Consciousness at Work: A Review of Some Important Values, Discussed from a Buddhist Perspective

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Abstract This article reviews the element of consciousness from a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist (Western) perspective. Within the Buddhist perspective, two practices toward attaining expanded and purified consciousness will be included: the Seven-Point Mind Training and Vipassana. Within the Western perspective, David Hawkins' works on consciousness will be used as a main guide. In addition, a number of important concepts that contribute to expanded and purified consciousness will be presented. Among these concepts are impermanence, karma, non-harming (ahimsa), ethics, kindness and compassion, mindfulness, right livelihood, charity, interdependence, wholesome view, collaboration, and fairness. This article may be of use to students and workforce members who consider a transdisciplinary approach on human wellbeing in personal and professional environments.

Keywords Buddhism · Consciousness · Ethics · Impermanence · Enlightenment · Karma · Non-harming

Introduction

Consciousness has become a growing topic of interest in light of the mounting evidence of unethical behavior in the business world. At the same time, interest for alternative philosophies or ethical systems is growing. Current and future workforce members seem to be seeking for durable solutions to the problems of contemporary society. As a viable option in that regard, this article will review the element of consciousness from both a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist perspective. Two Buddhist practices toward attaining expanded and purified consciousness will thereby be included: the Seven-Point Mind Training and Vipassana. In addition, a number of important Buddhist concepts that contribute to expanded and purified consciousness will be presented. Among these concepts are impermanence, karma, non-harming (ahimsa), ethics, kindness and compassion, mindfulness, right livelihood, charity, interdependence, wholesome view, collaboration, and fairness. These concepts were selected on the basis of a majority referral by eight prominent Buddhist scholars who were interviewed on the attainment of increased consciousness: four from US origin and four from Tibetan origin. All scholars had specialized in Tibetan Buddhism, thus adhered to the Mahayana tradition. Following the Buddhist perspective on consciousness, David Hawkins' works will be reviewed as a representation of a Western take on consciousness. Subsequently, a number of themes that can contribute to expanded consciousness will be reviewed. The themes were identified as the predominant common themes mentioned by the eight Buddhist scholars interviewed. As interest in alternative approaches in the contemporary workplace increases, the applicability of Buddhism at work will also be discussed in this article.

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Consciousness

My focus on consciousness, as well as the values to be discussed thereafter, is based on the premise that working people can enhance the quality of their own life as well as

the lives of other stakeholders at work if they act, think, and decide with these principles at their core. These are all principles that are achievable if one wishes to engage in some simple practices, of which two will be included in this article. It should be noted, though, the expanded and purified consciousness and enhanced awareness of the other values can also be attained in alternative ways.

Studies of consciousness have a long and well-considered history in Eastern traditions such as Buddhism. In her article, "In Search of the Real You," in which she questions the meaning and validity of authenticity, Wright (2008) annotates, "Eastern spiritual traditions have long furnished ways to glimpse the messiness of the self, and to view with detachment the vicissitudes of mind and emotion that roil human consciousness" (p. 70). Focusing in on Buddhist practice, Wright (2008) subsequently emphasizes that Buddhism takes the self in all its inconsistency as the main subject of reflection; self-study is considered to be of great importance. Considering the above analysis of perceptions on "the new Buddhism" in America, which is highly tailored to the American individualistic mindset, and which therefore focuses first and foremost on personal wellbeing and then on wellbeing of others, Wright seems to be referring to and making a point in favor of this type of American Buddhism. Yet, Wright is by far not the only one in America who has been contemplating on the role of Buddhism in individual consciousness. Alan Wallace, one of the participants in this study, has also written extensively about this topic. In his review of the Buddhist perspective on consciousness, Wallace explains that consciousness is not produced but rather conditioned by the brains. Wallace (2001) first contends that, in Buddhism, consciousness is preserved with reflection to Buddha's experiences and numerous Buddhist contemplatives after them. Wallace (2001) then points out that, in Buddhist theory, consciousness arises from consciousness. The Buddhist hypothesis is that an individual's consciousness does not arise from the consciousness of his or her parents, because each individual has his or her own continuum of consciousness. Subsequently explaining where human consciousness comes from, according to Buddhist teaching, Wallace (2001) declares, "Individual consciousness exists prior to conception, arising from a preceding, unique continuum and will carry on after this life" (p. 47).

The Buddha's Perspective on Consciousness Through Current Interpretations

The notion of consciousness, or viññāna (Pali), has been widely and deeply presented in Buddhist teachings. Rahula (1959) explains that, "according to Buddhist philosophy, there is no permanent, unchanging spirit which can be considered 'Self', or 'Soul', or 'Ego', as opposed to matter,

and that consciousness (viññāna) should not be taken as spirit in opposition to matter" (p. 23). Rahula summarizes, "The Buddha declared in unequivocal terms that consciousness depends on matter, sensation, perception, and mental formations and that it cannot exist independently of them" (p. 25).

Nhat Hanh (1998) explains the Buddhist perspective on consciousness from a more holistic standpoint: "Our consciousness is composed of all the seeds sown by our past actions and the past actions of our family and society. Everyday our thoughts, words, and actions flow into the sea of our consciousness and create our body, mind, and world" (p. 36). Explaining the dynamic of our consciousness and how we can influence this, Nhat Hanh (1998) is convinced that we can nurture our consciousness by practicing the Four Immeasurable Minds of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity, or we can nourish our consciousness with greed, hatred, ignorance, suspicion, and pride. Nhat Hanh (1998) ultimately warns, "Our consciousness is eating all the time, day and night, and what it consumes becomes the substance of our life. We have to be very careful which nutriments we ingest" (p. 36).

Nhat Hanh shares an interesting story from Buddha about the way we treat our consciousness

> A dangerous murderer was captured and brought before the king, and the king sentenced him to death by stabbing. 'Take him to the courtyard and plunge three hundred sharp knives through him.' At noon a guard reported, 'Majesty, he is still alive,' and the king declared, 'Stab him three hundred more times!' In the evening, the guard again told the king, 'Majesty, he is not yet dead.' So the king gave the third order: 'Plunge the three hundred sharