thing to insist upon connecting ostensibly "private troubles" to historical conditions and "structural changes" (Mills, 1959: 17). It is quite another to conflate private troubles with public issues by, for example, dismissing the play of so-called dark forces (Mills, 1959: 20 citing Ernest Jones), including fear and arrogance, in our everyday actions.

Following Hanisch, it is implausible to ascribe all "real problems," for which a personal solution cannot be readily found, to the "system." Such fantastical, wishful thinking and self-deception misses the opportunity to recognize, examine, and learn from feelings of uneasiness—such as Hanisch's uneasiness about the pressures of managing the impression of being strong and selfless in order to gain acceptance as a member of the women's movement. Reflection on such feelings can yield insights into other possible sources of discomfort, and thereby undermine their unthinking reproduction and debilitating effects. In Hanisch's case, she relates the denial of weaknesses among women's movement members to an ignorant dismissal of non-activists as apolitical. She shows how, by attributing the difficulties of attracting non-activists solely to their resistance, members of the women's movement avoided reflection on their own complicity in that resistance.

By taking up Hanisch's analysis of the women's movement, the forces of unfreedom have been shown to be personal in ways that are only partially apprehended by Mills' sociological imagination. While personal troubles are conditioned by public issues, they are irreducible to them. Some personal constraints on our capability to debunk and overcome unfreedom cannot plausibly be fully ascribed to their disconnection from public issues. This is significant since, as a consequence of being inadequately acknowledged and addressed, personal constraints, such as a fear of freedom, operate to preserve political limits on the removal of unfreedoms. When reason is mobilized to debunk unfreedoms, it routinely encounters, but also reinforces, the barrier of unexamined sentiment—the grip of emotional traumas and investments, as manifest in the appeal of black-and-white thinking, sectarianism, and fanaticism—that preserves unfreedom.

It has been shown how this restriction upon the emancipatory power of reason is addressed by Hanisch in *The Personal Is Political* where she illustrates how women's movement members "othering" of non-activists as apolitical contributed to the exclusion of meaningful dialogue with them (Hanisch, 1970). As Freire (2005, p. 39) notes, the actions of a person who is closed to dialogue "revolves about 'his' truth," and so "he" "feels threatened if that truth is questioned." Release from the self-referential "circle of certainty" (Freire, 2005, p. 39), in which we are prisoners of an intense emotional investment in our truth, depends upon developing—or, better, freeing—a capacity to be "not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled" (Freire, 2005, p. 40). In Hanisch's case, this capacity was expanded through her participation in small, "consciousness-raising" groups where her political consciousness was no longer (so) suppressed or restricted: "I went, and I continue to go to these meetings because I have gotten a political understanding which

all my reading, all my "political discussions," all my "political action," and all my 4 odd years in the movement never gave me" (Hanisch, 1970).

Hanisch claims that the political understanding developed in the meetings was absent from her involvement in the women's movement. She gradually came to better understand how "the personal is political" as her participation in the meetings yielded *experientially meaningful insights* into "the problems in my life" (Hanisch, 2006). This awareness was inaccessible to, or could not be acknowledged by, many women's movement members. Through Hanisch's participation in consciousness-raising groups, the nature and significance of the political became more immediate and meaningful and so enabled more effective, existentially grounded, and committed kinds of action.

Toward Embodied Knowing

We have seen how, in Hanisch's assessment, understanding the Other is impeded and diminished by (ego-inflating) arrogance and (ego-threatening) fear. Defensiveness based upon fear makes it difficult, and perhaps unthinkable, for movement members to consider that "*there might be something wrong, with our thinking*" (and our action) (emphasis added). So, is meditative mindfulness of any relevance for addressing this personal/political problem? I conjecture that it can be of value when its effect is to reduce resistance to reflection on the solidity of selfhood and so weakens the sense of egohood in which arrogance and fear, in relation to the Other, are rooted. By developing a more *open* orientation, it becomes possible, in principle, to enter a dialogue with the Other and thereby comprehend better why, in respect of the women's movement, for example, "many women don't want to do action" (Hanisch, 1970). An open orientation facilitates an (non-defensive) identification of shortcomings (something wrong) that may include a deficit of self-clarity for which possible remedies may be proposed.

I am particularly interested in the status of Hanisch's claim that as a consequence of the political understanding, developed by participating in consciousness-raising meetings, she was able, or empowered, to "say what I really believe about my life." The first step was to disclose and acknowledge the *feeling* that there were real problems for which she lacked a personal solution—that is, a solution consistent with the presumption of being in (sovereign) control of her life. The second was to disclose and address, though her involvement in consciousness-raising groups, the self-deception and oppression associated with the pretense of being a strong and selfless (sovereign) subject.

It may immediately be asked: how is it possible to "say what [we] really believe," as Hanisch puts it, when, in articulating our beliefs, we necessarily rely upon specific, partial, discourses? There is no escape from the limitations of language as it necessarily occludes the real problems in attempting to communicate what we feel and/or believe. The Lacanian "Real" points to the possibility of what cannot be symbolized, and so anticipates the possibility of liberation from the impulse to objectify/secure ourselves: "…liberation from our struggle with lack is synonymous

with becoming that which we fear most: dwelling in the Real of no-thingness, groundlessness, egolessness—that which can never be objectified or symbolized" (Purser, 2011, p. 301).

Hanisch's efforts to communicate and justify her theory and practice of radical change—including the value she places on "figuring out why many women don't want to do action" and the benefits she ascribes to participating in consciousness-raising groups—are necessarily mediated by available forms of reasoning and communication. We are all constrained as well as enabled by what Mills (1959, pp. 188–189) terms "self-rationalization" that "comes systematically to regulate [our] impulses and aspirations, [our] manner of life and [our] *ways of thought*" (emphasis added). How we interpret and articulate our feelings—as "uneasiness," say, rather than as "weakness," "timidity," or "suspiciousness"—express the priority given to particular beliefs and "ways of thought" that rationalize the felt relation of self to the world. And, indeed, as Mills (1959, p. 18) notes, it is likely that "much private uneasiness goes unformulated," especially when it is normalized as a social and/or existential inevitability.

For Hanisch, the process of recognizing, addressing, and debunking the self-rationalization that perpetuates unreason and unfreedom, such as that associated with her membership of the women's movement, is facilitated by critical self-reflection of the kind engendered by the consciousness-raising groups in which she participated. To the extent that these groups incorporate *self-transformative praxis, they* develop the capacity to reach out to non-activists, rather than dismissing them as apolitical—a capacity that is shown to require a more open way of being. Examining and questioning the characterization of the consciousness of nonmembers of the women's movement as apolitical was a first step in the process of reaching out to, and engaging, non-activists, rather than casually dismissing them as Other. In Hanisch's assessment, such engagement involves a transformation of *being* and not just the acquisition of a different kind of *knowledge*.

As Freire (2005) has argued, there is a key difference between *acquiring* and *banking* information—for example, about the connectedness of biography and history provided by the acquisition of a sociological imagination—and *embodying* and *transmitting* knowledge based upon problem-oriented praxis. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere (2005) contrasts two idealized and opposing approaches to education that have general applicability to wider processes of socialization and human development: banking and problem-posing. The *banking approach* conceives of human beings as passive receptacles into which nuggets of abstract knowledge are deposited, such as knowledge that nonmembers of the women's movement are apolitical. Rarely reflected upon, or put to the test, such knowledge is bestowed "by those who consider themselves knowledgeable [about] those they consider to know nothing" (Freire, 2005, p. 72). Assured of the truth of this knowledge, its possessors resist or suppress meaningful dialogue as, from their standpoint, there is nothing of value to be learned from it. The communication of knowledge as a series of deposits is, in effect, a "practice of domination" (Freire, 2005, p. 81) as the recipients of its truth are required to become defined and governed by its providers.

In the *problem-posing approach*, in contrast, human beings are conceived to be defined by their capacity to exercise and develop "their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world" (Freire, 2005, p. 83). The ability to raise doubts is regarded as a condition of possibility of transforming the relation of self and world. The problem-posing approach is distinguished by "a practice of freedom" (Freire, 2005, p. 81) that "stimulates reflection and action upon reality" (Freire, 2005, p. 84). It "affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves" (Freire, 2005, p. 84). The difference between a banking approach and a problem-posing approach to processes of politicization is articulated by Hanisch when she writes that "I am getting a *gut understanding* of everything as opposed to the esoteric, intellectual understandings and noblesse oblige feelings I had in "other people's" struggles" (Hanisch, 1970, emphasis added).

This gut understanding, which is associated with embodied knowing, is nurtured within social spaces, such as consciousness-raising groups, where it is possible to voice, whether inwardly or externally, what otherwise is repressed or silenced. Spaces that facilitate the removal of confusion and dispelling of self-deception are commonly found in traditions where "the practice of freedom" (Freire, 2005, p. 81) is conceived as social and collective. As if speaking directly to members of the women's movement who regarded non-activists as apolitical, Freire (2005, p. 67) writes that the deployment of "libertarian propaganda" or the endeavor to "implant… a belief in freedom" necessarily reproduces domination by contriving to undertake a "transformation *for* the oppressed rather than one *with* them" (Freire, 2005, p. 67). Freire's preferred alternative is a "relationship of dialogue" (Freire, 2005, p. 67). On this point, at least, there is a shared understanding between Freire (1970/2005); Hanisch (1970/2006); Mills (1959) for whom the aim of the social scientist "is to help build and to strengthen *self-cultivating* publics. Only then might society be reasonable and free" (p. 206, emphasis added).

But how is such "self-cultivation" (Mills) within a "permanent relationship of dialogue" (Freire), in which there is a willingness and a receptiveness to "say what I really believe about my life instead of what I've always been told to say" (Hanisch), to be accomplished? How might it be possible to counter, or at least mitigate, tendencies or impulses to privilege private or selfish considerations rather than "publics," to engage in monologues rather than dialogue, and to say what we believe others want to hear? As Hanisch's experience of participation in consciousness-raising groups attests, dialogue can, potentially, be hugely supportive in counteracting such tendencies. But can it *by itself* release the power necessary to engage in acts of truth telling and the formation of "self-cultivating publics" (Mills, 1959, p. 206)? For readers interested in this connection, Dyrberg (2014) has provided a systematic exploration of the relation between a democratic ethos and truth-telling (p*arrhesia*) which involves communicating "freely and being up-front…in contrast to holding something back, being secretive, covert and manipulative" (p. 2). His analysis illuminates the connectedness of personal troubles with public issues as it "connects personal and institutional aspects of politics" (Dyrberg, 2014, p. 2).

I am attracted to Hanisch's conjecture that critical reflection upon our assumptions and actions can be valuable for breaking or suspending habitual patterns of

thought. It may thereby open up other kinds of practices including the inaction of the apolitical Other. Such reflection, Hanisch contends, involves an appreciation of how *the personal*—for example, the antagonism or indifference of apolitical women to the women's movement—*is political*. But the development of this appreciative orientation itself requires considerable openness. If the openness necessary for a dialogue is restricted, how might its development—or, better, is disclosure—be enabled? To what extent can the willful application of reason lower or remove the (defensive, ego protecting) barriers to openness, and thereby reduce our complicity in forms of oppression?

Enter Meditation

At the point, or moment, when dialogue or communication fails or breaks down, greater receptiveness to practices dedicated to exposing and minimizing unreason and unfreedom—in the guise of confusion, insecurity, and defensiveness—may increase. A possible, if unlikely, antidote to the normalizing power exercised by everyday guardians of unreason and unfreedom—because it is so widely assumed to be apolitical—is meditation. Meditation?

The relevance of meditation for debunking and disarming unreason and unfreedom is certainly questionable if it is narrowly defined cognitively or instrumentally as, for example: "1: to engage in contemplation or reflection; 2: to engage in mental exercise (as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a mantra) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness" (Merriam Webster, 2017). Its relevance is also in doubt when meditation is defined as the practice of passive contemplation that involves "focus[ing] one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes or as a method of relaxation: (meditate on/upon) think deeply about (something): he went off to meditate on the new idea" (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2017, emphasis omitted).

According to the above definitions, meditation is, at best, very loosely coupled to *praxis*. It is seemingly confined to contemplation, reflection, spiritual awareness, relaxing, and deep thinking. Missing from these definitions is the transformative power of meditation and its relationship to enlightenment—not as the substitution of deposits of rational knowledge for the contents of religious mythology but as an *embodied* praxis. In its transformative effects, meditation is no more apolitical than the consciousness of the non-activist women to whom Hanisch refers. As Orwell (1946) persuasively maintained, "there is no such thing as 'keeping out politics'." Meditation and mindfulness are not exceptions.

As understood here, meditating is about discerning and dissolving the delusions of egohood, experienced as arrogance and fear, which impede the openness required for communication and communion. Meditating may involve some contemplation, reflection, relaxation, deep thinking, and increased spiritual awareness. These are not the ends of meditation although, in the form of spiritual materialism, they may become its displaced goal. Since meditation does not engage, or favor, any

particular political philosophy, it may be mistakenly regarded as apolitical. Yet, as *praxis*, meditation facilitates a process of becoming progressively more aware of, and becoming less identified with, and oppressed by, restrictive and/or confused patterns of thought and behavior. As a "practice of freedom," meditation is oriented to the disclosure and removal of confusion. It involves processes of divestment or purification, not acquisition. It is a practice of surrender, rather a perfection of technique. It permits the discovery, rather than the development or achievement, of a greater "awakeness" that extends to a clearer, less confused, awareness of "the political." As Trungpa (1973, p. 4) put it: "If the process [of meditation] were otherwise, the awakened state of mind would be a product, dependent upon cause and effect and therefore liable to dissolution…In meditation practice, we clear away the confusion of ego in order to glimpse the awakened state."

A release from unreason and unfreedom is enabled through a process of removing, or dissolving, confusion and self-deception. There is an opening up and letting go, rather than a building up, of defenses. Meditation can disclose how, at the heart of our confused state, the existential denial of inseparability compels us to cling to, and defend, whatever is sensed to affirm our sense of separateness and solidity. This confusion and associated suffering are attributed to the credibility and importance ascribed to our sense of sovereignty. Meditation can facilitate a relinquishing of the perception, or delusion, that we are, and have, separate, solid selves that are permanent and continuous. It is a practice of acknowledging and then surrendering what, for example, "I've always been told to say" (Hanisch, 1970).

Meditation fosters a capacity to admit that, for example, "I have real problems that I can't find a personal solution to" (Hanisch, 1970); and it offers a practice that addresses those problems. The key word is "I." A personal solution to real problems is elusive. That is not only because, as Hanisch discovered, in the absence of a supportive group, it can be unbearably threatening to "tell it like it is." A personal solution is also elusive because only a partial and temporary fix is possible without disarming the defenses of "I." That said, meditation practice may permit and enable, but it does not guarantee, an awareness of the connectiveness of "personal troubles" (e.g., suffering) with the "public issue" of how the preoccupation with preserving our sense of egohood becomes institutionalized and normalized.

Replacing defensiveness with openness is not adequately conceived as a personal matter or project; nor it is a political one. It is both. Withdrawal from ego-invested struggles through mindfulness simultaneously results in a change in the activities that comprise prevailing structures and relations of power. Specifically, it undermines relations of domination and oppression whose reproduction depends upon complicity sustained inter alia by egoistic fear and arrogance. The process of dissolving fear and arrogance also enables an expansion of awareness and transformation of consciousness. In sum, the practice and application of meditation is a process of "transforming the material of mind from expressions of ego's ambition into expressions of basic sanity" (Trungpa, 1973, p. 11). And, in this sense, mindfulness is nothing special; it is very ordinary, as natural as breathing, but its effect is to detoxify action.

Conclusion

For many people, mindfulness and meditation are mysterious or taboo. Despite a growing interest in some of their forms - especially those that promise self-improvement or performance enhancement - experiential knowledge of meditation, or even mindfulness, remains comparatively limited, fleeting, and/or superficial. Given this state of comparative ignorance, it is prudent to treat claims about meditation, including the arguments made in this chapter, with some skepticism. Otherwise, there is risk of engaging in unquestioning robotic forms of meditation, mindfulness, or "McMindfulness." It is necessary, if also more challenging, to strive to be open-minded to what is unfamiliar, even when it may seem improbable, counterintuitive, or outlandish.

Commending meditation as a potential facilitator of emancipatory struggle is likely, I acknowledge, to strike an unfamiliar and, perhaps, discordant, note. It is a perplexing proposition mainly because meditation is so strongly associated with inward retreat from the world, or with becoming blissed out. In its defense, I submit that my incongruous proposition is consistent with the responsibility ascribed by Mills (1959) to social scientists to "deliberately present controversial theories…and actively encourage controversy" (p. 211). Shaking up commonsense thinking is important, according to Mills, because "In the absence of *political debate* that is wide and open and informed, people can get in touch neither with the effective realities of their world *nor with the realities of themselves*" (Mills, 1959, p. 211, emphases added).

For Mills, political debate is key to becoming more open not only in relation to the realities of the world but also to the realities of ourselves. But Mills was uncharacteristically silent on the question of how to establish and nurture openness, except in urging us to acquire the knowledge generated by a sociological imagination. Based upon her experience of the women's movement, Hanisch has argued that becoming open requires more than textbook knowledge of how, for example, private troubles are connected to public issues. Additionally, it entails the nurturing of a capacity to examine how private troubles impede both the identification and the realization of this connection. Meditation, including meditative mindfulness, can facilitate the process of political debate by enabling people to get in touch with the affective realities of their world [and] themselves.

Hanisch's *The Personal Is Political* indicates how open and informed political debate and the advancement of progressive political movements depend upon nurturing a capacity to attend carefully to the Other, and that this attentiveness involves a process of disclosure and self-transformation. She illustrates the process when connecting the realities of her personal experience of being silenced, as a member of the women's movement, to the "dark forces" (Mills, 1959, p. 20 citing Ernest Jones) that suppressed and self-censored her voice. When in the grip of these forces, movement members elevated and defended their own identity - as strong and self-less - by positioning, and dismissing, non-activists as apolitical. By generating and disseminating this knowledge of non-activist women as apolitical, movement members eschewed the challenging, ego-threatening task of reaching out to them.

Hanisch's account of her own transformation exemplifies the process of burning out received wisdoms, confusions, and self-deceptions—a process of detoxification that is at the heart of meditation practice. Sharing a focus upon "clear[ing] away the confusion of ego" (Trungpa, 1973, p. 4), examples of meditation in action, such as Hanisch's involvement in consciousness-raising groups, are continuous with meditative practices. Critically, meditation practice is distinguished by its *substance* in removing the confusions of ego and not by its *form*.

The claim made, and question begged, by this chapter concerns how the practice of meditation may enable us to penetrate more deeply into the realities of world/ self. It has been claimed that meditation contributes to disarming unreason and expanding freedom. By reducing suffering associated with the needless harboring of confusion and self-deception, meditation may reverse the ascendency of Mills' robot—whether cheerful or cheerless—to which his sociological imagination aspires.

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Part IV

Religion, Secularity and Post-secularity

Dharma and Diversity

15

Patrick Kearney and Yoon-Suk Hwang

Introduction

The contemporary discovery and application of mindfulness for therapeutic purposes began with Kabat-Zinn's (2011) creation of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in the late 1970s. Kabat-Zinn borrowed and creatively adapted the concept of mindfulness from Buddhism so successfully that it has been widely adopted throughout the health and social sciences through the creation of a number of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). However, this development has not been without controversy. Buddhist meditation has traditionally been practiced within a soteriological context that includes the practice of *sīla* (ethics, virtue, morality) as an essential support for mindfulness practice (Bodhi, 2011). One debate that has exercised the mindfulness community, both among those within Buddhist traditions and those outside them, is the role of ethics in the secular practice of mindfulness and, in particular, the apparent decontextualization of mindfulness from its original embeddedness in the practice of ethics.

Ethics in Contemporary MBIs

Some have claimed that without including ethics as an integral part of mindfulness practice, it will not lead to liberation or healing but to fostering the conditions that lead to further human bondage and suffering (e.g., Monteiro, Musten, & Compson,

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2015; Purser, 2015; Titmuss, 2013). There have been two main responses to this critique. One argues that an understanding of ethics and its practice is already implicit in contemporary MBIs, making any explicit addition of ethical training unnecessary (Kabat-Zinn, 2011), while another argues that if there is to be an explicit application of ethics to the secular practice of mindfulness, it should come from outside Buddhist traditions (Baer, 2015).

Kabat-Zinn (2011) argued that it is unnecessary to add an ethics component to MBSR, for example, because ethics is already built into its practice through the principles of the Hippocratic tradition along with a willingness among MBSR teachers to maintain a collective honesty through communication among themselves. Baer (2015) cited arguments in favor of the proposition that the practice of ethics in MBIs is implicit in the codes that govern their providers and that the qualities that are found among teachers of MBIs, such as compassion and kindness, naturally affect their participants. Grossman (2015) also argued that mindfulness training includes the cultivation of virtuous qualities such as nonjudgmentalism, openness, acceptance, compassion and kindness, making their explicit addition redundant.

Baer (2015) presented the second response to the call for the explicit addition of an ethical framework to the MBIs when she argued that if there is to be such an addition then it should not be Buddhist or Buddhist-based but grounded in psychological science "that is theoretically sound, empirically supported, and suitable for contemporary secular settings" (p. 957). Davis (2015) appeared to support this approach by pointing out that the ethical trainings of the various Buddhist traditions are necessarily bound up with their metaphysical claims, and secular MBIs should not be drawn into a situation where they can be seen as favoring any such claims.

This response draws attention to the problem of diversity among the Buddhist traditions from which the theory and practice of contemporary mindfulness have been drawn. Out of the many Buddhist traditions, which one(s) should be regarded as having something uniquely authoritative to say about the nature and practice of mindfulness? There are a wide variety of Buddhist traditions, each with their own particular understanding of mindfulness (e.g., Purser & Milillo, 2015). Indeed, the single term "mindfulness" can mask diverse understandings within the various traditions found, for example, in the centuries-old debates between Constructivist and Innateist understandings of mindfulness practice (Dunne, 2011) and in the transformations in understanding of mindfulness practice within a single tradition (Sharf, 2015).

Given the complexity of the situation, perhaps we can consider some fundamental questions that might guide our understanding of the problem of ethics and the contemporary MBIs. The first thing to consider is the nature of the relationship between contemporary and traditional understandings of mindfulness. Traditional mindfulness is an integral aspect of an ancient oriental religion, while contemporary mindfulness is part of modern social science. Does this mean that the mindfulness of the MBIs has no relationship to traditional mindfulness, such that there are no grounds for claiming that Buddhist ethics belongs to its practice? Or, if there is a vital relationship between traditional and contemporary mindfulness, what may be gained by drawing upon this relationship, and what may be lost by discarding it?

Traditional and Contemporary Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become the standard translation of the Pāli word *sati* (Sanskrit *smṛti*), meaning "memory." Mindfulness as memory is illustrated by the use of the warning "Mind the Gap" found in railway stations, where minding the gap means remembering the act of entering and exiting a train in the very act of doing so (Hwang & Kearney, 2015). Mindfulness, then, means remembering the present, and the practice of mindfulness traditionally entails tracking one's experience over time in order to cultivate a felt sense of the continuity of awareness (Hwang & Kearney, 2015). This understanding of mindfulness is unfolded and developed in the Pāli Nikāyas, the "collections" of the Buddha's discourses recorded in the Pāli language. These represent possibly the earliest and certainly the fullest recension of the Buddha's teachings in an Indian language (Gethin, 2001; Wynne, 2003), and they contain a sophisticated and subtle understanding of mindfulness and its practice.

When the *sati* taught by the Buddha became the mindfulness of contemporary MBIs, it underwent a fundamental change by transforming from a unitary to a collective term (Hwang & Kearney, 2015). The Buddha analyzed experience into discrete phenomenal constituents called dharmas (Pāli *dhamma*) and saw the person and his/her world as networked systems of these dharmas (Karunadasa, 1996). Mindfulness, for the Buddha, is a dharma, a single, discrete ingredient within a broader blend of other dharmas that together create a higher order system such as a specific person or practice. For example, mindfulness is one ingredient of the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) that constitutes the original context of its practice (e.g., Bodhi, 2011; Purser, 2015). The path is divided into three trainings, those of ethics, meditation, and wisdom. The meditation section consists of its own subsystem of right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), and right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) (Bodhi, 1994). Effort represents the active, striving aspect of meditation practice, while concentration represents the peaceful, receptive aspect, and the balance between and strength of these two dharmas affects the kind of experience that emerges from their cultivation. At a basic level, too much effort relative to concentration leads to restlessness; too much concentration relative to effort leads to dullness (Silananda, 1990; Sujiva, 2000). At a higher level, the balance between these factors can emerge as distinct forms of meditation practice. Some styles emphasize the necessity of continual effort (e.g., Pandita, 1993), while others emphasize relaxing any unnecessary effort (e.g., Tejaniya, 2011).

Kabat-Zinn (1990, 2011) abandoned this traditional way of understanding the functioning of mindfulness when he decided to use mindfulness as an umbrella term to cover the particular style of meditation practice he developed for MBSR. This can be seen in his definitions of mindfulness as, for example, "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Here, mindfulness has become a collective term containing at least four aspects, those of awareness, attention, intentionality, and a particular kind of attitude. The attitudes he related to mindfulness, such as nonjudgmentality, kindness, compassion and acceptance, form the basis for much of the argument that ethics is

already implicit within mindfulness. However, when we look at this definition of mindfulness from the perspective of the early tradition we can see that Kabat-Zinn is not defining mindfulness itself but a particular kind of mindfulness meditation practice designed for the specific needs of the population he was working with.

Along with this development we find the transposition of the practice of mindfulness, however it might be conceived, from a religious to a secular, even scientific, context. This movement has had profound effects on the discourse surrounding mindfulness. When Kabat-Zinn (2011) developed MBSR he was anxious to downplay any religious aspects of mindfulness practice in order to make it acceptable to a wider public. It is important to note here that this was more of a marketing strategy than an attempt to accurately present the origins of mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn (2011) distanced mindfulness from Buddhism by arguing that mindfulness itself "has little or nothing to do with Buddhism" (p. 283). This determination to sidestep the Buddhist origins and nature of mindfulness in favor of presenting a product tailored to its market is reflected in Linehan's (1993b) advice to her DBT trainers that when they are communicating mindfulness to their audience they should divorce it from religion or, alternatively, relate it to all religions. This advice is not an attempt to convey the history or cultural context of mindfulness but to make it acceptable to an audience that might be expected to object to being exposed to a practice from an alien religion.

These two strategies, redefining mindfulness as a collective term that indicates a certain style of meditation practice rather than a discrete quality within meditation practice, and separating this practice from its origins in order to downplay its "religious" character, have largely shaped the debate around ethics and mindfulness. If mindfulness is a practice complete within itself, then why is there any need to add ethics to it? And if mindfulness is a secular practice, subject to scientific investigation, why should religious traditions be called upon to support and supplement it? A new understanding of the question of origins, however, may provide us with an alternative approach to the issue of the relationship between mindfulness and ethics. This approach involves both a return to the original nature of dharma and a reassessment of the Buddha's understanding of ethics.

The Nature of Dharma

The Buddha's teaching, or dharma, constitutes a distinctive approach to the analysis of human experience. While in the Western cultural context dharma can be readily seen as religion, it may be useful to be cautious in our labeling it as such, partly because religion itself is "too maddeningly polyvalent and too uncontainably diverse" to be pinned down as any one phenomenon (Caputo, 2001, p. 1) and partly because if we see dharma as religion we may miss its unique character. The Buddha, it could be said, did not teach religion nor did he teach psychology or philosophy. The Buddha taught dharma.

Dharma is an Indian cultural category and it is not readily classified within a European context. Certainly to merely place it in a box labeled "religion" is an

inadequate response. While various traditions that arose and flourished after the Buddha, the traditions that looked back to him as their founder, are so similar to what we would normally call religion that it might seem unrealistic to deny that they are so, the Buddha's dharma as recorded in the Pāli Nikāyas is a different case. Religion did flourish in the India of the Buddha's time, if one takes religion to refer to beliefs and practices that managed the relationships between the human world and other, intersecting worlds inhabited by the dead, by spirits, and by gods. However, this was not the concern of the Buddha's teaching and practice, except to the degree that the *saṅgha* of his monks and nuns took on the social role of mediators between these realms as a service to their supporting communities (DeCaroli, 2004). The Buddha had another project altogether, one that did not deny the sphere of the religious but which simply sidestepped it.

The key to understanding the Buddha's dharma is to acknowledge that it is a first-person discourse. Science, in contrast, is a third-person discourse, in that its concern is with the world as objectively and publicly understood (Dennett, 1991). Science assumes a detachment from our subjective perspective on the world (Nagel, 1986), and scientific clinical practice, for example, requires publicly verifiable measurement of the problems being addressed and the solutions being offered (Baer, 2011; Grossman, 2010; Grossman & Van Dam, 2011).

Dharma, in the sense that the Buddha uses the term, is a system of empirical phenomenology (Gowans, 2003; Kalupahana, 1969, 1992) that differs from European empiricism in that the mind is regarded as another sense sensitivity, of the same ontological status as the five physical senses but with the specialized function of taking the data from the five streams of the physical senses, along with its own specialized data of mental events such as thoughts and feelings, and constructing from these a unified world that conveys meaning. The Buddha's empiricism, and the first-person nature of his dharma, is conveyed by Sabba Sutta (*Everything* SN 35.23), where he explains "everything" (*sabba*) to his students.

> And what is everything? Eye sensitivity and forms; ear sensitivity and sounds; nose sensitivity and odors; tongue sensitivity and tastes; body sensitivity and tangibles; mind sensitivity and phenomena.
>
> Whoever would say, "Rejecting this everything I shall declare another," if questioned on the foundation of his words s/he would be unable to explain, and would also become distressed. Why? Because it is beyond range.

The Buddha's dharma is concerned *solely* with the phenomenology of human experience and with the *entirety* of the phenomenology of human experience. This concern charts the range of its interests. For example, we all know that the earth rotates on its axis and orbits around the sun. However, our experience tells us that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. These two beliefs do not contradict each other; rather, they belong to two different discourses, one of which is third person and the other first person. The Buddha has nothing to tell us about the world of science, of planets orbiting the sun, but a great deal to tell us about the nature of human experience from the perspective of the experiencing subject. It is noteworthy, for example, that if the Buddha's dharma is a religion, then it is a religion that eschews

any belief in a creator god. The reason for this absence is clear from Sabba Sutta. If there is a transcendent being that exists beyond the experienced world of the six senses then anything that can be said of him has no empirical foundation and any belief in him can only be based on some form of clinging to words and concepts.

When faced with people who held such beliefs, one response of the Buddha was to ask for the empirical foundation of their belief. As he said to Kāpaṭhika Bhāradvāja, a Brahmin who was defending his traditional theistic beliefs in the admitted absence of any empirical foundation in the lineage of teachers who propounded these beliefs:

> Suppose there was a line of blind men, each in touch with the next: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. In this way, Bhāradvāja, in regard to their statements the *brāhmaṇas* seem to be like a line of blind men: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see.
>   What do you think, Bhāradvāja, that being so, does not the faith of the *brāhmaṇas* turn out to be groundless? (Cankī Sutta *To Cankī* MN 95)

The practice of meditation fits entirely within this radical phenomenological approach. If experience is all we have, and all we can ever have, then it becomes imperative that we clarify the nature of our experience as best as we can. This is the role of insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), as discussed by the Buddha in a dialogue with Ānanda found in Kim Atthiya Sutta (*For What Purpose?* AN 10.1):

> [Ānanda:] "What is the purpose and benefit of concentration?"
>   [Buddha:] "The purpose and benefit of concentration is realistic understanding and seeing."

It is important to note that for the Buddha, the meditation process is entirely natural and independent of supernatural forces. In Cetanākaraṇīya Sutta (*Resolve* AN 10.2), which immediately follows Kim Atthiya Sutta, the Buddha makes this clear in reference to the arising of insight:

> For one who is concentrated there is no need to resolve: "May I understand and see realistically." It's just nature [*dhammatā*] that one who is concentrated understands and sees realistically.

It is the Buddha's concern with the nature of human experience, and his presentation of the project of clarifying this experience as an entirely natural one, that makes him relevant to our contemporary world and its secular concerns. This understanding creates a foundation for considering the role of his approach to ethics and its integration with mindfulness practice, for however we might characterize his understanding of ethics it is clearly not religious in our sense of the term.

We have seen that the Buddha's dharma is, in modern terms, a secular enterprise. It is also characterized by a modular structure. We have already seen how mindfulness, for the Buddha, is a unitary phenomenon rather than a collective one. This is essential to his understanding of dharmas and their functioning. Mindfulness, in the way the Buddha speaks of it, does not *contain* ethics but functions *supported by*

ethics. The basic model of the practice is that of the eightfold path. This path, unlike its individual parts, does constitute a collective entity. It is a collective system made up of eight individual aspects that are in turn divided into three subsystems, one relating to wisdom (*paññā*), one to ethics (*sīla*), and one to meditation (*samādhi*). Note that here *samādhi* has the broader meaning of meditation in general rather than concentration in particular. We have already mentioned the meditation subsystem, consisting of effort, mindfulness and concentration, and how these three factors are distinct from each other but designed to work together. How does *sīla* work with meditation?

The Role of Sīla

For the Buddha, *sīla*, as another subsystem of the path, is a necessary support for mindfulness practice if it is to fulfill its function of creating realistic understanding and seeing. *Sīla* is a broad term that covers the area of character, habit, nature, virtue, ethics and conduct, as well as specific virtues such as compassion (*karuṇā*), generosity (*cāga*), and commitment (*viriya*) (Harvey, 1995; Keown, 2001). The basic role of *sīla* is to cultivate the harmony necessary to provide a foundation for *samādhi*, both in its broad sense of meditation in general and its narrower sense of concentration in particular.

Buddhaghosa, the medieval Theravāda commentator, emphasizes this harmonizing aspect of *sīla*: "It is *sīla* in the sense of composing (*sīlana*). What is this composing? It is … a unifying, meaning a harmonizing of bodily action, etc., due to virtue" (Vism. 1.19). *Sīla*, in other words, indicates conduct that results in harmony, both social and psychological. When, for example, we look at the five precepts that outline the basic ethical training for the laity, we find that they are concerned with social harmony; they are disciplines that, when practiced, result in a "reasonable society" (Vasen, 2014, p. 551). When we do not harm, steal from, sexually exploit or deceive others, or engage in any or all of these behaviors because of intoxication, then we cultivate a society where people can feel safe and at ease with others and live, as the Buddha suggests, "in open houses" (Kūṭadanta Sutta *To Kūṭadanta* DN 5).

The social aspect of *sīla* is also emphasized in the way the Buddha speaks of the benefits of its practice. One of the disadvantages of behaving without *sīla* is that when one enters an assembly of warriors, brahmins, householders, or philosophers—in the Buddha's world, of people whose respect one would wish to have—one does so "hesitantly and timidly," whereas if one behaves with *sīla* one enters such an assembly "confidently and assuredly" (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta *The Great Liberation* DN 16). *Sīla*, in other words, promotes one's social functioning.

There is also a psychological result of practicing or not practicing *sīla*. Returning to Kim Atthiya Sutta (*For What Purpose?* AN 10.1), the Buddha declares the purpose and benefit of *sīla* to be non-regret (*avippaṭisāra*), which in turn has the purpose and benefit of joy (*pāmojja*). *A-vippaṭisāra* is a negative term, where the negative prefix

"*a-*" can indicate either mere absence or the presence of the opposite quality. *Vippaṭisāra*, "regret, remorse," is based on the Sanskrit root *smr*, "remember," the same root that forms the Pāli word *sati*, "mindfulness." Regret and remorse refer to our relationship to the past. There is something we have done, or not done, in the past that bothers us today and that leads us to obsess about the past. This obsession pollutes our relationship with the present. Non-regret could indicate the simple absence of regret/remorse. If taken as the *opposite* of regret, non-regret would suggest a positive state of happiness or contentment with one's life, or even rejoicing in how one has lived. The fact that joy arises in one who experiences non-regret suggests this stronger meaning is indicated here. So "non-regret" indicates a felt sense of satisfaction with the way one has lived, and it causes joy to arise in the heart.

The Buddha goes on to explain that the joy arising from non-regret naturally gives rise to rapture, which leads to tranquility, then to happiness, from there to concentration, to realistic understanding and seeing, which leads to disenchantment and the fading of obsession, and this in turn leads to the understanding and seeing that comes from liberation. In this way, the Buddha explains, "wholesome virtue leads progressively to the highest" (Kim Atthiya Sutta *For What Purpose?* AN 10.1).

The central point here is the seamless progression from the everyday practice of ethics to the depths of meditation practice to the highest awakening. The terms from rapture (*pīti*) through to concentration (*samādhi*) are technical terms that indicate meditation practice, while the terms from disenchantment (*nibbidā*) to the understanding and seeing that comes from liberation (*vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana*) are technical terms that indicate awakening. Ethics, in other words, functions as an indispensable support for mindfulness practice and its result, however we might frame that result.

Dharma in the Contemporary World

Dharma in the sense that the Buddha used the term indicates natural law, the way things flow, as sensed from a first person perspective. Take, for example, the Buddha's foundational assumption, that of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the intuition that whatever arises does so because of conditions other than itself, and whatever ceases does so because of conditions other than itself (Bodhi, 1995). This natural law provides the content of the Buddha's awakening.

> Whether awakened ones appear or do not appear, the enduring element [*ṭhitā dhātu*] is the stability of nature [*dhammaṭṭhitatā*], the natural order [*dhammaniyāmatā*], specific conditionality [*idappaccayatā*].
>
> This is what an awakened one awakens to, this is what he realizes. After awakening to and realizing it he explains, teaches, declares, lays it out, reveals, analyses and clarifies it, saying: "Look!" (Paccaya Sutta *Conditions* SN 12.20)

Dependent arising expresses the general principle that the activity of phenomena reveals patterns that are normative in their nature and in this sense lawful. Specific conditionality refers to particular trajectories of causation or conditionality, where

given a particular set of conditions one specific dharma gives rise to another specific dharma. In its broader sense, dharma indicates the natural law that governs the patterns of experienced phenomena; in its specific sense, dharma indicates the individual phenomenon working in accordance with natural law (Bodhi, 2000; Jayatilleke, 1963). In both cases the appeal is to a natural order accessible to human experience, when that experience is properly trained. Further, the reason for studying this natural order is for the diminution and ultimately cessation of human suffering. As the Buddha explained, "both previously and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering" (Alagaddūpama Sutta *Simile of the snake* MN 22). We find a very similar understanding of the human condition in contemporary MBIs.

Contemporary MBIs each contain their own theoretical framework of the nature of the human condition, how the form of human suffering that is the focus of that particular MBI develops and how it can be reduced. This framework is allied to some kind of practical program that is designed to reduce the suffering of its clients. MBCT, for example, is concerned with the mental processes that result in depression and is interested in mindfulness as a practical way of allowing patients to become more aware of the state of their minds and thus to disengage from modes of mind that lead to more suffering and to engage with modes of mind that lead to less suffering (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). DBT employs a dialectical view of causation and uses mindfulness to train patients to modulate their emotions and develop behaviors that decrease their suffering (Linehan, 1993a).

Each MBI presents a naturalistic theory of how human beings create suffering and how they might develop toward a more satisfactory way of life. Each is based on a theory that needs to be put into practice, and their practices all have in common "what could be called a technology of attention, a systematic way of training attention to allow the individual to directly perceive the processes that are the subject of theoretical explanation" (Hwang & Kearney, 2015, p.19).

The MBIs can be seen as each constituting their own dharma, sharing important characteristics with the Buddha's dharma. Each dharma provides a naturalistic analysis of the human condition that is conducted with the pragmatic purpose of directly engaging with particular forms of human suffering in order to reduce or eliminate it. Each dharma creates a theory in order to shed light on the mental processes that increase suffering, and each requires a practical program of training so as to attain its theoretical goals. The Buddha's dharma contains both a sophisticated analysis of human experience and a highly developed tradition of cognitive and affective training, of *bhāvanā* ("cultivation," usually translated as "meditation"), to bring about the transformation spoken of in this analysis. Mindfulness and its practice are central aspects of this training system.

In contrast with the Buddha's dharma, contemporary MBIs have lacked effective systems of attention training that would enable their client populations to access the deeper aspects of their mental processes that influence the arising or the cessation of their suffering. Perhaps the major contribution that the Buddha's dharma is making to Western culture is the import and adaptation of his understanding of what could be called a practical craft of attention training, with all the supporting factors associated with it. This craft has been named "mindfulness" in the contemporary MBIs.

The Role of Ethics

> What is wholesome, what is unwholesome? What is praiseworthy, what is blameable? What ought I to do, what ought I not to do? What, having done it, will bring me harm and suffering over the long term, and what will bring me welfare and happiness over the long term? (Lakkhaṇa Sutta *Characteristics* DN 30)

Ethics is concerned with the question of how we should live. The term itself derives from the Greek *ethikos*, "that which pertains to *ethos*, or character" (Saddhatissa, 1997, p. 1), and this meaning of ethics applies particularly to virtue ethics, where the primary concern is "with character rather than conduct – with how we should *be* rather than what we should *do*" (Darwall, 2002, p. 1). The Buddha's understanding of *sīla* constitutes a form of virtue ethics (Keown, 2001), and we can see from the above quotation that the Buddha's central concern is the issue of how we can live in such a way as to lead to our long-term welfare and happiness. The Buddha is more concerned with life than with the construction of metaphysical systems. But while the Buddha is primarily focused on human flourishing, this does entail issues regarding human nature. What does a flourishing human life look like? This, in turn, is conditioned by his understanding of human nature: What are we, really?

Given the equally practical concerns of the contemporary MBIs we would expect to see an emphasis on the role of ethics in their systems, as their participants face exactly the same existential dilemmas as those faced by practitioners of the Buddha's dharma. And this is what we are seeing in the current debate regarding the relationship between mindfulness and ethical theory and practice.

Broadly speaking, this debate is being carried out from two perspectives. The first is from a position beyond the boundaries of Buddhism(s), where the concern of MBIs with issues of human flourishing necessarily involves more than mere attention training but also requires some kind of philosophic or therapeutic theory that gives meaning to life and so anchors mindfulness training within a broader context (e.g., Leary & Tate, 2007). The second perspective addresses this issue from within Buddhism(s), where critics have argued that in its original context mindfulness was intertwined with a particular approach to ethics, and removing mindfulness practice from this context necessarily weakens its capacity to reduce suffering (e.g., Monteiro et al., 2015).

This debate has been conducted against the background issue of the relationship between science and religion. Should the ethical stance of contemporary MBIs be imported from a particular religion? This question, however, merely clouds the central issue because while particular forms of Buddhism may well be considered as religions, the teachings of the Buddha himself, as recorded in the Pāli Nikāyas, can be seen as an essentially secular enterprise, as a system of virtue ethics comparable to that of Aristotle in the European tradition (Keown, 2001).

The Buddha is preoccupied with the role of *sīla* because he concerned with its capacity to calm and harmonize the mind and heart. This state of calm and harmony is both a necessary condition for the practice of mindfulness and one of its

outcomes. Meditation teachers stress the need for an ethical way of life in order to provide a foundation for practice but also emphasize that practicing mindfulness meditation provides the sensitivity necessary to understand one's behavior and the need to change it so as to reduce agitation, stress, and conflict (e.g., Mahāsī, 2016).

For the Buddha, *sīla* (ethical conduct/training) leads to *samādhi* (meditation; concentration), which in turn leads to *paññā* (wisdom; understanding), and these three aspects of experience transform human life. *Sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* are, in their very functioning, entirely intertwined. It is not that there are three separate fields of action, and each may or may not be linked to the others. For the Buddha, *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* are part of the same spectrum, so it becomes impossible to disassociate *sīla* from *samādhi*. One's *sīla will* affect one's *samādhi*. It is part of the skill, or lack of it, in one's cultivation of *samādhi*. Practicing mindfulness will lead to some kind of result; whether or not it is a desired result depends on the skill one brings to the enterprise. *Sīla* is part of that skill. One can practice in a way that gives strong results; one can practice in a way that gives weak results. If one wants strong results, one practices with *sīla*.

An important consequence of this approach is that the nature of *sīla* is not determined by Buddhist teaching but by the lived experience of what behaviors promote *samādhi* and *paññā* and what behaviors do not. This can only be learned through experience. The Buddha had something to contribute here, but it is not a question of necessarily following the Buddha's opinions; it is a question of studying one's own experience to see what kind of behavior promotes *samādhi* and *paññā*. It follows that worrying whether or not the particular system of ethics that is attached to mindfulness follows any given Buddhist tradition is really irrelevant. The real issue is how do we practice mindfulness in such a way that it promotes a harmonious and happy way of living that in turn promotes the ongoing cultivation of *samādhi*? In this project we may consult different authorities: the ethical stance of various therapies, the Western philosophical tradition, one or another religious tradition. And it would make sense to also consult the Buddha, as the architect of the system, to see what he thought is helpful. But the Buddha is just part of the mix. The project itself remains the unifying of one's way of life (*sīla*) with the cultivation of a peaceful heart (*samādhi*) and discerning mind (*paññā*).

The Buddha himself did not regard the adoption of "Buddhist" teaching as essential to the living of a good life. This can be seen in his teaching to the Kālāma people. The Kālāmas were not his declared students, and the Buddha was not teaching them "Buddhism" but what he regarded as universal human values.

> Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: "These things are unwholesome, these things are blameable, these things are criticized by the wise; undertaken and carried out, these things lead to harm and suffering," then abandon them. …
>
> Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: "These things are wholesome, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and carried out, these things lead to welfare and happiness," then attain and live them. (Kālāma Sutta *To the Kālāmas* AN 3.65)

The only beliefs entailed in this teaching was the question of whether or not the Kālāmas believed that the state of being "given to greed … hatred … delusion, overwhelmed and mentally defeated by greed … hatred … delusion," will result "in one's long term suffering" or not (Kālāma Sutta *To the Kālāmas* AN 3.65).

A return to the Buddha as the source of the teachings of mindfulness and its practice, therefore, does not necessarily entail any "religious" commitments. Bringing religion into the mix simply serves to confuse the issue and provide reasons for ignoring what the Buddha can offer to contemporary mindfulness practice. This means that a turn to the Buddha does *not* necessarily entail a turn to one or more forms of Buddhism.

It is important, therefore, that if the contemporary mindfulness movement draws upon the Buddha and his teachings, it does so without making any metaphysical assumptions that cannot be backed up by scientific enquiry. For example, when Kabat-Zinn (1990) offered his paradigm, or theoretical framework, in his pioneering *Full Catastrophe Living*, he wrote of the inherent "wholeness and connectedness" that are "most fundamental in our nature as living beings" and that contains the scars that we carry from our suffering. With mindfulness meditation "we can reconnect up with our intrinsic wholeness at any time because its very nature is that it is always present" (pp. 161–62). Belief in this doctrine of intrinsic wholeness may be very helpful for a given population of mindfulness practitioners, but it constitutes a bold metaphysical claim for which there is no scientific evidence and no chance of any such evidence. The claim itself appears to come out of the Buddha nature doctrine of certain streams of East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism (Williams, 2009). In brief, this claim is more religious than scientific.

But when we stay with the empirical dharma of the Buddha there is no need for such claims, because not only does the Buddha himself not make them, they are inconsistent with his radical empiricism. The Buddha's claims are not third person and they are therefore not scientific, but they do constitute a map of human experience that can be applied and tested, adapted to individual circumstances and, when seen to be lacking, abandoned. The only question is, as the Buddha himself made clear, does his analysis of the nature of human experience and of what it takes for a human life to flourish work in practice?

The Problem of "Right" Mindfulness

One theme that permeates criticism of the contemporary mindfulness movement concerns its decontextualization from its original purpose and, in particular, its separation from ethics. We have seen how, for the Buddha, mindfulness is one aspect of the complex system that is the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) analyzed into three trainings, those of *sīla* (ethics, morality, virtue), *samādhi* (in its broader sense of meditation), and *paññā* (understanding, wisdom), with *sīla* regarded as the foundation for meditation practice (Bodhi, 1994).

The Buddha distinguishes between wrong mindfulness (*micchā sati*) and right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), depending on whether or not it functions as part of the

noble eightfold path (Gethin, 2001). Does contemporary mindfulness match up to the tradition's right mindfulness? Some argue that the emphasis on nonjudgmental awareness necessarily weakens the link between ethics and mindfulness, as non-judgmentalism removes the capacity to discriminate between the wholesome and the unwholesome (e.g., Monteiro et al., 2015; Purser, 2015; Stanley, 2013), thus removing mindfulness from its context as part of the path. This is especially the case because Buddhist traditions see psychological health as being determined primarily by ethical conduct, not by the ability to pay attention to phenomenal experience (Stanley, 2013).

How does the Buddha himself address the issue of right and wrong mindfulness? The image of the path suggests direction, and the eightfold path naturally inclines us toward the cessation of suffering (e.g., Paṭhama Pācīnaninna Sutta *Slanting to the east (1)* SN 45.91). Wrong mindfulness (*micchā sati*), or any other path factor labeled as "wrong," is wrong in its direction in that it does *not* incline us toward the cessation of suffering. This would include the mindfulness of the sniper cited in Monteiro et al. (2015). Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), or any other path factor labeled as "right," is right in its direction insofar as it *does* incline us toward the cessation of suffering.

If right mindfulness moves us toward the cessation of suffering, how far does it take us along this path? This is one issue raised in the discussion of ethics in contemporary mindfulness, with the suggestion being made that without an appropriate ethical framework, mindfulness practice would be very limited in how far it could take its practitioners. Here we come to the significance of the word "*ariya*" when applied to the eightfold path.

The concept of *ariya* (Skt. *ārya*) originated with the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples who spread throughout northern India during the first millennium BCE. By the time of the Buddha *ārya* had come to refer to a social identity, essentially people who spoke Sanskrit and could claim social status and culture (Thapar, 2002). The Buddha borrowed this term and ethicized it, so for him *ariya* (the Pāli version of *ārya*) referred technically to those individuals who had attained some degree of awakening or in a more general sense to those who were mature in their practice. Such a person was an *ariya sāvaka*, a cultivated student (e.g., Ānaṇya Sutta *Freedom from debt* AN 4.62), or a *sutavā ariya sāvaka*, a trained cultivated student (e.g., Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta *The not-self characteristic* SN 22.59). Anything *ariya* is world-transcending or supramundane (*lokuttara*) as distinct from remaining in and of the world or mundane (*lokiya*) (Gethin, 2001).

This distinction between mundane and supramundane applies to each of the path factors. When they are practiced as mundane, they are "affected by taints (*sāsavā*), having auspicious power (*puñña-bhāgiya*) and ripen in the supports (*upadhi-vepakka*)." These are technical terms that add up to the idea that practicing the path in this way will develop some degree of human flourishing but always within *saṃsāra*, the "repeated wandering" of mundane life. When the path factors are practiced as supramundane, they are described as noble (*ariya*), taintless (*anāsava*), path factors (*maggaṅga*). Practicing the path in this way culminates in awakening itself, the ultimate fulfillment of human flourishing. This state of ultimate

flourishing is one in which each aspect of the path is supported (*upanisa*) and resourced (*parikkhāra*) by all the others, so they operate together as a complex and complete system (Mahācattārīsaka Sutta *The great forty* MN 117).

Mindfulness and Modernity

How does this theoretical understanding of the context of mindfulness practice apply to contemporary MBIs? Firstly, we might reframe the original question by suggesting that the central problem is not that the MBIs have removed mindfulness practice from its traditional context, because *all* contemporary mindfulness meditation practices are already removed from their traditional context. This is due to the fundamental disruption created by the impact of modernity on traditional Buddhist cultures.

The origins of the contemporary mindfulness movement can be traced to the destructive impact of British colonialism in South East Asia and in particular to its effect on Burma. A key event was the second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852–1853, which resulted in the loss of lower Burma to the British and the elevation of King Mindon (ruled 1853–1878) to the Burmese throne. Mindon sought to revive royal authority and the health of the Burmese polity by sponsoring a revival of Buddhism, and at the center of this revival was the project of developing new meditation methods that could spread the practice of *vipassanā* ("insight") meditation throughout lay society (Braun, 2013; Houtman, 1999).

This movement sought to bring the traditional goal of enlightenment to the mass of ordinary lay Buddhists, with the hope that the spread of meditation throughout society would lead to general social uplift and delay the inevitable decay of Buddhism (Jordt, 2007). The lay insight movement flourished in the first half of the twentieth century with the emergence of teachers such as U Ba Khin, S. N. Goenka, and Mahāsī Sayādaw, all of whom were dedicated to creating techniques and institutions that would make the traditional goals of awakening (*bodhi*) and nirvana (*nibbāna*) available to ordinary lay people who were prepared to make the necessary effort. The new meditation methods were focused on the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* (insight emerging from mindfulness meditation). They routinized the practice of meditation, making it culturally more stable and more capable of surviving beyond the occasional appearances of charismatic individuals (Jordt, 2007). This movement represents an attempt to democratize enlightenment by creating meditation methods suitable for mass participation by the laity, led by lay-controlled organizations, and deliberately exported beyond its original cultural and national boundaries to a wider world (e.g., Jordt, 2007; Kearney, 2011; Sharf, 1995).

The impact of modernity forced a number of discontinuities between this new mass lay meditation movement and its traditional forebears, even though in its Burmese context the insight movement remains firmly within Theravāda orthodoxy (Kearney, 2011). The first discontinuity entails a distinction between traditional, customary Buddhism and an authentic dharma that is reconstructed from authoritative texts and experienced individually through meditation. The second is the

valuing of "practice" (*paṭipatti*) and its result, "penetration" (*paṭivedha*), over "scriptural learning" (*pariyatti*). The third discontinuity is the emphasis on the part of Burmese practitioners on meditation (*bhāvanā*) over other forms of Buddhist activity such as giving (*dāna*) and ethics or morality (*sīla*) (Houtman, 1990; Kearney, 2011). This last is based on belief that the practice of meditation would itself overcome any initial deficiencies in *sīla* that might hold lay practitioners back in the development of their practice (Houtman, 1990; Mahāsī, 2016).

Once we recognize that mindfulness and its practice, for both Buddhist and non-Buddhists, has *already* been decontextualized by the emergence of contemporary Buddhist meditation movements, then the question becomes how mindfulness might be recontextualized, in both Buddhist and secular settings.

The Goals of Practice

We have seen that the Buddha's concept of *sīla* constitutes what can be called a system of virtue ethics, where the goal is one of human flourishing. The distinction between right and wrong forms of mindfulness relates directly to this goal. Does mindfulness take us along the path to human flourishing or away from it? And how far along this path can it take us?

Certainly the Buddha taught that *sīla* may generate benefits beyond anything envisaged by contemporary MBIs. For example, when listing the benefits of good conduct (*sucarita*), he began with psychological and social benefits: "one does not blame oneself; the wise, after investigating, praise one; one gains a good reputation" (AN 2.18). These benefits seem to fit into a view of human flourishing that would be consonant with that of contemporary MBIs. The Buddha may be considered to be taking a step beyond this view when he adds the benefit of "one dies unconfused" but even this can fit into a materialist, scientific framework. But when he adds that, "with the breakup of the body, after death, one arises in a good destination, in a heavenly world," then he has gone beyond the realm of the MBIs and their concerns into the realm of the religious.

There are two things to be considered here. Firstly, even this goal of heavenly destiny does not yet reach the realm of *ariya*, or noble, right mindfulness, for the Buddha regarded the heavens as part of the mundane realm. Secondly, while this goal does suggest the practitioner taking on metaphysical beliefs that we would regard as religious, in other contexts the Buddha was clear that such beliefs are entirely unnecessary for practicing *sīla* and living a good life. We have already looked at Kālāma Sutta, where the Buddha was speaking to non-Buddhists, people who were not his students and therefore could not be expected to share his view of the universe. There he explained the benefits of living with *sīla* and meditation practice in fundamentally secular, even materialist, terms:

> A student of the cultivated ones, Kālāmas, with a heart that is free from hatred and malice, undefiled and purified, finds [two] comforts here and now. [1] "If there is another world and there is a fruit, a result, of actions done well or badly, then at the break-up of the body, after

death, I shall arise in a blissful heavenly world." This is the first comfort she finds. [2] "If there is no other world and no fruit, no result, of actions done well or badly, then I keep myself peaceful, loving, calm and happy." This is the second comfort she finds. (Kālāma Sutta *To the Kālāmas* AN 3.65)

In other words, the Buddha's presentation of the practice of the path, that includes ethics, meditation, and wisdom, does not depend on the adoption of religious or metaphysical commitments, because the path is beneficial regardless of how far along one chooses to travel. Those who commit to being the Buddha's students would commit themselves to travel as far as awakening itself and in the process might take on beliefs beyond anything that would be considered appropriate to the world of the MBIs. But the Buddha himself had no expectation that all practitioners of the path would necessarily take on these commitments. The implication here is that contemporary MBIs can see the Buddha as an authoritative source for mindfulness and its practice, *without* taking on or even referring to Buddhism as a religion. The only relevant issue is the degree to which the Buddha said anything useful about mindfulness and its practice.

The Danger of Stealth Buddhism

Contemporary mindfulness as studied and practiced in the health and social sciences has come a long way from its origins. Its translation from ancient India to the contemporary world has been characterized by a mixture of bold innovations and cautious defenses. On the one hand, an ancient introspective practice from an oriental religion has been adapted to therapeutic applications in the modern world, while on the other hand much energy has gone into obscuring its origins and reinventing its characteristics, to avoid stirring up anxieties and animosities in its new secular and scientific home.

We have suggested that one way through the tangle of issues surrounding the adaptation of mindfulness to the secular world can come from viewing its origins with new eyes. When we see the Buddha as teaching a dharma that is firmly grounded in empirical data, and that is concerned chiefly with living a satisfying human life without dependence on faith-based metaphysical commitments, then we may be able to take full advantage of the understanding of the practical craft of attention training contained in the Nikāyas, the collections of the Buddha's discourses. In particular, by recognizing the Buddha's approach to ethics as constituting a humanistic project to cultivate human flourishing, then we may find ways to integrate ethics and mindfulness practice that take advantage of a range of resources provided by the tradition while respecting the diversity we find in our complex world.

When we are reluctant to openly acknowledge the origins of mindfulness, when we fail to fully acknowledge the Buddha as the originator and developer of mindfulness practice and yet draw upon him or the traditions that trace themselves back to him as authorities, then we find ourselves in an ethical dilemma that has been called "stealth Buddhism" (e.g., Brown, 2014). This is a direct consequence of making decisions that seek to avoid problems by obscuring or distancing mindfulness from

its origins in order to make it more palatable to a modern, secular, and in particular non-Buddhist, audience.

Purser (2015) has pointed to the contradictions entailed when MBIs present mindfulness as the essence of Buddhism on the one hand and as having no connection with Buddhism on the other. He sees this, in part, as an issue of truth in advertising, calling it "camouflage" (p. 26), and argued that it is incompatible with the ethical demand for informed consent on the part of participants, who may find themselves being taught religious beliefs disguised as scientific principles. When MBIs are taught in a context where the psychological and philosophical principles are Buddhist but where participants have not been adequately informed of this situation, then we find an ethical problem that creates distortions in current theories and practices of mindfulness and that has the potential to create a backlash against the use of mindfulness in the future.

The exploration of the Buddha's teaching as a secular dharma provides a possible resolution to the problem of stealth Buddhism in particular and to wider anxieties concerning the mixing of science and religion on the other. In this approach we focus on what we know of the teachings of the Buddha and his students as contained in the Nikāyas without the later "religious" accretions of subsequent Buddhist traditions. This chapter has attempted to outline the reasons for believing that such a project is feasible. Once we acknowledge the empiricism that lies beneath the Buddha's understanding of the human condition, and recognize his reluctance to impose metaphysical or ontological commitments on either himself or others, then a way opens to develop the practice of mindfulness meditation in the contemporary world without having to be evasive about its origins or to eschew the wealth of what the Buddha can teach us about both mindfulness specifically and his vision of the nature of human flourishing more generally. But to do that, we have to accept the Buddha on his own terms, as a teacher of dharma, rather than impose our cultural presuppositions upon him and persist in seeing him as the god of an oriental religion.

Abbreviations

AN   Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN   Dīgha Nikāya
MN   Majjhima Nikāya
SN   Saṃyutta Nikāya
Vism.   Visuddhimagga

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Implicit and Explicit Ethics in Mindfulness-Based Programs in a Broader Context

Kin Cheung

Introduction

As the popularity of mindfulness-based programs grows, so has the number of critical voices concerning these programs. Here, I will focus on one line of criticism: the call for explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs. Firstly, the rationales for explicit ethics are diverse, as are the programs themselves. This call for explicit ethics to be taught in mindfulness-based programs only applies to those that claim they are without them, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). There is a vast diversity of mindfulness-based programs, including ones that introduce explicit ethical frameworks such as those in the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic developed by Monteiro. While MBSR may not be representative of all mindfulness-based programs, critics focus on it because it is immensely influential and widely used. In his creation of MBSR, Kabat-Zinn intentionally avoided references to Buddhism and the explicit teaching of ethical components.

The worry raised by critics like Purser and Loy (2013) is that promoting a bare-attention practice as stress reduction without an ethical basis merely patches up the surface symptoms of contemporary stress without addressing the systemic or institutional causes of individual disease and social ills. Hickey (2010) addressed the larger concern of medicalizing meditation—such as MBCT for the treatment of anxiety or depression relapse—because it puts the onus on the individual while ignoring social structural problems. Specifically, she takes issue with "the removal of meditation practice from its moral and communal frameworks, [and] a tendency toward individualism and commodification" (p. 178). Placing the burden on the

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individual shifts attention away from efforts at reducing contributions to systems that continually add stress to contemporary life. The commodification critique highlights Kabat-Zinn's trademark of MBSR.

One strand of response against these ethical charges is to argue that there is an implicit, rather than an overt, ethical teaching coupled with mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn (2011) said this is skillful means to reach the widest audience possible in ways they are ready to accept. Critics protest the use of skillful means by anyone not a Buddha or advanced bodhisattva and challenge the skill in supposedly inoculating bankers to a "destructive form of capitalism" (Wallis, 2011) or training snipers to kill mindfully ("A Sniper's Meditation," n.d.).

These two vocal positions represent the polar extremes in this contemporary debate, which, stated bluntly, are (1) *implicit ethics present*: there is some inherently/implicitly ethical component in mindfulness-based programs, and (2) *explicit ethics needed*: there is no implicit ethical component (or not nearly enough of it), and hence, there is a need for explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs. While these are the polar positions, there are clearly nuanced stances in-between. Purser (2015) explained why it is unhelpful to characterize these two streams as a "traditional Buddhist community" versus "contemporary mindfulness, as propagated and practiced by secular and clinical mindfulness practitioners" (p. 23).

The debate on implicit and explicit ethics can be framed as two contrasting models of how to view human nature and ethical cultivation. MBSR proponents propose an innate model of human goodness, such that mindfulness-based practices can allow the individual to find his/her innate tendencies toward ethical behavior. Critics of this model argue for a picture of human nature where individuals need to be explicitly taught proper ethical conduct.

Framed in this light, the current debate on explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs rehashes old debates within the Buddhist tradition and without. Historically, Buddhist debates on *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha-womb) along with its closely related concept of Buddha nature and between sudden and gradual enlightenment have led to two similarly divergent views on ethical cultivation. Outside the Buddhist context, Confucian philosophers have debated how to view human nature and ethical training. Mengzi used the analogy of innate human goodness in the image of virtuous sprouts that need nourishing, while Xunzi used the analogy of human nature as crooked wood that needs to be shaped by education into something useful.

I argue that the current debate on whether or not explicit ethics should be taught in mindfulness-based programs can benefit from looking to similar debates within the Buddhist tradition and without. Specifically, using Ivanhoe's (2000) framework of Confucian models of ethical acquisition, development, reformation, recovery, discovery, praxis, and realization will add depth to the contemporary mindfulness discussion. Finally, I suggest turning to a more fruitful line of inquiry: investigating if, and how, mindfulness-based programs lead to change in ethical conduct.

Implicit Versus Explicit Debate in Buddhist Contexts

Building on the work of Klein (1995), Lindahl (2015a) has pointed out two competing models—the "discovery" and "developmental"—that characterize the role mindfulness plays in ethical cultivation. These models help contextualize this contemporary debate in reference to older Buddhist debates. For Lindahl, a discovery model is one that assumes ethics are intrinsic to mindfulness and that bare-attention practice can bring out or help participants discover their own innate ethical tendencies. Kabat-Zinn and other defenders of implicit ethics hold this stance in mindfulness-based programs. Lindahl noted that others who hold the discovery model position include Gaylon Ferguson, Ngakpa Chögyam, Khandro Dechen, Anam Thubten, Lama Surya Das, Lama Ole Nydahl, and Tara Brach.

In contrast, others describe a developmental model that assumes ethics are developed and are not innate. Here, the qualities cultivated through mindfulness would depend on what is actively pursued. Klein and Lindahl showed that these two positions bear semblance to the debate internal to Buddhism between a sudden versus gradual approach to enlightenment, especially in the way that these are rhetorical models of ethical cultivation. Faure (1991) highlighted the rhetorical aspects of sudden enlightenment (*dunwu* 頓悟), especially when it is presented as "simultaneous" or "immediate" enlightenment, in the Chinese Chan Buddhist context (p. 39–41). This rhetoric has had an enormous impact not only on Chan (*chan* 禪) but also on its East Asian counterparts of Japanese Zen and Korean Seon. The latter undoubtedly has influenced Kabat-Zinn (2011) as he trained under the Korean Zen (Seon) master Seung Sahn (p. 286–89).

Dodson-Lavelle (2015) noted that the eighth century Buddhist debate between an "innateist" Chinese monk and a "constructivist" Indian monk in a Tibetan monastery has had an influence on Tibetan Buddhism for centuries (p. 81). She wrote,

> From an extreme innateist perspective, since all of the qualities of enlightenment are already present, albeit obscured, performing other preliminary practices and so forth are not necessary, for there is nothing one needs to cultivate that is not already innately present. From a constructivist perspective, however, ordinary beings have only the *potential* for buddhahood, or only possess some of the qualities of awakening, and thus the practitioner must construct the conditions necessary for awakening, in part through the cultivation of various preparatory practices (p. 82, emphasis in original).

Dodson-Lavelle used her terminology of innateist to label the stance for sudden enlightenment and constructivist to label the side for gradual enlightenment. She argued the disparate approaches in contemporary programs such as the innateist MBSR and the constructivist Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) reflect this centuries old debate (p. 82).

Staying within the context of Buddhist debates, the argument between qualities of enlightenment already present in everyone versus only the potential for Buddhahood has played out in the debates on *tathāgatagarbha*, commonly translated as Buddha-womb. In the East Asian Buddhist context, the debates center around the closely related term Buddha nature (*foxing* 佛性) (King, 1991, p. 4–5).

King ([1991](#)) gave details on how the debates in the past included whether the *icchantika* (the most spiritually deluded) had Buddha nature and whether Buddha nature introduces a non-Buddhist element of a metaphysical self or soul (p. 13–28). To put this in another way, the debate asks if Buddha nature is an ontological claim or pedagogical tool. King argued it is the latter.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Japanese movement of Critical Buddhism (*hihan bukkyō* 批判仏教) rejected *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha nature as later doctrinal developments that contradicts *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination) and hence is not Buddhist. The leaders of this movement, Matsumoto and Hakamaya, are academics and ordained Sōtō Zen priests. They argue that *tathāgatagarbha* and its development into the doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚) in Japanese Buddhism are "far from being egalitarian, [and have] in fact engendered and perpetuated social injustice by sacralizing the status quo" (Stone, [1999](#), p. 159). As Zen priests, they also reject Zen as not Buddhist. Their criticism of Zen's stance on original enlightenment focuses on how it leads to complacency in systemic and structural injustices (Hubbard and Swanson, [1997](#)).

To be sure, the critical Buddhists and the critiques of mindfulness without ethics are in different sociohistorical contexts. Yet, it is not difficult to see the parallels between the two groups' criticism of Zen and of mindfulness without explicit ethics leading to similar problems. Matsumoto and Hakayama's criticism of Zen extends to Kabat-Zinn's MBSR. Though MBSR has roots in Theravada (Insight Meditation Society's *vipassanā* practice), Mayahana (specifically Rinzai *and* Sōtō Zen), and certain yogic traditions, Kabat-Zinn's ([2011](#)) primary teacher is based in Korean Zen (p. 289). I wish to highlight that Kabat-Zinn's ([2011](#)) piece repeats, for the most part, his 1982 article that presented the roots of mindfulness. However, one important difference in his older article is that he distinguished Rinzai Zen meditation from Sōtō Zen meditation and classified mindfulness as connected to the latter but not the former (p. 34). I note this to show that it is difficult to pin down Kabat-Zinn to any specific Zen, Buddhist, or religious influence on MBSR (Husgafvel, [2016](#), p.101–104).

I point out the above parallels between Critical Buddhism and certain critiques of mindfulness not to side with one group or the other, or to suggest one is right, or that these critiques are completely similar. Rather, I wish to bring attention to the limits of the usefulness of only two extreme positions. It would be more helpful to nuance the extremes by highlighting a range of multiple possible positions on human nature and ethical cultivation. While the two extreme positions are the most vocal in the contemporary context, there are also nuanced positions such as those of Brazier ([2013](#)) and Lindahl ([2015b](#)).

One way the contemporary debate between implicit and explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs can benefit from looking to these Buddhist debates is attention to the rhetorical nature of these positions in the latter context. King responded to the Critical Buddhism protest against Buddha nature by explaining how the term should be understood as a pedagogical and rhetorical device as part of a positive response to the overly negative formulations of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) in Mādhyamika schools. The next context of debate I examine is less rhetorical and more reflective of deep philosophical inquiry into ethical cultivation.

The Debate in a Confucian Context

Confucian philosophers in premodern China have debated the relationship between human nature and ethical cultivation. Confucians, and their opponents, argued over whether human nature was good or bad and the role that education played in instilling ethics. These debates were in the context of various thinkers advocating to rulers how best to govern their people and create a flourishing state.

Mengzi used the analogy of innate human goodness with an image of virtuous sprouts inside everyone that need nourishing—through education—to flourish, but the seeds are already there. On the other hand, Xunzi argued that human nature is bad and used the analogy of people as crooked wood that needs to be shaped—by education—into something useful. These two extreme ends, of a spectrum of Confucian positions, are reminiscent of the aforementioned implicit ethics present and explicit ethics needed sides.

To better understand Mengzi and Xunzi, one must turn to their conversation partners and the context of these debates. Ivanhoe (2000) summarized seven Confucian and two non-Confucian models of human nature and ethical development. While the debates revolved around implicit and explicit ethics, these Chinese thinkers also focused their debate around the axis of how much ethical learning should emphasize the intellectual or theoretical, in contrast to practical implementation of learning. To give the reader an initial sense of the range of positions in the premodern Chinese debate, I present a figure that places these thinkers along two axes of contention (one of the nine that Ivanhoe mentions is not concerned around these debate terms and falls outside the figure) (Fig. 16.1).

To explain the figure above, I will now provide details of each thinker's position. Ivanhoe begins by ascribing to Kongzi (551–479 BCE, Latinized and more commonly known as Confucius) the acquisition model of ethical self-cultivation, which falls in the middle between the extreme ends of the two axes of debate taken up by his successors. The acquisition model required intellectual mastery of ancient texts to gain wisdom of past sages on ethical self-cultivation. It also required practical application of these lessons in life, specifically through rituals of ceremony and

INTELLECTUAL

Dai Zhen

Zhu Xi

IMPLICIT Mengzi   Kongzi   Xunzi EXPLICIT

Wang Yangming

Yan Yuan   Mozi
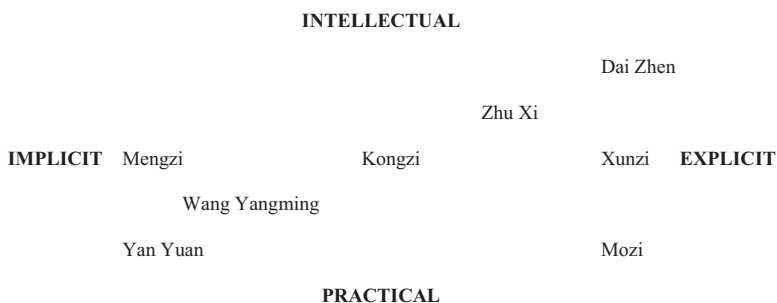
PRACTICAL

Fig. 16.1 The Chinese thinkers and their positions in relation to each other along the axes of implicit versus explicit ethics (*x*-axis) and intellectual versus practical learning (*y*-axis). Framed this way, Yang Zhu stands outside this matrix

music. As for the question of implicit versus explicit ethics, Ivanhoe (2000) found it "difficult to locate Kongzi definitely along the spectrum defined by these two extremes since he does not directly tie his method of learning to a theory about human nature, as Mengzi and Xunzi do" (pp. 1–2). Sarkissian, via personal communication, placed Kongzi closer towards the explicit side.

Kongzi's acquisition model comes into focus when compared with his coeval debate partners in the followers of Mozi (the Mohists) and Yang Zhu. Ivanhoe characterized Mozi (c. 400 s–300 s BCE) as a materialist and state consequentialist. Accordingly, the Mohists were less concerned with molding human nature and ethical cultivation and more concerned with advocating rulers to implement policy that judges human action based on how such action "maximizes the greatest amount of overall, material good for the state, with the good described in terms of wealth, order, and population for the state" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 15). This emphasis on utility for the state is in contrast to an individual ethical cultivation based on learning and practice. Yang Zhu (c. 400 s–300 s BCE) disagreed with both Mozi and Kongzi. Though he was neither hedonist nor selfish, nevertheless, he "was a special kind of egoist, one who didn't see social participation as, in any significant degree, integral to personal satisfaction or human flourishing" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 16).

In terms of the matrix above, Mozi had a lower expectation of innate human ethical roots than that of Kongzi. Mozi also dismissed intellectual or theoretical learning in favor of very practical guidelines of citizens of the state to follow. Yang Zhu was not interested in these two axes and advocated people to follow their own local concerns. I place Yang Zhu outside the matrix. Overall, these three thinkers did not articulate a precise position on human nature. Yet, there were plenty of points made by Kongzi that were taken up by his successors to argue for more definite and extreme positions.

It is in this context of the under-articulation of a clear picture of human nature by the above three that Mengzi (391–308 BCE) enters to fill in the gaps. In his defense of Kongzi's emphasis on learning from the ancient texts and implementing their wisdom through engaging in rituals, Mengzi offers what Ivanhoe calls a developmental model of ethical self-cultivation –not to be confused with Klein's and Lindahl's developmental model of human nature, which holds precisely the opposite of Ivanhoe's use of the term developmental model. Mengzi argued against Mozi's and Yang Zhu's state consequentialist and egoist positions by offering a picture of innate human dispositions toward the ethical. He called these ethical sprouts (*duan* 端). He argued for his position with the following thought experiment. Suppose one happens upon a child near a well who is about to fall in. Would one not feel an impulse to take the ethical action to help, regardless of one's relationship to the child? The actual implementation of that impulse is irrelevant. What mattered to Mengzi was to show that everyone, upon reflection, could see within themselves the impulse to help in that scenario. This impulse is not for fame, favor, or self-interest. Therefore, he declared human nature to be good (*xingshan* 性善). However, just because humans are endowed with ethical sprouts, it does not follow that everyone behaves ethically. He explained this by continuing the organic analogy. Sprouts need minimal conditions and a proper environment to grow. Just as

botanical sprouts require water and sunlight, ethical sprouts demand stable food and shelter. The political implication is for a ruler to ensure his/her state provides his/her people with minimum physical needs.

An important point he makes through that organic analogy is that sprouts cannot be forced to grow; it takes time and effort (through proper Confucian learning). He provides an example of a farmer who ruins his crops in an attempt to help his sprouts by pulling on them, and thus uprooting them in his haste. Similarly, "[t]he desire to be a good person can itself pose an impediment to moral improvement, if it encourages one to work beyond one's moral means" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 21).

In response to Mengzi, Xunzi (310–219 BCE) argued the opposite: human nature is bad (*xinge* 性惡). Bad should not be taken as evil. Xunzi did not believe humans innately wished to harm others or enjoyed inflicting pain and suffering in a sadistic sense. Rather, he believed humans are lazy, selfish, and greedy. Xunzi's position is that humans "begin life in a state of utter moral blindness" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 32). There are no innate ethical tendencies; ethics has to be instilled. Ivanhoe called this the re-formation model of ethical cultivation because Xunzi saw human ethical cultivation as the molding of one's nature. Xunzi gave analogies of shaping clay into a vessel and carving wood into a utensil.

Mengzi and Xunzi were not simply disagreeing over an optimistic versus a pessimistic outlook on human nature. Rather, they had clearly articulated positions on how human nature affects ethical cultivation. Ivanhoe (2000) noted:

> Mengzi's view of moral self cultivation describes the process as a natural flowering or *development* of inherent tendencies. Xunzi sees it as the difficult and demanding task of acquiring a second nature. For Xunzi, successful self cultivation requires protracted and concerted effort, for the task is to constrain and *re-form* a recalcitrant and unruly nature (p. 36, emphasis in original).

The usefulness of Ivanhoe's labels of development versus re-form becomes more apparent when he leaves these two polar positions and explains the subsequently more nuanced models of ethical cultivation.

The next influential Confucian to pick up this conversation and articulate his own position does so a millennium later. Zhu Xi (1130–1200 CE) continued this discourse in the context of Buddhist and Daoist ideas, which were absent in China during the time of his predecessors. He reacted against Buddhist notions of human nature, and yet, he was undoubtedly influenced by both Buddhism and Daoism. Ivanhoe (2000) illustrated this complex movement of ideas with the fourth century BCE Daoist Zhuangzi's "image of the mind as a mirror," which shows how a sage's innate nature (*xing* 性) both reacts to the world "spontaneously and pre-reflectively manifest[s]" the sage himself/herself (p. 45–46). This early Daoist view influenced the development of Buddha nature in China, which in turn set the context for Zhu Xi and other Neo-Confucians to articulate their positions on an original nature (*benxing* 本性) and a material nature (*qizhizhixing* 氣質之性).

Ivanhoe labeled Zhu Xi's stance as a recovery model of ethical cultivation. Zhu Xi does not see ethical cultivation as "the *development* of incipient tendencies but as the *recovery* or release of this 'original nature' by refining one's imperfect and

obscuring 'material nature'" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 46, emphasis in original). The perfected former aspect of the self is concealed by the flawed latter aspect. Zhu Xi advocated two parts to recovery of this ethical original nature. The first part is a practice of quiet sitting (*jingzuo* 靜坐) in order to "gather together and calm one's mind, and thereby protect it from the obscuring effects of agitated emotions and desires" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 49). Stopping at this first part without the second is problematic because "as important as this practice was, it alone would not advance one's grasp of principle, and quiet sitting could become a liability to moral progress if one allowed it to become an end unto itself" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 49). Principle (*li* 里) for Neo-Confucians "is both descriptive and normative, when things follow *li* they are as they ought to be, i.e., they are natural" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 46). In other words, it is vital to grasp principle through studying and mastery of Confucian texts, (not simply book learning, but also engagement with the real world in order to observe and understand the nature of *li* within it), which are the second part of Zhu Xi's recovery model. He emphasized the learning and acquisition of ethical cultivation.

In contradistinction to Zhu Xi, the next major Confucian thinker, Wang Yangming (1472–1529 CE), emphasized intuition of the ethical. Ivanhoe saw Wang Yangming as providing a discovery model of ethical cultivation–again, not to be confused with Klein's and Lindhal's discovery model of human nature. It focused less on knowledge of ethical principles or how one should behave. Instead, it prioritized acting ethically. The discovery comes after a process of engaging with and gradually eliminating one's selfishness, especially in ordinary life affairs. "Wang emphasized the need to cultivate certain affective states and saw these as playing a critical *cognitive role* in moral understanding" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 66, emphasis in original). For Wang Yangming, these cultivated affective states counter selfish desires and allow one to behave ethically. In a sense, Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi are replaying the debate between Mengzi and Xunzi, in terms of implicit versus explicit ethics, but have added another dimension of disagreement in regard to intellectual understanding versus practical application.

The last two Confucian thinkers mainly disagreed on this second dimension: how much to emphasize praxis of ethical behavior or theoretical knowledge of ethical principles. Yan Yuan (1635–1704 CE) reacted against what he saw as over-philosophizing of abstract metaphysics that his peers engaged in, such as the relationship between *li* (里) and *qi* (氣). He advocated, what Ivanhoe labeled, a praxis model of ethical cultivation that was similar to Xunzi's in that it "was very much an outside-in affair. One acquired virtue through repeated and concerted practice and inculcation, the accumulated effect of which shaped and transformed the self" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 81). However, he disagreed with Xunzi on human nature and defended Mengzi's view that people are innately ethical. Nevertheless, Yan Yuan diverges from Mengzi's developmental model and articulates his own position by advancing the need for "reshaping and training the physical human body and so he fought any tendency to conceive of our nature—and especially the good elements or aspects of it—as in any way separated from our physical embodiedness" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 80). With this focus on physical activity, Yan Yuan advocated cultivation

practices such as martial arts and repudiated Zhu Xi's quiet sitting. He also thought Wang Yangming "failed to appreciate how much one must acquire from traditional norms and methods of practice" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 82). In addition to physical exercises, what Yan Yuan has in mind are the practices of musical and medical arts. It is through mastery of such crafts—from physical practice, not theoretical knowledge—that one becomes an ethical person.

The final thinker, Dai Zhen (1723–1777 CE), took a completely opposite approach to that of Yan Yuan on both axes. Dai Zhen did not believe people had innate ethical tendencies. He advocated a purely intellectual method of ethical cultivation. Ivanhoe called it a realization model. "Dai's approach to moral self cultivation can be understood as an ethical expression of the hermeneutical circle" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 92). Dai's unique approach completely emphasized textual and theoretical acquisition. "For him, the projects of philosophy and philology were coextensive; one found the truth by getting the classics right and one got the classics right by doing careful textual work" (Ivanhoe, 2000, p. 90). Specifically, he argued one needed careful and systematic study of the Confucian Golden Rule (sometimes called the Silver Rule because of its negative formulation): what you do not wish for yourself, do not impose onto others. Ethical cultivation revolved around intellectual realization of ethical principles.

Returning to Contemporary Mindfulness-Based Programs

Clearly, the above summary of Confucian thinkers and their models of human nature and ethical cultivation refer to a different historical, social, and cultural context than the contemporary debates around the ethics of MBSR. My goal is to draw out analogs between these two discourses to shed light on the latter. Helderman (2015) provided a recent examination of the pros and cons of comparing historical activities with contemporary ones. He investigated how psychotherapists in the United States compare their work with the transmission of Buddhism in medieval China in order to highlight what work is being done by such comparisons, as comparisons are not made in an objective or neutral vacuum.

Though Zhu Xi advocated quiet sitting with a qualification, and Yan Yuan and Dai Zhen were against it for different reasons, it would take much more work to establish if there are meaningful comparisons between the quiet sitting various Neo-Confucians referred to and the mindfulness practice in MBSR or other mindfulness-based practices. My interest is not in examining the practices. Rather, I wish to compare the rhetoric surrounding the relationship between mindfulness-based practices and ethical cultivation.

It is not difficult to imagine that each side of the contemporary debate can adapt from a range of arguments made by the Chinese thinkers. For instance, Kabat-Zinn and other advocates for the implicit ethics position may be able to use Mengzi's perspective on human nature to strengthen their stance on how ethics is implicit in MBSR. They may choose to develop an argument, following Mengzi's claim that the *desire* to be ethical can be a hindrance, to push back against demands of explicit

ethics in MBSR. On the other hand, champions of the explicit ethics position can build an argument from Zhu Xi's stance that (mindfulness-based) practice alone does not help one obtain (ethical) principle; thus there needs to be explicit learning and study (of ethics).

The debate among Confucian thinkers revolved around two intricately related axes of disagreement: whether human nature has inherent ethical tendencies or is devoid of them, and intellectual or practical grasp of ethical cultivation. This second axis gets developed more explicitly by the later Confucian thinkers. It is possible that as the contemporary debate continues, this axis will be picked up and made explicit in the contemporary context as well. I am not suggesting that adding this axis of debate to the contemporary discourse would benefit either side. However, like Ivanhoe, I do believe that rhetorical debates between polar positions may lead to better understanding of the complexities of possible stances between the extreme ends. In describing Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming's debate on ethical intuition versus ethical knowledge, Ivanhoe (2000) wrote, "Like the notions of subjectivity and objectivity themselves, this proved to be an irreducible yet highly productive tension" (p. 54).

One major difference is that in the past debates within Buddhist and Confucian contexts, the starting and focal points are their respective canons. Early Confucians argued from the basis of *The Five Classics*, and later Confucians added *The Four Books* to their canon. The explicit ethics position in the contemporary debate also uses the Buddhist canon to point out right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is one out of eight parts of the Buddhist path, with three other parts concerned with ethics (right livelihood, *sammā-ājīva*; right speech, *sammā-vācā*; and right conduct, *sammā-kammanta*). Yet, both sides in the contemporary debate are not limited to the Buddhist canon. Kabat-Zinn has claimed the *dharma* does not belong to Buddhism alone, and thus mindfulness is not limited to Buddhism. The explicit ethics side responds to this claim of a universalized dharma by arguing that it whitewashes mindfulness (Ng & Purser, 2015).

This highlights an important divergence between the contemporary positions and the historical debates. Kabat-Zinn and those in the implicit ethics camp, the above Chinese thinkers, and the historical Buddhist debaters all assert that human nature is a certain way. They universalize human nature. Lindahl noted that these broad claims are religious claims, and hence, unlikely to be empirically testable claims. This is precisely what critics of mindfulness without explicit ethics point to as problematic: "how Kabat-Zinn's rhetoric exposed the 'whiteness' of the mindfulness movement. The discourse of universalism was particularly apparent, a form of rhetoric that positions white people as standing outside of culture, and as the universal model of humans" (Ng & Purser, 2015). Gleig noted, via personal communication, that this universalizing may not be unique to mindfulness but seems to be a common characteristic of Buddhist modernism in general (Ng & Purser, 2015).

In the historical Buddhist debates, the rhetorical moves were important for socio-political reasons. The various positions represented how different Buddhist schools differentiated themselves from each other. There was a battle of power that undergirded the battle of wits. Schools competed for legitimacy and superiority while

vying for patronage. Looking for the political implications of the contemporary debate raises questions of who benefits by holding on to each of the polar positions and how they benefit. I could speculate that Kabat-Zinn and defenders of MBSR and MBCT benefit from keeping their 8-week standardized programs as is, without trying to introduce the messiness of explicit ethics. On the other hand, I can ask what is gained by critics of MBSR. It would be inaccurate to paint the critics as members of a Buddhist community or scholars of Buddhism who are claiming ownership over mindfulness (Purser, 2015, p. 25). In addition, there are religious studies scholars such as Brown (2016) who argue that it is unethical of mindfulness-based programs to hide away or deceive participants of their implicitly Buddhist or religious ethical content. Contemporary teachers of mindfulness-based programs also have a stake in how they wish to present their work in relation to ethics and values. I now turn to three such teachers I interviewed in spring 2015 regarding this debate.

Meissner, a defender of the implicit ethics position, sees no place for ethics in mindfulness programs, just as there is no place for ethics in teaching an athlete how to shoot a basketball jump shot. He notes critics pushing for explicit ethics have not clearly defined what type of ethics is appropriate. Next, he says that imposing explicit ethical values is against the pedagogical methods of mindfulness-based programs that let the lessons unfold. In my interview with Meissner, we both used the analogy of mindfulness as a tool. He proposed that if MBSR is compared to an 8-week workshop of woodworking, then telling participants not to hit their thumbs with a hammer is not as effective as them hitting their own thumbs or witnessing others miss the nail and end up in pain. In this sense, he agrees with Kabat-Zinn in that participants learn better from the embodiment of ethical conduct in the teacher, rather than explicit injunctions or rules. What he does see is the values of caring and compassion unfolding and coming out as the participants progress along the weeks of mindfulness training. They showed more care and concern toward fellow participants that signaled a shift in the way they interacted with others, which is not simply a result of bonding over the participation in a program together, but a change in general interactions.

Meissner has background in Zen and Theravada traditions. He is the Executive Director of the Secular Buddhist Association. He has training in MBSR and has been teaching mindfulness-based programs in the United States specifically designed for corporate settings. However, the fact that he benefits from making a living through teaching mindfulness-based programs and is a certified MBSR instructor is not sufficient to suggest that Meissner defends his position because of the resulting social and economic capital gains. As mentioned earlier, Monteiro developed her own mindfulness-based programs in Canada that diverge from MBSR, with explicit ethical components.

Monteiro has training in MBSR, MBCT, and Buddhist Chaplaincy. She teaches programs such as the Mindfulness for (M4) Stress and Symptom Management, M4-Pain Management, M4-Health Care Professionals, etc. She was ordained in Thich Nhat Hanh's Thiền (Vietnamese counterpart to Zen) Buddhist tradition, which has influenced her clinical practice as she adapts Nhat Hanh's positive formulation of the five precepts into her mindfulness-based programs. She formed the M4

programs partly in direct response to the lack of explicit ethical guardrails in MBSR, which frowned upon explicit ethics. Monteiro's programs uses five skillful habits, which are explicit values-based constructs actively cultivated by participants, and are based on Nhat Hanh's Five Mindfulness Trainings. Rather than the formulation of the Buddhist precept of vowing not to take life, the positive formulation is the cultivation of a reverence for life. Rather than vowing not to take what does not belong to oneself, the positive formulation is the practice of generosity (The Five Mindfulness Trainings | Plum Village, n.d.).

In leading these programs, she has worked with a range of participants such as military personnel with PTSD, persons with chronic pain, and those with terminal cancer. Across the field, participants take well to these five skillful habits and core values. They have no trouble with these action guidelines; in fact, their sentiments lean toward asking for more explicit guidelines because they tend not to resonate with Socratic questions. For example, if a participant sets a goal to value healthy consumption, and wishes to abstain from alcohol, and said participant fails and gives in, then the participant and teacher explore a widening awareness of the experience and the cultivation of discernment in making choices. One goal of mindfulness-based programs is to lead participants to ask themselves to be more aware of how actions affect them. The inquiry challenges the conventional belief that the teacher knows the answers and cultivates trust in one's own ability to develop and arrive at clear understanding. Monteiro has not come across anyone rejecting these values or is against the use of explicit ethics in her programs. Thus, if formulated positively in a nonsectarian way, this provides one example against the claim of MBSR defenders that participants are not ready for explicit ethics.

Monteiro (2016) has argued against the notion that mindfulness-based interventions are value-neutral. She maintains, rather, that there are three dimensions in which they are value-laden: (1) they have implicit or explicit ethics in content, (2) ethics is modeled or embodied by the teacher, and (3) the desires and intention of clientele represent specific values. Her position in this debate is that "The practice of ethics is inseparable from mindfulness practice and is its flavor. However, it cannot be left to chance through an implicit process" (p. 220).

While Monteiro has had success integrating a positive formulation of the Buddhist five precepts adapted from Nhat Hanh's Five Mindfulness Trainings, it does not completely satisfy Meissner's concern regarding what type of explicit ethics *should* be introduced. Wilks also addresses the question of whether or not participants of mindfulness programs are willing to consider explicit ethics as part of the curriculum. She has a background in Insight Meditation Society and various Buddhist traditions. She has training in MBSR and MBCT and has been leading these programs for over a decade in the United Kingdom. She sees herself doing clinical work and therapy (MBCT) in working for the state-funded National Health Service, and as such it is not her job to challenge people's ethical values unless they are doing something significantly harmful. Personally, she would not teach mindfulness programs to organizations with values that offended her own. For instance, she would not support marines with mindfulness-based practices going into war since she is a pacifist, although she has never faced this decision in real life. A relevant example to this debate is her experience in a public service company that hired her

with the goal of getting people back to work in their stressful jobs. However, her goal as an instructor was stress management, and that may mean quitting the job causing the stress in the first place. A handful of people did quit after reflecting on their life, values, and how their job was affecting them.

Wilks says ethics that are explicitly Buddhist could potentially offend participants who are atheist, Christian, Muslim or identify with (an)other religion(s). She mentions an example of a participant challenging the appropriateness of a poem read by a fellow teacher in a MBSR program because the poem was "too New-Agey" and it felt like brainwashing, trying to control them, or telling them how to live. She says much depends on why the participant is there. If they come as seekers of *dharma* in a Buddhist retreat, then explicit Buddhist ethics makes sense. However, some come to MBCT with low self-esteem, and having them question their ethical framework and responsibilities seems like an added burden at a time when they are mentally and emotionally fragile. She is aware of Monteiro's positive formulation and says something like that could work if they were talking about core values and ethics is understood not as consequentialist or deontological, but as aretaic, i.e., virtue-based, and asks what kind of person does one want to become. Lastly, she points out critics of mindfulness lacking explicit ethics seem to be making a faulty comparison: looking at an idealized Buddhism at its best and then comparing it to mindfulness-based programs that are poorly taught by poorly trained teachers.

I bring in the perspectives of these teachers of mindfulness-based programs in order to highlight the nuanced positions beyond the polar extremes. If Monteiro is correct in her claim that these programs are value-laden, then the question is not *whether* to introduce ethics, but *how* should ethics be introduced and *which* ethics. To revisit the polar position of explicit ethics, while critics claim there are no or not enough ethics in mindfulness-based programs, there is another way to interpret this position. One can see them saying that it is the wrong type of ethics—namely, that of neoliberalism and late capitalism—that is implicit. Again, it would not change their stance that (a different) explicit ethics is needed.

The aforementioned teachers also bring their values into this discourse. Meissner's claim that participants learn better by implicit example than explicit rules is itself an ethical stance based on normative values. Wilks example of the poem being challenged reveals a disagreement in values. Helderman noted, via personal communication, this instance shows "there are different ethical stances here—one is an ethical frame that upholds a value of neutrality over other values, the other is a pragmatic posture that prioritizes specific desire outcomes." The polarize positions fail to capture the complicated realities of how ethics and values are played out in the teaching and participation of mindfulness-based programs.

Toward the Direction of Ethical Change

What I see missing from the contemporary debate is awareness of historical precedent for each extreme position. George Santayana's aphorism is relevant here: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Remaining on

the theoretical and rhetorical level, as the debates in other contexts show, this contemporary iteration may continue for as long as the Confucian debates—two millennia—with neither side able to convince the other. The rhetorical nature of these debates highlights how staunch each side will likely remain. If Lindahl is correct that these claims of human nature are untestable, then I suggest the contemporary participants turn to an empirically testable claim: whether or not mindfulness-based programs affect change in ethical behavior.

Research is already underway investigating the effects of mindfulness-based (and other meditation) practices on ethical conduct. Shapiro, Jazaieri, and Goldin's (2012) study asserted that mindfulness meditation leads to increased ability for ethical reasoning. However, there is still a gap between increased ability for ethical *reasoning* and change in ethical *behavior* (although they are linked, that link must be addressed). Additionally, Purser (2015) noted that the flaws in this study include its reliance on self-reported data from a scale and questionnaire that are recently called into question and its basis "on an extremely small sample size of 25, mostly Caucasian women, lacking both randomized and active control groups" (p. 38). Condon, Desbordes, Miller, and DeSteno's (2013) study stated that after 8 weeks of mindfulness or compassion meditation, practitioners exhibited increased ethical behavior compared to non-meditators. Briefly, their experiment tested subjects who meditated against subjects who did not and found that meditators were five times more likely than non-meditators to act in a situation where they were able to alleviate someone who appeared to be suffering in pain. That same core group of researchers in Northeastern conducted another study to investigate how exactly does compassion meditation lead to increases ethical behavior. Lim, Condon, and DeSteno's (2015) findings concluded that it does not have to do with any increase ability to detect pain or decode emotional experiences of other people. Other recent studies on compassion meditation include Leiberg, Klimecki, and Singer's (2011) study, which found compassion meditation training led to increases in prosocial behavior. Weng et al.'s (2013) study found that compassion meditation "increased altruistic redistribution of funds to a victim encountered outside of the training context" (p. 1171).

In addition, research has been done on how measures of increased mindfulness are correlated to increased ethical and prosocial behavior. These studies are not training subjects in mindfulness-based practices, rather they measure if subjects are higher or lower on a self-reported mindfulness scale that scores how well the individual is aware of his or her present experience and surrounding environment (Amel, Manning, & Scott, 2009; Brown & Kasser, 2005; Jacob, Jovic, & Brinkerhoff, 2009). However, correlation is not causation, and individual studies may have flaws. It would take more research and detailed meta-analyses to a gain meaningful grasp on how mindfulness-based practices influence the individual. The researchers interested in social behavior, especially concerning sustainability and the environment, would benefit from following my proposed direction of research for mindfulness-based practices' relation to ethical change. These studies show researchers' interest in whether or not, and if so how, meditative practices lead to ethical change.

Conclusion

By situating the contemporary debate over whether or not to teach explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs within a larger context of historical debates pertaining to human nature and ethical cultivation, I wish to point out the range of possible moves made by each side. Lindahl and Dodson-Lavelle have already noted how contemporary debaters rehash historical debates with analogous positions within the Buddhist context in debates on sudden versus graduate enlightenment. I point out further analogous Buddhist debates surrounding *tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha nature, original enlightenment, and Critical Buddhism. Additionally, I add a new comparison to the contemporary debates with historical Confucian debates on human nature and ethical cultivation that move beyond the two polar views of innate human ethical goodness versus innate ethical blindness. I overview the positions of nine Chinese thinkers to show how the conversation on human nature and ethical cultivation can move beyond two positions on the axis of innate ethics and incorporate an axis of intellectual versus practical grasp of ethical cultivation.

The contemporary stalemate is likely to continue between the two camps if this discussion remains purely on a theoretical abstract level. I advocate leaving the discussion on implicit and explicit ethics in mindfulness-based programs behind and shifting attention toward whether mindfulness-based practices can lead to change in ethical behavior. Research is already underway in this area.

Regarding Meissner's question about what type of explicit ethics would be appropriate for mindfulness-based programs, another fruitful direction of inquiry would be to gather comprehensive data by asking the participants of such programs how they feel about implicit or explicit ethics and what type of ethics—whether it be some version of Zen ethics, Theravada ethics, nonsectarian Buddhist ethics, secular ethics, or MBSR ethics—is acceptable or welcomed in these programs. I have not been able to find any research done in this area. My initial attempts to gather data by asking the three aforementioned instructors of mindfulness-based programs (not meant to be a representative sample size) what they thought the participants of programs they have previously instructed would feel about explicit ethics suggest this area deserves further investigation.

Including participants' voices in this contemporary debate is not equivalent to polling consumers in order to better serve their needs. As a teacher in higher education, I regularly ask for students to provide feedback on my teaching. Clearly, I do not bend to their every whim because, as an experienced teacher, I know students' immediate desires may not be best for their own long-term interests. However, to completely disregard student voice would be hubris (Cheung, 2015). While MBSR is a developing program that asks for participants' feedback to improve their program, the dimension of explicit ethics is ignored.

Kabat-Zinn has made the decision to exclude explicit ethics based on the reasoning that participants of MBSR would find explicit ethics unpalatable, despite evidence that positive formulations are indeed acceptable in other mindfulness-based programs. Whether or not some participants welcome explicit ethics, in an 8-week MBSR curriculum, not everyone is able to adequately teach explicit ethics. As

Monteiro mentioned, ethics is embodied by the teacher. Meissner echoed Yan Yuan when he mentioned that merely giving ethical instruction (which expects participants to learn through solely rational study) is not as effective as embodied practical learning. To truly teach ethics requires even more teacher training. How exactly each individual teacher of mindfulness-based programs embodies ethics is a variable that would challenge the facade of standardization in such programs. The rhetoric of standardization is perpetuated to justify clinical research on the benefits of MBSR. However, all three aforementioned instructors of mindfulness-based programs note that each individual instructor, participant, and class develops their own relationship to the practice that defies easy blanket statements regarding ethical cultivation. The rhetorical debates on human nature suggest that these blanket statements on human nature both miss the mark and are unconvincing to the other side. Continued debate in the contemporary context would benefit from collecting data on whether individual participants change ethical conduct after participating in these programs.

To be clear, as the above historical debates on ethics show, there are different conceptions of what constitute ethical conduct. My suggestion to turn attention toward empirical studies of ethical change should not be taken to completely endorse the authority of clinical researchers or scientists (most of those interested in studying mindfulness-based practices are psychologists and neuroscientists) and their definitions of what is considered ethical. The data are what is relevant for the debate. If more studies do not show ethical change after participation in these programs, that may be evidence for the explicit side. If continued studies do show ethical change, perhaps that is evidence of the implicit side. However, results are usually not clear-cut case-closed arguments for either position. If the results are mixed, then the debate continues, but with more refined arguments on both sides, including nuanced positions between them that are less rhetorical and more concrete.

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Mindfulness and Morality

17

Richard K. Payne

Introduction

As mindfulness programs make greater inroads in public life—from hospitals, to schools, to the workplace—their relation to the traditions of Buddhism has become increasingly contested. Claims have been made that the two are totally separate, or actually identical, or that there is a developmental continuity from Buddhism to mindfulness—that they constitute a modernizing improvement of Buddhism—making it more relevant to today's world. Still other contributors to the discussion see the disjunction of mindfulness from Buddhism as an unfortunate, disruptive, or destructive consequence of capitalist appropriations. At the same time, others have maintained that mindfulness is the true heart of Buddhism, only to be found once irrelevant cultural accretions are stripped away. And yet others have seen mindfulness as a way to camouflage Buddhism so as to use social institutions to promote its teachings and practices without confronting legal prohibitions (Brown, 2016).

Recently discussions have focused on two related general questions. First is the relation between morality and the practice of mindfulness meditation, especially regarding how the practice is taught. And second, how morality defines the practice as religious or secular, Buddhist or non-Buddhist. These tensions about not only how to define mindfulness but who has the authority to do so follow from the promotion of mindfulness meditation as a secular therapeutic technology in medical, educational, and corporate settings. Lindahl (2015) has described two differing

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interpretations of the relation between the Buddhist tradition and mindfulness training. "One version has treated the universal dimensions of mindfulness as non-proprietary, divorceable from Buddhism, and therefore secular. The other approach has emphasized the universal dimensions of mindfulness as indicative of the truth of the Buddha's teachings and has been concerned over deviations from the context of traditional mindfulness" (p. 59). Since the dichotomy between religious and secular is an artifice, this chapter does not focus on the sterile issue of whether mindfulness meditation is "really" religious or not. That debate has all the appearance of being largely motivated by struggles over authority, and by the economic benefits of successfully making such a claim—despite the distractions of seemingly more elevated concerns. The semiotically paired categories of religious and secular are artificial, social constructs, and therefore the disagreements about the religious or secular character of mindfulness are over how to define things that only exist by being defined (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Instead, the focus of this chapter is twofold. First is establishing a taxonomy of the conflicting rhetorics regarding the relation between mindfulness and ethics. Although unthematized, those rhetorics are formative of the positions taken in these debates. And since these rhetorics make different assumptions that are not clearly stated, participants are "talking past one another."

The second topic of this chapter is the presumption that there is an identity between religion and morality, a presumption that is foundational for the contentiousness of the debates. Monteiro, Musten, and Compson (2015) note, for instance, that the "seeming absence of the explicit teaching of ethics in the MBI [mindfulness based interventions] curriculum" (p. 8) is the "thorniest" source for criticisms of MBIs. This is thorny because of the shared presumptions regarding the centrality of ethical development for processes of self-improvement and spiritual training and the presumed absence of such considerations from scientifically grounded technologies. Contributors to the debates over the "proper" relation between mindfulness meditation and ethical instruction share the presumption that religion and ethics are a unity. Despite secularized mindfulness being represented as a context-neutral and value-free mental technology, some of those promoting secular mindfulness argue that secular mindfulness is fundamentally moral as well. This seemingly self-contradictory position—when presented as technology, mindfulness is value-free, and when presented as self-improvement, it is moral—evidences the moral and religious quality of the culture of self-improvement itself, a product of Euro-American popular religious culture (Payne, 2016).

The first part of this chapter identifies three ways that the relation between morality and mindfulness is conceived, while the second part problematizes the underlying presumption that there is an identity between religion and morality. Examining the historicity of the identification of religion and morality as an artifice having sociopolitical ramifications invalidates the presumption of a "natural" relation between mindfulness training and moral instruction. At the same time, the co-construction of secular and religious invalidates the claim that a medicalized mindfulness is a purely "secular" mental technology, value-free, and context neutral.

Rhetorical Constructions of the Relation Between Mindfulness and Morality

Three kinds of claims regarding the relation of morality and mindfulness have been made in these discussions: that the two are (1) inherent to one another, (2) integral to one another, or (3) modular in relation to one another.

Inherent to One Another

The argument for an *inherent* relation claims that mindfulness training by itself, without any instruction in morality, leads people to higher moral standing. This is the claim made, for example, by DeSteno (2013) who said that an 8-week instructional program in meditation increased compassionate responses to the suffering of others threefold—whether or not there was any accompanying instruction in morality (Condon, Desbordes, Miller, & DeSteno, 2013). In addition to a control protocol, the research project DeSteno cited provided two meditation protocols, one mindfulness as such, and the other compassion meditation. "Although techniques to focus and calm the mind were taught in both protocols, direct discussion of compassion and the suffering of others only occurred in compassion meditation training" (p. 3). Despite this difference, an increase in compassionate action was found to follow from both mindfulness and compassion meditation. In other words, the kind of meditation practiced did not matter—that is, the increase in compassionate action followed equally from both practices (p. 4). They claim that their research "provides scientific credence to ancient Buddhist teachings that meditation increases spontaneous compassionate behavior" (5). In other words, it was meditation practice per se and not the content of the meditation that increased compassion.

This formulation appears to be grounded on the idea that compassion is a human universal, one that arises spontaneously or can be actively engendered under the proper conditions, rather than being a cultural value that is learned by social transmission. This idea is also found in some Buddhist teachings, such as the philosophy of mind (*Abhidharma*). Compassion is a human universal, at least in potential, but one that can be cultivated. Dreyfus (2002) has pointed out that "Compassion and loving-kindness are mental factors included in the list of eleven virtuous mental factors. As such they exist at least potentially in the mind of every human being and, from a Buddhist point of view, in every sentient being. But the compassion that exists naturally in humans is limited….[and] quite different from the compassion developed by the Buddhist path" (p. 42).

Although DeSteno's (2013) presentation is necessarily simplified, the idea that spontaneous compassionate behavior can be increased by meditation practice accords with some Buddhist teachings regarding the nature of mind as having the potential of compassion. DeSteno's "favored explanation" regarding the causality of such potential being activated "derives from a different aspect of meditation: its ability to foster a view that all beings are interconnected. The psychologist Piercarlo Valdesolo and I have found that any marker of affiliation between two people, even

something as subtle as tapping their hands together in synchrony, causes them to feel more compassion for each other when distressed. The increased compassion of meditators, then, might stem directly from meditation's ability to dissolve the artificial social distinctions — ethnicity, religion, ideology and the like — that divide us."

DeSteno's use of the term "interconnected" resonates with popular understandings of Buddhist's thought as promoting an interdependent understanding of the world. The historical development of this idea, however, is a complex one, and the modern formulations are almost diametrically opposite to those found in early Buddhist thought. McMahan (2008a) explains that early classical formulations of the "concept of dependent origination and its implications were developed by monks and ascetics who saw the phenomenal world as a binding chain—not a web of wonderment but a web of entanglement" (p. 135). He goes on to discuss the identification of interdependence with emptiness in Mahāyāna developments, visionary experiences in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and Buddha-nature theories in East Asian Buddhism. DeSteno operates with a conception of mindfulness as a value-free and context-neutral mental technology, one that when practiced automatically generates compassion in the practitioner by increasing that person's awareness of interconnectedness. The variety of different understandings of interconnectedness or interdependence indicated by McMahan suggests, however, that rather than being a matter of unmediated insight, any particular understanding of interdependence is part of the doctrinal context within which meditation practice is undertaken. The second rhetorical construction of the relation between mindfulness and morality, that the two are integral to one another, explicitly asserts the importance of doctrine as contextualizing meditation practice.

Integral to One Another

An *integral* relation is one in which mindfulness and morality are inseparably related, that is, the claim is made that the specific morality of the Buddhist tradition is necessarily a part of mindfulness training. In this view, the success of mindfulness training requires practitioners to change their moral orientation to the world in specific—that is, Buddhist—ways. This perspective is found, for example, in the work of Purser and Milillo (2014). Locating mindfulness in the eightfold path as "right mindfulness" (*sammā sati*, the seventh path factor), they suggest that the integrity of the path structure follows from the eight path factors being mutually supportive of one another—"the entire soteriological system of the Buddhist path is aimed at effecting deep transformations of mind and behavior toward greater psychological well-being, ethical behavior, and social responsibility" (p. 6). The eight path factors (also known as the eightfold path) are grouped together under the three categories of proper moral actions (*sīla*), meditation practices (*samādhi*), and insight (*paññā*), and because they are mutually supportive, the eight form a whole in which morality is integral. "Because the eight path factors are interpenetrating and mutually reinforcing, right mindfulness is elevated to a form of ethics-based mind training"

(p. 7). A similar understanding is articulated by Gombrich (2009) when he summarized the early Buddhist perspective as one in which "doing a good act is actually purifying one's state of mind. In meditation, such purification is undertaken directly, without any accompanying action….The system is all of a piece" (p. 14).

In contrast to both the inherent conception in which morality is thought to arise spontaneously from meditative practice, and the integral in which Buddhist doctrines are necessarily part of meditation practice, the third view sees them as autonomous from one another.

Modular in Relation to One Another

Finally, a *modular* relation views mindfulness training and morality as distinct and separate, existing independently of one another. Taylor (2007) described the modern sense of self as individual in just such terms. "Just as, in modern epistemological thinking, a neutral description of things is thought to impinge first on us, and then 'values' are 'added'; so here, we seize ourselves first as individuals, then become aware of others, and of forms of sociality" (p. 157). Being separate modules, mindfulness training and different programs of training in morality can be linked together to create different structures. Consequently, under this conception the morality module attached to the module of mindfulness training could equally be Christian or humanist or Buddhist or whatever.

Such a modular conception also appears as the basis of the distinction between right mindfulness and wrong mindfulness (Analayo, 2003, pp. 51–52). In classical Indian Buddhist philosophy of mind (*Abhidharma*), mindfulness is simply a general mental factor (*cetasika*). While the semantic derivation is from the term for remembering, the *Abhidhammattha-sangaha* explains that "as a mental factor it signifies presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than a faculty of memory regarding the past. It has the characteristic of not wobbling, i.e., not floating away from the object. Its function is absence of confusion or non-forgetfulness" (Bodhi, 1993, p. 86). Guenther (1974) rendered the term "inspection" and explained that while it is present in the attentive awareness of a memory, "it is not the futile running after fleeting memories and thereby losing sight of the present, but that function, by which one tries to keep the perceptual situation as constant as possible, in order to learn more about the objective constituent of the particular perceptual situation" (p. 67). For mindfulness to be the path factor of right mindfulness, it "requires the support of being diligent (*ātāpī*) and of clearly knowing (*sampajāna*). It is this combination of mental qualities, supported by a state of mind free from desires and discontent, and directed toward the body, feelings, the mind, and *dhammas*, which becomes the path factor of right mindfulness" (Analayo, 2003, p. 52). In the absence of these supporting factors, and the presence of other factors unconducive to awakening, the general mental factor becomes wrong mindfulness (*micchā sati*).

Within the modular conception of the relation between mindfulness and morality, two different approaches have been expressed. One is that morality is *implicit* to an instructional program in mindfulness, that is, the claim that there is a morality is

implicit to any institutional setting of training and that it is this institutional morality that is learned implicitly during the course of mindfulness training. According to this version of modularity, the professional standards of the institution administering the training and the behavior of its staff provide models of moral behavior that clients will naturally emulate. Clients will, therefore, come to behave more morally as they engage in the training process. While conceiving of the relation as inherent claims that morality increases with practicing meditation, the view that it is implicit means that increasing morality is a consequence limited to the context of the training program per se. This is the view Kabat-Zinn (2011) presented when he suggested that "within the context of medicine and healthcare, we already have in place a profound framework and professional code of conduct in the Hippocratic tradition" (p. 294). Kabat-Zinn interprets non-duality to mean that all beings are "not separate and never were." In an elusive bit of mystification, Kabat-Zinn claims that it is socially easy to profess morality outwardly without adhering to it inwardly—a claim apparently contradictory to his own definition of non-duality. It is, however, on this basis that he goes on to claim that the best form of ethics is implicit: "…it may best be expressed, supported, and furthered by how we, the MBSR instructor and the entire staff of the clinic, embody it in our own lives and in how we relate to the patients" (p. 295). In other words patients learn morality by socializing to the behavior of those with whom they come into contact in the course of an 8-week period of mindfulness training.

An alternative conception of the modular view is that *explicit* instruction in morality—either Buddhist or some other—can be added to instruction in mindfulness. Monteiro et al. (2015) discuss several programs, including their own, that explicitly add an instructional component of ethical training to training in mindfulness per se (p. 9).

This brief survey of the discursive strategies in the discussions regarding mindfulness training and moral instruction has exposed three different conceptions of the relation between the two. The conception that morality is inherent within mindfulness claims that morality arises spontaneously as a result of mindfulness practice. In this conception no moral instruction is necessary to produce an increase in moral behavior, nor does the kind of meditation involved effect this change in the meditator's being in the world. The second conception, integral, is that mindfulness practice is part of the Buddhist tradition and that to be effective requires the practitioner to adopt those values promoted within the tradition. Last, the modular conception sees mindfulness training and moral training as fully autonomous from one another, and like other modular relations, they can be conjoined in various ways. The modular conception in turn has two variant forms, an implicit and an explicit version. In the implicit version, the values of the training context, such as those of the institution and of the personnel involved in the training program, are communicated to clients without being formulated as a program of moral instruction. In the explicit version, training in mindfulness meditation can exist independently, but it is also possible to add a program of moral instruction to the meditation training. Further, there is nothing about the relation that mandates a preference for any specific system of morality.

Because of the differing conceptions of the way that mindfulness training and moral instruction relate to one another, the conversation appears to have reached an impasse. If the goal is to reach some shared understanding of the role of moral instruction in mindfulness training, then the discussants will need to recognize the distinct conceptions of that relation at the bases of their different views. If a shared understanding is not a goal they hold in common, then it is to be expected that the divergent positions will become increasingly entrenched in well-defined and institutionalized doctrinal claims, whether secular (medical or self-help) or Buddhist.

These different rhetorical constructions are based on more fundamental conceptions of the nature of the secular and the religious. Given that conceptions of secular and religious are presumed by discussions about morality and mindfulness, we can explicate those conceptions by examining the consequences of categorizing Buddhism as a religion. Most immediate are the characteristics that are presumed to be true of all religions and therefore must be part of Buddhism as well. More fundamental is the dichotomous formation of the category of religion as an oppositional semantic pairing with the category of the secular. As we will see, this latter opposition is not an evenly balanced one and ramifies back to the discourse over whether mindfulness is Buddhist or secular.

Religion and Ethics

Having schematized these differing conceptions of the relation between mindfulness and morality, we can now step back and ask why this has become such a central issue in present discussions of mindfulness in the first place? American popular religious culture places the role of moral preceptor at the center of how religion is conceived. Consequently this identification of religion and morality is basic to these debates over the proper relation between mindfulness training and instruction in ethics.

The identification of religion with morality is inherited from the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. This spanned the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and modern conceptions identifying religion and morality were formed in the latter part of that period. Welch (1972) summarizes this development, saying that "the rationalism of the Enlightenment was characterized by a deep and pervasive moralism. This meant both moral passion exhibited in the quest for truth and the application of criticism, and the conviction that, finally, morality is the better part of, the final meaning and content of religion. … Religion is the acknowledgement of moral duties as divine commands. …[T]he only value of religion, both natural and revealed, is the provision of divine sanctions for morality" (vol. I, p. 34).

At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, as knowledge of other cultures came to increasingly expand beyond medieval conceptions of Christendom as the divinely sanctioned order of both nature and society, the concept of religion was being promoted to the status of a universal category of humanity. This is an instance of what Fitzgerald (2003) called "cognitive imperialism, which is essentially an attempt to remake the world according to one's own

dominant ideological categories, not merely to understand, but to force compliance" (p. 22). Masuzawa (2005) observed that constructing Buddhism involved a twofold textual construction, which "was a project that put a premium on the supposed thoughts and deeds of the reputed founder and on a certain body of writing that was perceived to authorize, and in turn was authorized by, the founder figure" (p. 126). These two emphases, a founder and a body of scripture recording the teachings of the founder, are hallmarks of modern conceptions of what it means to be a religion, hallmarks themselves based in the formation of modern Christianity. Thus, the construction of Buddhism as a religion enforces compliance with modern conceptions of religion. Such categorization is itself always a matter of contestation, however. The Buddhist modernist's claim that Buddhism is really a philosophy of life and not a religion is a current manifestation of a debate that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, though at that time the valence was just the opposite, and Christian theologians argued that Buddhism did not deserve the exalted title of religion, being instead only a philosophy. This was not the only attempt to privilege Christianity.

Despite the universalizing rhetoric of "world religions," Christianity was held to have a privileged status as "revealed religion," while all others, including Buddhism, were understood to be instances of "natural religion," a lower category. While the category of religion was extended to include Christianity and all the many forms now constructed as religions, the claim to revelation maintained Christian exceptionalism, that is, the idea that while it may share much in common with other religions, it was the unique vessel of God's intention in the world. The relevant point for our present consideration is that the identification of religion and morality was constructed at a particular historical juncture, in service to particular social, political, and economic ends, and, being an artifice, it is neither a necessary nor a natural identity.

Indicative of the implications of classifying Buddhism as one religion among many is the five characteristics some Enlightenment scholars held to be "essential in all religions: that there is a Supreme Being, that he ought to be worshiped, that virtue joined with piety is the chief part of worship, that vices and crimes should be expiated by repentance, and that there are divine rewards and punishments in both this life and the next" (Welch, 1972, vol. I, p. 35). While these specific five characteristics are not now given the defining role they were by some scholars at the time, they are representative of similar presumptions that continue to inform the concept of religion. When Buddhism is identified as one of the religions, then such characteristics are implicitly attributed to it. Despite any awareness of the mismatch between a specific characteristic and Buddhist praxis—such as "belief in a Supreme Being" and the Buddhist modernist dogma of a Śākyamuni as simply human—such mismatches are generally thought to only require nuancing, as the very idea that Buddhism is *not* a religion is counterintuitive.

Probably the most important thinker of the Enlightenment era is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose influence continues to mold Euro-American thinking right into the present. Kant formulated a general conception of religion, that is, one that he presents as applicable to all religions, not just Christianity. While Kant recognized the existence of different religions, he holds that while they have their own

distinctive characteristics they share the principles of a "pure rational system" which "are essential to our becoming 'well pleasing to God'," that is, essential to our salvation. According to Kant, "it is not ritual observance or doctrinal profession that makes us well pleasing to God. Rather, our standing before God depends on the moral status of our *Gesinnung*, i.e., whether we give priority to self-interest over morality or undergo a 'change of heart' whereby morality is given priority over self-interest. Hence, there is only one true path, but it can be packaged in different forms" (Pasternack & Rossi, 2014, p. 46). More than just morality, the ideal of moral perfectionism is one that organizes Kant's conception of religion. "Kant's Jesus is wholly the ideal of moral perfection and the founder of a moral community" (Welch, 1972, vol. 1, p. 47). Thus, "morality is the essential thing in all worship of God. But even more, the rationally permissible belief structure now explicitly rests on the self-certifying moral experience" (p. 47).

Buddhism as Religion

Today this understanding of religion is so totally implicit in popular religious culture that without consciously adopting this image of religion as a whole, many in the Western Buddhist community absorb this cultural identification of religion with morality uncritically. It is, after all, so well established as to be invisible and taken for granted; it simply is the nature of religion—so much so that it is counterintuitive to call it into question. In a word, this understanding of religion as morality has been naturalized. There is, for example, the widespread assumption in the USA that moral behavior follows from being religious and that anyone who is not religious is almost definitely immoral—the implication being that they have not learned the importance of controlling their lower, base, animal desires and motivations.

The key role played by morality is foundational to the basic narrative trajectory of Christianity that leads from primal, blissful harmony in Paradise, through sinful disobedience and ejection from Paradise, to a final atonement and reconciliation. This biblical narrative is fundamentally ethical in nature, hinging as it does on sinful action as the cause for the fall from grace.

If, however, we look at the structure of the Buddhist narrative, we find it presents quite a different trajectory from the biblical narrative (Payne, 2012). The original condition of human existence is not one of blissful harmony but rather of ignorance repeatedly leading to suffering. We can note that there is a difference between the Christian narrative that projects blissful harmony onto a prehistoric past and the Buddhist narrative that locates ignorance as foundational for the individual—a difference that is similar in kind to the distinction between phylogeny and ontogeny. This is an important difference in how the human condition is conceived: on one hand an inherited moral failing that humans on their own can do nothing about correcting, and on the other hand an epistemological condition that one can learn to recognize and systematically compensate for. Despite these differences, however, both narratives structure how the human condition is conceived, and therefore both narratives function as organizing structures for thinking about human existence. In

some strains of Buddhist thought the ideas that our immediate condition is dissatisfying, the way to overcome that dissatisfaction, and the character of the condition we can achieve by making those changes are known respectively as ground, path, and goal.

Realizing that ignorance leads to suffering (*dukkha*), and to the repetition of suffering (*saṃsara*), defines one's current condition (the ground) and motivates action and practice (the path) toward awakening (the goal). Thus, in contrast to the fundamentally moral storyline of Christianity, Buddhism's narrative is driven by overcoming ignorance—not ethics, but epistemology. This fundamental difference between the two traditions suggests that the emphasis on morality in the present discussions of mindfulness is rooted not in the Buddhist tradition itself but in the cultural preoccupations of Euro-American society. The central role of ethics in much of Christian soteriology as popularly understood—deserving salvation by following God's moral injunctions, or as per Kant above, becoming pleasing to God through a change of heart—is taken as characteristic of religion per se and thereby is projected onto Buddhism. Anne Harrington claims, for example, that "Buddhism has historically sought a solution to suffering in inner transformation and a corresponding commitment to the highest ethical ideals" (Harrington, 2002, p. 19). The components of this (unsupported) claim are all equally problematic—that the goal of Buddhism is "a solution to suffering," that this is achieved by an "inner transformation," and that this entails "commitment to the highest ethical ideals." The purpose for pointing out the problematic character of these issues here is not to attempt to nuance, much less falsify these claims. It is instead to point out that they are simply asserted as unproblematically true and that therefore they operate normatively—they work to create a particular understanding of what Buddhism is and what it is not—an understanding that frames Buddhism in congruence with the cultural presumption regarding the identity of religion and morality. Granted, that was probably not the purposeful intent of the author, whom I would assume thought that she was repeating claims regarding the character of Buddhism that are simply truisms. However, it is the rhetorical dynamic imposed by the presumptions built into American popular religious culture that needs to be understood in order to address the presumption that morality plays the same kind of salvific role in Buddhism as in Christianity.

One version of this is the idea that salvation as understood in the Christian tradition is "ultimately" identical with awakening as understood in the Buddhist. This sort of harmonizing interpretation is a hallmark of Perennialism, an elitism that claims to know that all religions have the same goal. A failure to discriminate between Christian salvation and Buddhist awakening is not only a common characteristic in American popular religious culture but is also at times held to be a morally superior perspective—as if failing to see fundamental differences is perception of a higher unity.

This is not, of course, to say that the Buddhist tradition sees no role for morality but rather that morality does not play the salvifically central role that it does in Christianity. Rather than being the key to attain redemption for one's original sinful failing, morality constitutes a condition for effective practice in Buddhism or is a

motivation for practice. Even so, both Buddhist thought and Christian theology of course offer many extensive and detailed expositions on every aspect of these fundamental models of the human problem, and the simplified structures discussed above do not intend to provide a fully adequate description of either. These are instead abstractions designed to highlight the basic differences between the religious systems.

Secular and Religious: Imbalanced Opposites

One approach to understanding the contestation over the character of mindfulness training in relation to morality would be to ask whether this impasse is the result of mindfulness having become simply one more locus of competition over authority, authenticity, and legitimacy in a capitalist economic system. Such an analysis would look at the capitalist structures of modern neoliberal society to understand the competitive motivations involved (Hsu, 2016). Capitalist structures played a central role in the production of the system of modern nation-states, and the modern nation-state requires an understanding that the secular is the common framework within which religion exists as a unique and limited personal commitment. Thus, while in a capitalist system competition for "ownership" of mindfulness as a saleable commodity is a motivating factor, an alternative inquiry can reveal that the ground upon which all of these different positions are taken, the way that religion is conceptualized in Western culture, is in fact neither natural, universal, nor neutral. It is, instead, a juridical artifice serving particular economic and political ends. As Fitzgerald says, "the category religion is at the heart of modern western capitalist ideology and … it mystifies by playing a crucial role in the construction of the secular, which to us constitutes the self-evidently true realm of scientific factuality, rationality and naturalness" (Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 20). In such a framework, the subsumption of Buddhism into the category of religion is part of a broader ideological program separating the social order, defined as secular, from a privatized religiosity. Fitzgerald locates this development in connection with Protestant doctrines of salvation which introduced the concept that one's moral conscience is private. Consequently, "there developed an influential notion that the truly religious consciousness is private" (p. 28). The secular claims to be the neutral public ground upon which individual moral and religious commitments are made.

Mindfulness as Technology: Value-Free and Context Neutral

One of the grounds upon which the dichotomy of science and religion has been constructed is ethics. Simplistic distinctions common in popular religious culture make science, identified as the neutral and universal arbiter of truth in the secular, concerned with facts, while religion is concerned with values. While this dichotomization has a long history, so also has critique of it, as, for example, by C.P. Snow in his lectures of 1959 (Snow, 1993). Recently, however, this way of distinguishing the

two has been given new life, and a new acronym, by Gould (1999) as the idea that science and religion constitute two non-overlapping magisteria, or NOMA. Knowledge created through the scientific method is held to be of value for its technological applications, but not itself subject to moral evaluation beyond the commonly shared epistemic and intellectual standards—such as that the work be done accurately, that it be an original piece of work, and so on.

When, as in DeSteno's study, a scientific approach is employed in the study of the relation between mindfulness and morality, the fundamental construct is that of a mechanistic technology of mind. That is, the performance of action X creates result Y. This relation is itself understood simply as a "mechanical" one having no moral dimension. As such the relation between cause and effect is not subject to ethical evaluation, though the effect may itself be held to be a positive or negative one. It is in other words the case that the technology is value neutral in much the same way that say a telephone is considered to be value neutral, the evaluation only applying to the use to which the technology is put, that is, the kind of effect produced by some specific use of the technology.

The putative value neutrality of science and technology is itself based on a claim to universality. In this view "religions" are limited to voluntary associations, based on individual subjective experiences, and constructed of beliefs a person holds to be true—and consequently those beliefs can be epistemologically devalued as "true for them." In contrast, science is supposed to address that which is true without such qualifications. In other words, the dichotomy of secular and religious is not an even one, epistemological privilege being given to science as universal, over religion as limited, subjective, and personal. The current fascination with cognitive science as somehow "proving" the validity or value of meditation, as per DeSteno, perpetuates this discursive imbalance. Fitzgerald (2017) noted that,

> When cognitive scientists claim that 'religion' can be explained scientifically by evolutionary theory, and even posit a special gene for 'it,' we can see mystification at work. The very form of this claim tacitly embeds 'religion' (which we have seen is an inherently confused category with powerful and contradictory meanings) as a distinct kind of 'thing' which can be defined according to its universal characteristics. But the other side of this embedding is the unquestioned assumption, not only that the term 'religion' can be made to to stand for a specific aspect of evolutionary behaviour (as if, for example, counter-intuitive beliefs are typically religious, but could not be found in science), but that science is a distinctly non-religious activity that can explain religion.

Mutatis mutandis, the same discursive structure applies to "meditation" as a distinct kind of thing that can be defined according to its universal characteristics. In doing so, this promotes such claims as that whatever the Buddha Śākyamuni legendarily did under the bodhi tree is the same as mindfulness meditation as taught today, but only outside the framework of Buddhism—which as "a religion" is represented as "non-universal." Against this background, what at least to this author had appeared to be an incoherent set of claims typical of secular mindfulness (and Secular Buddhism as well) begin to make sense—along with the internal contradictions regarding morality.

These internal contradictions have been indicated by Jared Lindahl in his juxtaposition of secularized mindfulness and right mindfulness. Borrowing from Lindahl's (2015) discussion, we can point out that on the one hand, there is the claim made by some proponents that a mindfulness-based interventions are universal because they are "divorced from the more problematic 'religious' elements of Buddhism: its cosmologies, beliefs, and rituals" (p. 59). The act of stripping mindfulness meditation of its Buddhist context is then understood as making it universal, in keeping with the imbalanced dichotomy identified by Fitzgerald. Being universal "means that mindfulness as a particular way of paying attention, although developed within the context of Buddhism, is not dependent on Buddhism; it is non-proprietary" (p. 59) At the same time, however, this secularized and "non-proprietary" form of mindfulness is (somehow) identical with a "universal dharma." In this way proponents of secularized mindfulness as "a universal dharma that is co-extensive, if not identical, with the teachings of the Buddha" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 290) repeat in modern garb the apologetics of early Buddhist modernists, that is, the claim that the teachings of the *buddhadharma* form an identity with modern (nineteenth century) scientific rationality. We should note that this kind of claim, made in reaction to Christian missionaries who attempted to dismiss Buddhism as superstitious, simply reversed the accusation, claiming that it is Buddhism that is truly scientific and rational and Christianity that is superstitious (McMahan, 2008b, pp. 89–116).

It is this internal contradiction of the "secular mindfulness is universal *buddhadharma*" position that contributes so much confusion to the debate over mindfulness and morality. Mindfulness is operationalized as a technology and therefore value neutral, but is then also identified as having a moral dimension, making it also a member of the category "religion." Support for the moral dimension of secular mindfulness follows from it being judged to be good on the basis of the effects produced. A value neutral technology, however, can be applied toward aims that one might judge to be morally reprehensible. This reveals the difficulty for some of the proponents of secular applications of mindfulness. If it is presented as a technology, that means that it is value neutral. In such a case, the judgment is not of the technology of mindfulness meditation but rather of the results of its application. Some proponents have objected that critiques based on ethical concerns regarding corporate demands for productivity or military demands for maintaining combat readiness are misplaced and that the goal of mindfulness training is only personal well-being. Such defenses fail, however, to recognize that formulating a secular version of mindfulness as a value-free technology is just exactly what raises the moral issues to begin with.

Conclusion

While three different views regarding the relation between mindfulness training and moral instruction have been formulated by different parties to the debate, the cultural presumption that religion and morality are identical creates a number of conundrums for all parties. For those who wish to present a secular mindfulness that

incorporates ethical instruction explicitly, that incorporation makes it look like religion, whatever kind of ethics is involved. For those who present mindfulness as a medicalized technology, claiming a moral dimension requires a discursive sleight of hand. For those who see Buddhism as a religion in this sense, ethical instruction would seem to be a necessary part of mindfulness. The preconceptions regarding the identity of religion and morality are not, however, rooted in the Buddhist tradition itself but rather a cultural heritage of the Reformation and Enlightenment. Rather than simply accepting this cultural presumption uncritically, it should be recognized as merely an artifact from a particular historical era, one that arose as part of a discourse compartmentalizing religion as a limited affiliation and private commitment within the public sphere of the secular. In addition to questioning the identification of religion with morality, there is a more fundamental question of what has followed from identifying Buddhism as "a religion" among others in the public, secular, and scientific domain.

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Postsecular Charisma: Thich Nhat Hanh and the Ethics of Mindfulness

18

Marek Sullivan and Alp Arat

'Your life is the teaching, is the message.' (Nhat Hanh 2005)

Introduction

When Thich Nhat Hanh scheduled a visit to Google headquarters in September 2013, a *Guardian* article asked ahead of the event: "Why on earth are many of the world's most powerful technology companies, including Google, showing a special interest in an 87-year-old Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk?" According to the author, "the answer is that all of them are interested in understanding how the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh […] can help their organizations to become more compassionate and effective" (Confino, 2013).

That a world-renowned teacher of mindfulness could be presented as a purveyor of corporate organizational efficiency is a gift for McMindfulness critics (Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Ng, 2015a), according to whom mindfulness' entry into the capitalist mainstream has been facilitated by a desire to streamline worker productivity, quieten dissent, and maximize company profits. The perceived secularization of mindfulness—the stripping away of accumulated Buddhist tradition and its concomitant baggage of religious ethics in favor of a scientifically proven, nonreligious form of mind-body praxis—is shown up as one more strand in a late-modern, neoliberal attempt to insert free market values in every aspect of life. The Buddha's emphasis on moderation and his adherence to a strict ethical code enshrined in varying sets of precepts (e.g., the Five Lay Precepts of not killing, not stealing, not indulging in sexual impropriety, not practicing false speech, and not consuming intoxicants) can all be laid aside, so long as the corporate motto holds: "Keep mindful and stay productive." From this perspective, Google's interests in Thich Nhat Hanh seem less than innocent.

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Although important questions should be asked about the rights and wrongs of corporate mindfulness (and other essays in this volume provide some excellent responses in this regard), the focus on discursive content, based on what people or texts have said, is less interesting to us than the question of authority, based on who or what is doing the saying (Arat, 2017; Williamson 2010). Specifically, we ask why Silicon Valley would seek out the figure of Thich Nhat Hanh in particular over other, less ambiguously nonreligious spokespersons. If a condition of Thich Nhat Hanh's invitation to speak at Google is the event's secularity—i.e., its translatability into an a-religious, scientific idiom—we might ask what the specific figure of a charismatic Buddhist monk can add to the pedagogy of mindfulness, since the question of who speaks at events like these should have no bearing on the validity of what is said. Science does not need charisma; evolutionary biology is not truer because Richard Dawkins explains it. In principle, Thich Nhat Hanh's job could have been done by anyone (or, indeed, any*thing*) with the right script or manual of mindfulness practice.

What then draws corporations like Google to religious figures of authority like Thich Nhat Hanh? And what can such events tell us about the knotty relation between mindfulness, religion, secularity, and ethics? We suggest the ongoing appeal of teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh even in secular contexts reveals something important about the set of problems stemming from current debates around the ethics of mindfulness. Against supporters and critics of McMindfulness, we deny that mindfulness is fully detachable from Buddhist ethics; it is simply impossible for mindfulness to be fully "secularized." But against Trojan horse defenders of McMindfulness, we also deny that Buddhist ethics are, or must be, inherent in the practice of mindfulness itself. Drawing on theories of discourse and social constructivism, we argue, rather, that mindfulness has become joined to distinct ethical dispositions and practices through decades of discursive elaboration that link the teachings and practices of charismatic figures of authority like Thich Nhat Hanh to the very meaning of mindfulness. In other words, it is impossible to practice mindfulness today without in some way connecting this practice to Buddhist ethics, not for reasons of objective facticity (i.e., mindfulness intrinsically breeds good Buddhists, at all times, in all places) but for social and historical reasons linked to the particular history of mindfulness in the West—a history involving, centrally, Thich Nhat Hanh.

By reframing debates around the ethics of mindfulness in terms of history, tradition, and charismatic authority, we seek to move away from stale distinguishers of religious and secular toward an alternative postsecular perspective on the complex issue of religion's ongoing relevance in late modernity. Although we still make use of the terms religious and secular heuristically, not least to highlight the difficulty of disentangling one from the other, we argue that contemporary mindfulness practice exceeds the boundaries of religious and secular space to form a distinctly modern tradition, best captured by the concept of postsecularity.

McMindfulness and Trojan-Horse Theories of Practice

Current debate about the ethics of mindfulness swings between concerns over the ethical evisceration of mindfulness under conditions of secular instrumentalization (producing McMindfulness; Purser & Loy, 2013) and Trojan horse defenses of

corporate mindfulness that emphasize its inherently positive ethical content, and hence its power to transform corporate culture from the inside (Batchelor & Rockman, 2011; Folk, 2013; Kingston, 2013). For the McMindfulness team, mindfulness and Buddhist tradition (including Buddhist ethics) can be separated. Indeed, their separability is a condition of mindfulness' injection into the mainstream, since it allows a theory and practice historically bound up with one of the great world religions to penetrate secular space without dragging religion along with it. For both supporters and critics of McMindfulness, the issue is not so much whether mindfulness and Buddhism are separable, but whether they *should* be separated. Supporters of McMindfulness celebrate the possibility of drawing the secular wheat from the religious chaff, since it allows (a) the isolation and refinement of objectively therapeutic principles without interference from religious forms of authority and (b) the application of such principles across distinctions of religion or denomination, since secular principles are by definition not beholden to any one tradition. This latter point is a boon to big industry, since it grants mindfulness access to the multifaith, multicultural domain of the modern workspace. Critics of McMindfulness, on the other hand, usually follow a left-wing anti-capitalist and/or Buddhist agenda that seeks to restore mindfulness to the (inherently) anti-capitalist, Buddhist tradition it derives from and thus remove it from the co-opting clutches of corporate culture. For both critics and supporters, however, mindfulness and ethics or tradition can exist autonomously. The key question concerns the desirability of such autonomy.

The Trojan horse team, on the other hand, tends to emphasize the power of mindfulness to stand on its own as a critical practice in itself that will bear fruits regardless of its connection to, or disconnection from, Buddhist ethics or tradition. For example, Silicon Valley entrepreneur Kenneth Folk has sung the virtues of corporate mindfulness training, on the basis that it allows a Buddhist value system centered on compassion and empathy to be sneaked into an otherwise valueless commercial context. Likewise, for buddhistgeeks.com producer Kelly Sosan Bearer, it is enough to get business elites on the meditation cushion, since meditation inherently leads to awakening and hence to proper ethical conduct (Brown, 2016). For both, whether meditating staff aim to become "good" Buddhists or not, they will. This idea has been underscored by Kabat-Zinn (2011), whose latest work described Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) as merely "one of a possibly infinite number of skillful means for bringing the dharma into mainstream settings" (p. 281).

In turn, Purser and Ng (2015a) have criticized these defenses for their lack of empirical foundation: "there is simply no evidence that hitting the meditation cushion will make one more or less likely to kill, steal, or support radical anti-capitalist change." Mindfulness did not stop Steve Jobs' investment in Foxconn, and neither did it halt the destructive nationalism of WWII kamikaze pilots (Hunter, 2013, p. 59). As Titmuss (2014) rhetorically asked, on the subject of military mindfulness training, "Have any group of marines engaged in operations refused to continue killing and harming the local population in Muslim countries after a mindfulness course? Have any drone pilots changed their motivation while sitting in front of Death TV and walked away from their desk after a mindfulness course? Is there any evidence to show a change in heart of any military personnel from military mindfulness practices? Would the military permit the continuity of MMFT if soldiers and drone pilots developed compassion for their victims and walked away from the killing fields and death TV?"

Without wishing to downplay the importance of these debates, our approach is slightly different. We agree with Trojan horsers that mindfulness is in a sense inseparable from Buddhist ethics. Mindfulness (at least as it is practiced in the modern West) is, at one level, tied to a distinct set of ethical dispositions, generally focused on Buddhist virtues of non-harm, peace, and equanimity. But we challenge the idea that mindfulness and Buddhist ethics cannot be separated because the latter inhere in the former, as though mindfulness naturally leads one to proper ethical practice. Our approach does not, in fact, rely on natural or principled relations at all. Rather, we understand the relation between mindfulness and ethics in terms of a historical—and therefore contingent—amalgamation of discourse, authority, tradition, representation, and power. On this understanding, the question of the relation between ethics and mindfulness is not answerable by reference to logic, science, or even personal experience. It depends, fundamentally, on history: the history of individual bodies, and their quality of representation in a field of secular-religious capital and power.

Mindful March

To complement his Google appearance, Thich Nhat Hanh led a day of mindful meditation at the World Bank on September 10, 2013 followed by a walking meditation through central Washington, both of which were intended, and interpreted by many, as peaceful protests against economic neoliberalization and environmental destruction. Not everyone was impressed, however. *The Economist* reported the event as follows:

> The World Bank may need a period of quiet reflection, but this was ridiculous. On September 10th 300 bankers joined Thich Nhat Hanh, an 87-year-old Vietnamese monk and founder of the Order of Interbeing, for a day of "mindful meditation" with Jim Kim, the bank's president and an admirer of Mr. Hanh. 'It was all very Zen', one member of staff told the *Washington Post*. Afterwards, Mr. Hanh […] led a 'walking meditation' through Washington—though since the traffic police did not show up, the quiet contemplation was marred by the not-so-Zen honking of angry drivers. Mr. Hanh says he believes in 'the power of aimlessness' and thinks civilization is threatened by 'voracious' economic growth. Mr. Kim (one hopes) does not". (anonymous, 2013)

Such sardonicism aside, we might ask: what social and historical factors must be in place for an event like this to be reliably interpreted as a form of social protest? How can a slow procession through central Washington, of meditators focused on their breath and the physical sensations of walking, and without ostensible use of banners or chanting, point toward an anti-growth model of economics and the pressing need to curb environmental destruction?

While these might seem like obvious connections, there is no a priori reason that a walking meditation should signify a demand for anti-growth economics and environmental preservation. Indeed, the obviousness of the connection is simply an indication of the strength of our assumptions. Can we imagine a mindful march designed to promote environmental destruction, racism, or neoliberalism? We wager that, for the vast majority of us, the idea seems a little strange.

Moreover, we argue that an explanation for this strangeness is not to be found within the practice of mindfulness itself (since, as noted above, mindfulness has historically not stopped people from being environmentally destructive, racist, or neoliberal) but the particular way that mindfulness has been presented and marketed in the West, often by non-Western individuals vested with significant degrees of charismatic power and authority. This history, of course, exceeds the discourse of mindfulness per se and bleeds into the history of Eastern meditation "virtuosos" (to use Weber's, 1978, preferred term) in general. From *dhyana-siddha* (meditation expert) Swami Vivekananda's (1893) call for "tolerance and universal acceptance" at the Parliament of the World's Religions to D. T. Suzuki's unitarianism-infused Buddhist environmentalism, there has been no shortage of such virtuosos willing to back more left-leaning, progressive causes, including environmental preservation and issues of social justice. (The surprising racism of certain virtuosos—notably Suzuki—does not invalidate our argument but supports it, precisely because it is surprising.)

In a certain sense, we may speak here of the formation of a distinctly "modern" (McMahan, 2008) tradition of meditation-based, ethically sensitive spirituality, characterized by temporal and geographical dislocation and hybridity, as traditional ethics are uprooted, transposed, and grafted onto contemporary dilemmas. According to his official website (plumvillage.org), Thich Nhat Hanh has simplified [the essence of ancient Buddhist practices] and developed [these] to be easily and powerfully applied to the challenges and difficulties of our times" (anonymous, 2017). Even in the relatively short lifespan of Buddhism in the West, mindfulness, Buddhist ethics, and modern virtues of social and environmental care have been contingently, yet by and large nonnegotiably, sutured by decades of discursive sedimentation linking the domains together: contingently, because the suture is formed historically, through reiterative processes of identity formation carried in speech, acts, and bodily performances (like Thich Nhat Hanh's mindful march), and nonnegotiably because—as in all domains of social life—we have limited control over the wider frameworks of meaning we inhabit (we cannot choose to make "apple" mean "orange"). In other words, the linkage between Buddhist ethics and mindfulness is open to contestation and change, yet stable enough to resist most forms of dissent. The stability of the linkage is, of course, directly related to the authority of the speaker on whose speech and acts the linkage depends.

Another way of framing this problem is through a recently theorized distinction between self- and social authority. Whereas forms of legitimation grounded in self-authority assume the practice and fruits of mindfulness are adequately authenticated through personal experience (the individualized self being the natural counterpoint to, and demonstrative route into, universal principles), we emphasize the importance of social authority in affirmations of meditational success. Despite the claims of corporate secular institutions like Google to stand outside of religion and religious structures of authority, and despite a classical secular faith in the power of science to legitimate itself, their ongoing attachment to charisma betrays a reliance on traditional, even religious sources of legitimation. We develop this point more fully below.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–)

Let us examine the specific figure of Thich Nhat Hanh. As arguably the single most charismatic protagonist of the contemporary mindfulness movement, the person of Thich Nhat Hanh plays a crucial role to his message. It will therefore be useful to sketch the broad outlines of his extraordinary career in Vietnam and the West. The following is not intended to provide a comprehensive or critical evaluation of Thich Nhat Hanh's life but to reproduce a popular image of Thich Nhat Hanh, as presented in his many books and summarized on the official Plum Village website. For it is *this* understanding that will inevitably inform standard representations of mindfulness most deeply and most directly.

Thich Nhat Hanh (born Nguyen Xuan Bao) came into the world in 1926 in Hue, Central Vietnam. At the age of 16, he joined the local monastery at Tu Hieu Temple as a novice monk, undergoing official ordination 7 years later (1949), under the abbotship of Thanh Quy Chan That (1884–1968). After a further 17 years of training (1966), Thich Nhat Hanh received the "light transmission" of the Lieu Quan Dharma lineage making him a 42nd generation *dharmacarya* (teacher of the dharma) of the Lam Te Dhyana school (roughly equivalent to the Japanese Rinzai tradition)—among the highest ranks of the Chan monastic hierarchy. Thanh Quy Chan That passed away in 1968 and, following his wishes, was succeeded by Thich Nhat Hanh, who remains the current abbot of Tu Hieu Temple (Phap Dung, 2006).

Outside the formal monastic context, Thich Nhat Hanh studied literature and philosophy at the University of Saigon and, in 1961, travelled to the USA to study and teach Comparative Religion and Buddhism at Princeton and Columbia Universities, respectively. During the early 1960s, he also founded La Boi publishing house, the Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, and the School of Youth and Social Service (described by his official online biography as "a grass-roots relief organization of 10,000 volunteers based on the Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassionate action" (anonymous, 2017)). In 1966 he established the Order of Interbeing, based principally on the Mahāyāna doctrine of the interdependence and interpenetration of all things and committed to sets of Buddhist precepts reinterpreted as "mindfulness trainings" to reflect the practical nature of Buddhist ethics, the close link between mindfulness and ethics, and the importance of cultivating both over time. A year later he published his first major book, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (1967), in which he coined the now widespread term "engaged Buddhism."

Thich Nhat Hanh returned to the USA in 1966 to raise awareness of the horrors of the Vietnam War, "to make the case for peace," and "to call for an end to hostilities in Vietnam." During this trip Thich Nhat Hanh met Martin Luther King Jr., who would nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize the following year (but tragically cost him the prize, since Nobel nominations cannot be made public until the vote is decided). As a result of Thich Nhat Hanh's consciousness-raising efforts in the West and his eschewal of partisan politics, he was exiled from Vietnam, and henceforth devoted his life to spreading Buddhist mindfulness and ethics around the world. According to his biography, "Thich Nhat Hanh continued to travel widely, spreading the message of peace

and brotherhood, lobbying Western leaders to end the Vietnam War, and leading the Buddhist delegation to the Paris Peace Talks in 1969." Throughout this time, he lectured and wrote extensively on "the art of mindfulness" and "living peace."

Two Buddhist communities followed: the Sweet Potato community, established near Paris in 1975, and its more recent incarnation, Plum Village, established near Bordeaux in South-West France in 1982. According to the Plum Village website, this is now "the West's largest and most active Buddhist monastery," receiving up to 8000 visitors per year, who "come from around the world to learn 'the art of mindful living.'" According to the same website, the last 20 years have seen over 100,000 retreatants commit to follow Thich Nhat Hanh's "modernized code of universal global ethics in their daily life, known as 'The Five Mindfulness Trainings'."

More recently, Thich Nhat Hanh has founded Wake Up ("a worldwide movement of thousands of young people training in these practices of mindful living") and expanded the Order of Interbeing to include monasteries in California, New York, Vietnam, Paris, Hong Kong, Thailand, Mississippi, and Australia. He is also the central founder of Europe's first "Institute of Applied Buddhism" in Germany. Altogether, the Plum Village website estimates the number of participants in Plum Village-related activities in Europe and the USA at over 45,000.

In 1990, Thich Nhat Hanh was approached by Jon Kabat-Zinn to write a preface for his foundational work on MBSR *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (1990). He has also written prefaces for, and coauthored books with, Western scholars of Buddhism such as Stephanie Kaza, Joan Halifax, and Joanna Macy. Together, these authors have written extensively on the relevance of Buddhist teachings to the environmental crisis, to issues of social justice, and to the facilitation of peaceful and constructive dialogue between any and all conflicting parties.

Although Thich Nhat Hanh suffered a severe stroke in 2014, he still attends walking meditations, talks, and ceremonies at Plum Village and elsewhere.

Charismatic Authority

Reflecting on Thich Nhat Hanh's rich and engaged life, we may advance some suggestions concerning the sources of his charisma and centrality to the mindfulness movement. Beyond the immediately obvious—Thich Nhat Hanh's physical presence, his unshakeably peaceful demeanor, clarity of speech, rhetorical proficiency, gentleness—we suggest his charismatic recognition stems from at least five interrelated factors: (a) his formal position of authority in the monastic hierarchy of both the Lam Te Dhyana school and the Buddhist Order of Interbeing; (b) his respectability within a highly interconnected, global Buddhist community; (c) his public profile as an advocate of human rights; (d) his personal and political association with Martin Luther King; and (e) his peripheral contributions to discourse on MBSR.

As we can see from these five factors (which are in no way intended to be exhaustive), religious frameworks and justifications intermingle with secular ones; ethical stances intermingle with certified practical wisdom; and science intermingles with

history. No single factor can be treated in isolation from the others. If Thich Nhat Hanh is listened to on the subject of MBSR, this is, at least partly, because he holds a position of authority in the Buddhist world—one granted on the basis of an illustrious disciplinary, meditational, and pedagogical career. If Thich Nhat Hanh today enjoys the respect of millions of followers around the world, this is, at least partly, the result of his keen engagements with secular political issues (e.g., immigration), cognitive science, and modern psychotherapy. To use a term familiar to adherents of Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy, each factor "interpenetrates" the other.

The charismatic figure of mindfulness raises a significant paradox to a secular logic of mindfulness legitimated by scientific evidence, values, and practices. Given that mindfulness and ethics are inseparably fused together in the modus operandi of one of its chief protagonists, a clear tension is set up between a Thich Nhat Hanhian "ethics of mindfulness" and the rational morality of the secular imagination. On one hand, Thich Nhat Hanh's charismatic authority is unambiguously underpinned by a religious source of legitimacy that is both formal (insofar as he slots into a prefigured hierarchy of monastic trainees) and social (the legitimacy of this hierarchy depends—like all hierarchies—on the force of social consensus). As already highlighted above, Thich Nhat Hanh operates in the secular world as a self-avowed, committed, and well-established Buddhist monk, and the religious capital and knowledgeable mastery he commands over the goods of salvation (Bourdieu, 1991) rest firmly within the plausibility structures of the Buddhist worldview (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). On the other hand, unlike more traditional religious specialists whose authority restricts itself to institutional sources of legitimacy, Thich Nhat Hanh has successfully networked his spiritual capital to the secular public sphere, to the extent that he is capable of exercising power outside the immediate confines of a religious field of accumulation (Arat, 2016). Public recognition of his charismatic authority rests simultaneously on religious, spiritual, and rational scientific sources of capital.

Moreover, this authority is both practical and ethical in nature. Regardless of one's religious or Buddhist predilections, Thich Nhat Hanh is widely recognized as (a) having accumulated significant levels of practical mastery in meditation and (b) having an ethical profile of exceptionally good standing. Together, these factors generate a public profile in which mindfulness and ethical conduct are strongly tied together. Even where Thich Nhat Hanh's ethics are not made explicit, they are nevertheless inherent in his popular image and thus indissociable from a particular, though widely successful brand of mindful practice. Whether he marches in Washington, provides consultations for Google, chats to Oprah Winfrey, or features in the *Guardian* or *Huffington Post*, Thich Nhat Hanh consistently evokes the archetype of the enlightened, benevolent, mindful Buddhist saint—an archetype that resonates in secular as well as religious circles.

By tracing the contours of one, particularly charismatic teacher mindfulness in the modern context, our approach reaches beyond a classically secular and immediate logic of philosophical or scientific justifications to understand the relation between mindfulness and ethics. For us, a narrow focus on scientific evidence or universally accessible good reasons misses much of what is at stake in the

contemporary evolution of mindfulness outside of its traditionally Buddhist sphere. Validation of Thich Nhat Hanh's secular authority rests not only on his acts and speech in the present, but the totality of his personal biography, which concatenates and reifies with every new public appearance. This personal biography freely intertwines secular and religious reasons, practices, and ethics to generate the figure of an enlightened, integrated, and ethically perfected being.

Such intertwining, however, is not without complications.

Ethics and Charisma in Practice

To illustrate, consider the way Thich Nhat Hanh justifies mindful ethics in practice. Thich Nhat Hanh was recently asked to respond to the McMindfulness critique that mindfulness is in danger of corruption through its insertion in a corporate economy. He responded as follows:

> If you know how to practice mindfulness you can generate peace and joy right here, right now. And you'll appreciate that and it will change you. In the beginning, you believe that if you cannot become number one, you cannot be happy, but if you practice mindfulness you will readily release that kind of idea. We need not fear that mindfulness might become only a means and not an end because in mindfulness the means and the end are the same thing. There is no way to happiness; happiness is the way. (Confino, 2014)

Thich Nhat Hanh here endorses a very predictable form of secular self-authority that is vulnerable to attacks from critics of McMindfulness, since, according to this passage, the benefits of mindfulness can be enjoyed in the here and now regardless of mindfulness' particular content or mode of expression. If the means and ends of mindfulness practice are collapsed, there is, by definition, no gap between is and ought. The normative implications of mindfulness, and any telos of social justice, are denied in principle. Indeed, many people may feel that "happiness is the way," yet happily continue to partake in a socially oppressive and unjust economy. This is the essence of the McMindfulness critique of corporate mindfulness.

> It is not the full story, however. As Thich Nhat Hanh continues:
> If you consider mindfulness as a means of having a lot of money, then you have not touched its true purpose…It may look like the practice of mindfulness but inside there's no peace, no joy, no happiness produced. It's just an imitation. If you don't feel the energy of brotherhood, of sisterhood, radiating from your work, that is not mindfulness…If you're happy, you cannot be a victim of your happiness. But if you're successful, you can be a victim of your success. (Confino, 2014)

As should be clear, Thich Nhat Hanh here (a) offers up a substantive definition of true mindfulness, focused on feeling "the energy of brotherhood, of sisterhood" radiating from one's work and (b) justifies this definition not through a logical system of reasons and demonstrations but an assertion of authority derived from personal experience. Unless one feels what Thich Nhat Hanh says we should feel, we have not touched the true purpose of mindfulness. This argument is offered without

further justification: the true purpose of mindfulness is true not because there is some secondary reason or secular legitimation structure that authorizes a foundational truth claim, but because Thich Nhat Hanh says it is.

Why is having lots of money not the "true purpose" of mindfulness? And is it really impossible to experience true peace, joy, and happiness while using mindfulness to make a buck? We do not offer these questions to cast doubt on Thich Nhat Hanh's judgment but to highlight the ease with which he shifts from a hedonistic justification of mindful practice (taken to generate joy and peace) to a blank statement of fact underpinned by his authority as a seasoned teacher of Zen Buddhism: yes, joy and peace are the goal, but not any kind of joy and peace; only a Buddhist joy and peace will do. In other words, he clamps down a highly specific (and ethical) criterion of authenticity, based on two factors: his experience as a mature monk and the thoroughly Buddhist ethical framework that underpins this experience—an observation in perfect accord with Hunter (2013), who noted that "All the fellow teachers I spoke with emphasized that if mindfulness doesn't ultimately cultivate greater awareness of connectedness—to others, to the community, to a larger environment—it isn't the genuine article" (p. 59). For Thich Nhat Hanh and others, right mindfulness is held—one might say, presumed—to be incompatible with rampant consumerism, since true peace, true joy, and true happiness have nothing to do with the search for money—a position that stems organically from a Buddhist tradition centered on relinquishing attachment to material things, but has no analogue system of legitimation in the secular sphere. The true content of mindfulness is not resolved by the logic of public/secular reason, but instead subjected to the ratifying gaze of charismatic religious authority, which supports mindful practice only insofar as it bears real ethical fruits, i.e., fruits attached to a fundamentally Buddhist tree.

Enactments of religious authority like these go a long way, we suggest, toward explaining modern perceptions of mindfulness as inherently ethical. While certain practices of mindfulness may well be separable from the Buddhist tradition in which they were developed originally, the ethics of mindfulness are not. An ethically heightened mode of being remains deeply imbued in popular conceptions of being mindful. Engaging with mindfulness is impossible without also, at some level, engaging with the Buddhist ethics that frame its performance.

It should be clear, then, that public interpretations of mindful protest are shaped by religious as well as secular discourses of legitimation, without which the authority of its principal leader would falter. Or, to put it another way: secular discourse buys into a form of authority whose support mechanisms are rooted in a religious tradition and mode of practice, yet buried under an exclusively secular mode of self-presentation. This structure cannot be reduced to individualized practices or secular principles alone, since both are underpinned by religious factors of Buddhist tradition and charismatic recognition, including a stable system of precepts and practices enshrined in scripture and passed down from generation to generation. We suggest it is this extra-secular, religious background that gives Thich Nhat Hanh's peaceful march through Washington much of its ethical content. What may appear as a self-sufficient, secular display in which scientifically certified practices and states of mind interact with secular issues of social injustice is in fact profoundly dependent on a history of ethical discourse tied up in the religious as much as the secular. If a mindful march can be interpreted as a critique

of late modern capitalism, it is not simply because mindfulness requires slowing down against the torrent of accelerating consumer demands, technological progress, and global expansion or becoming mindfully aware of global suffering, and neither is it simply because Thich Nhat Hanh is a known critic of excessive consumerism and environmental degradation; it is also because of his embeddedness in a religious tradition which places strict ethical demands on its adherents, because the second precept forbids us from taking what is not given, or because large-scale industrialization seriously challenges the first precept to not harm living beings. In other words, it is because the religious tradition of Buddhism still informs what secular discourse takes to define mindfulness, regardless of whether this is made explicit or not.

Thich Nhat Hanh and MBSR

Although Thich Nhat Hanh has not actively participated in scientific research on or related to modern secular articulations of mindfulness-based therapy, e.g., MBSR or MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy), he has had at least a peripheral role in MBSR-related discourse from its very beginnings. For example, Thich Nhat Hanh's preface to Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living* marked a crucial stage in the complex story of Buddhism's relation to the modern mindfulness movement. As popular mindfulness teacher and author Edel Maex wrote in *The Buddhist Roots of Mindfulness Training*: "Had it not been for Thich Nhat Hanh's foreword the Buddhist origin of [Kabat-Zinn's concepts] might have gone unnoticed to many readers. Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the foremost Buddhist teachers in the West and his few words certainly attracted many Buddhist practitioners to this book and to the application of mindfulness in clinical practice. This work gave rise to a first generation of mindfulness teachers" (Maex, publication date unstated).

Yet the story of Thich Nhat Hanh's inclusion in this book itself provides a fascinating insight into the complex intertwining of religious authority and secular practice in the modern mindfulness movement and the challenge of disentangling one from the other. We therefore end our section on Thich Nhat Hanh with a brief overview of his relation to the early MBSR movement and the difficulties faced by MBSR founder Kabat-Zinn in simultaneously appealing to religious forms of authority and seeking a secular language divorced from religious traditions.

Kabat-Zinn (2011) has reflected on the process that led him to write *Full Catastrophe Living* as a primarily nonreligious, specifically non-Buddhist document. Despite his contemporary claim that MBSR was designed as a skillful means to import "the dharma" into "mainstream settings," part of this process involved stripping away suspiciously Buddhist words like dharma and avoiding appeals to Buddhist sources of authority: "When I wrote *Full Catastrophe Living*, 9 years after starting the Stress Reduction Clinic, it was very important to me that it capture the essence and spirit of the MBSR curriculum as it unfolds for our patients. At the same time, I wanted it to articulate the dharma that underlies the curriculum, but without ever using the word 'Dharma' or invoking Buddhist thought or authority, since for obvious reasons, we do not teach MBSR in that way" (p. 282).

Since 1990, Kabat-Zinn has clearly become more outspoken about MBSR's links to the dharma and its accompanying ethical content. This may be for several reasons: MBSR's establishment in the secular mainstream, so that it could afford to branch into religious territory; Buddhism's increased profile and respectability in the West; and/or the natural tendency for practitioners of MBSR to take an interest in Buddhism. Each of these factors make it easier for Kabat-Zinn to come clean today about the skillful means motivation that lead him to translate the dharma into purely secular terms at the origins of the MBSR movement.

Nevertheless, Kabat-Zinn's earlier wrestling with the pros and cons of Thich Nhat Hanh's preface to *Full Catastrophe Living* remains a powerful testament both to MBSR's quasi-neurotic rejection of the religious and to the difficulty of detaching secular mindfulness from Buddhist forms of authority. Elaborating on the process of incorporating Thich Nhat Hanh's preface, Kabat-Zinn wrote:

> Before the book was published, I asked a number of colleagues that I respected to endorse it. Among those I asked was Thich Nhat Hanh, whom I didn't know at the time except through his writings, and in particular, his little book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975), which had a certain plainness and simplicity to it that I admired. In this case, more than hoping for any kind of endorsement, I thought I would simply share with him the direction we were taking and get his sense of it. I didn't actually expect a response. However, he did respond, and offered a statement that I felt showed that he had grasped the essence of the book and the line it was trying to walk. What's more, he expressed it in such an elegant and affirming way that I felt it was a gift, and that it would be disrespectful, having asked for it, not to use it. However, I did think twice about it. It precipitated something of a crisis in me for a time, because not only was Thich Nhat Hanh definitely a Buddhist authority, his brief endorsement used the very foreign word dharma not once, but four times. Yet what he said spoke deeply and directly to the essence of the original vision and intention of MBSR. I wondered: 'Is this the right time for this? Would it be skillful to stretch the envelope at this point? Or would it in the end cause more harm than good?' In retrospect, these concerns now sound a bit silly to me. But at the time, they felt significant. (p. 282-3)

Here we see Kabat-Zinn wrestling with precisely the legitimation issue examined above: how to disentangle the religious (i.e., Buddhist) from the secular, while relying upon the authority and the prestige bestowed upon his work by the endorsement of an eminently Buddhist monk (a prestige conveyed, e.g., by Kabat-Zinn's admission that he didn't "actually expect a response"). Such unease with Buddhist terminology speaks directly to the politics of representation at the root of the modern mindfulness movement. For some (e.g., Purser and Ng, 2015b), discomfort with non-Western otherness, captured here in Kabat-Zinn's disconnection from the exoticism of dharma, has facilitated the whitewashing of mindfulness, i.e., its reimagination as the exclusive production of white, middle-class Americans and Europeans, even as these same individuals continue to draw on the teachings and authority of non-Western Buddhists. Indeed, there is little doubt that negative Orientalism and other forms of exclusionary discourse practice underpin the history and ultimate success of mindfulness in the West, and that Kabat-Zinn has in many ways been at the forefront of this history, e.g., through his insistence on the applicability of mindfulness to universal categories like "all humanity" (as Purser and Ng (2015b) put it, "The universalizing assertion that "people are not any

inherent 'race', we are all human beings" can….be a form of whitewashing"). Yet what interests us here is not so much Kabat-Zinn's discomfort with Oriental, religious terminology in a Western secular context, as the fact he ultimately accepted Thich Nhat Hanh's endorsement, because the benefits of including his authoritative word outweighed the downsides of incorporating a religious language. Religious authority snuck in through the secular back door, as it were.

We argue that such marriages of religious authority and secular practice are not irrelevant to the contemporary problem of an "ethics of mindfulness." For Thich Nhat Hanh's ultimate inclusion in Kabat-Zinn's early work has shaped the way mindfulness and MBSR have been taught, practiced, and discussed since the very early 1990s, irrevocably welding a Buddhist set of values and precepts to an otherwise valueless, secular practice. Moreover, it is important to recognize the non-Western, religious origins of the dharma's post-MBSR rehabilitation. When Kabat-Zinn today reveals the dharmic impetus of his earlier work, celebrating the positive ethical impact of mindfulness across domains of family, work, politics, and even military (Nakahara, 2012; Titmuss, 2014), yet insists this impact derives from the *inherent* benefits of mindfulness, regardless of its historical association with Buddhist ethics and/or Buddhist figures of authority, he obfuscates the crucial role individuals like Thich Nhat Hanh have played in setting the terms of discussion at the very origins of the MBSR movement (and, in later years, its periphery), both through articulated discourse and by providing a living example of the dharma in practice. Our paper may be read as an attempt to redress the historical balance. We affirm the importance of religion and religious discourses of legitimation for sustaining an ethics of mindfulness in a secular context. And we affirm the importance of specific (importantly, non-Western) bodies invested with charismatic authority for establishing the parameters of such ethics.

Secular/Postsecular

Aside from nuancing debates around the ethics of mindfulness and mindfulness of ethics, our analysis joins current discussion around the distinction between markers of secular and religious and in some ways calls for a reassessment of the modern mindfulness movement as neither secular nor religious, but postsecular (Arat, 2017, 2018). In this final section, we outline some possible interpretations of this term and consider its applicability to current discourses of mindfulness.

The term *postsecular* is highly contested but can mean at least two things. On one hand, it gestures toward a perceived resurgence of religion in the last few decades (e.g., Habermas, 2008) and encapsulates a condition stemming from the *Desecularization of the World* (Berger, 1999). The "post-" here is strictly temporal: until the end of the twentieth century (according to some, until the Iranian Revolution of 1979), religion was on the back foot, receding—as prophets of modernity from Comte to Marx had predicted—under the force of secularizing reason. As the last half-century has shown, however, this trend has not survived late modernity and, indeed, may never have existed at all. Religion is still with us, and it looks, to all intents and purposes, as though it is here to stay.

On the other hand, postsecular can designate a rejection of the very terms on which markers of religious and secular were constructed. Here, the post- prefix refers not so much to a temporal distinction as a conceptual overcoming of the binary logic inherent in secular constructions of the religious. On this reading, distinctions between religious and secular practices, ideologies, and discourses are ontologically unstable and produced asymmetrically by secular forces that must isolate and neuter religion, usually for the purposes of jurisprudence or statecraft (Asad, 2003). It is not that the secular is free from religion—on the contrary, what it designates as religion thrives in the unarticulated interstices of secular society— but that its existence, e.g., as an idealized domain of a- or anti-religious, unmediated, unregulated speech acts in the public sphere, is premised on an illegitimate circumscription and "othering" of the religious (an othering which, crucially, occurs most intensely in Western confrontations with a perceived encroachment of non-Western religions, notably Islam). In this second sense, then, practices, ideologies, and discourses can be designated postsecular to the extent that they refuse easy categorization in slots of religious and secular. Recent scholarship has moved far in this direction (see, e.g., Asad, Brown, Butler, & Mahmood, 2013; Mahmood, 2008).

As we have seen, contemporary manifestations of mindfulness mix religious with secular justifications and secularized practices with unsecularized ethics. Ostensibly providing a secular solution to secular dilemmas (how to increase productivity? increase worker well-being?), mindfulness teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh ultimately fall back upon religious structures of legitimation to convey the full import of their message and change corporate culture from the inside. The authority and charisma required to assume the position of a highly respected teacher of mindfulness cannot be underpinned by secular reasons alone, but stems, also, from the highly disciplined, hierarchical, and ethically stringent world of the Buddhist monk. There is a sense in which traditional markers of religious and secular simply cannot make sense of the knotty relationship between sources of authority at play in modern articulations of mindfulness and the charisma that allows Thich Nhat Hanh to speak *for* mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh's approach therefore fuzzies a facile distinction between religious and secular and, we argue, levers the modern mindfulness movement as a whole toward the conflicted realm of the postsecular.

Conclusion

We suggest the ongoing draw of figures like Thich Nhat Hanh, even in seemingly secular contexts, is key to the set of problems stemming from current debates around the reality and value of an ethics of mindfulness. Alongside Trojan horse defenders of McMindfulness, we argue that mindfulness does carry some form of ethical content. But against these same defenders, we deny that this content is, or has to be, inherent in the practice of mindfulness itself. Rather, mindfulness has become joined or sutured to distinct ethical dispositions and practices through decades of discursive elaboration that link the teachings and practices of charismatic figures of authority like Thich Nhat Hanh to the very meaning of mindfulness.

When organizations like Google call on Thich Nhat Hanh's services, they do not get a blank body, articulating sets of instructions as a robot would. They get the figure of a wise monk, conditioned by a lifetime of intensive practice, and rule-bound to sets of demanding precepts that have no direct correlate in the secular sphere. We suggest these facts are not extraneous to Thich Nhat Hanh's pedagogy and his efforts to help Google become "more compassionate and effective." We suggest they are in fact central to the power we grant Thich Nhat Hanh to speak on behalf of mindfulness, to the message he conveys when standing in front of an audience—whether secular or religious—and to his capacity for setting the parameters for a modern ethics of mindfulness. If today the dharma has "entered the mainstream," as Kabat-Zinn suggests, this is not simply because MBSR has made corporate executives better Buddhists in and of itself, but because the tireless work of people like Thich Nhat Hanh has made it difficult, if not impossible, to think of mindfulness without also conjuring up something of the lifestyle and ethics enshrined in their teachings and life stories.

Thus, religion—that designated domain of outdated ethics and oppressive hierarchy—continues to shape public practices and ethics, even in a secular space ostensibly emancipated from religious authority. Indeed, the secular, in certain ways, *depends* on religious modes of authority to bolster the attractiveness and ethical positivity of otherwise neutral practices, although this relation of dependency must remain invisible for mindfulness to still be designated "secular" and hence be admitted into the public sphere. Given the difficulty of pigeonholing the modern mindfulness movement into boxes of religious or secular, it may be best captured as one more strand in the tangled web of the postsecular.

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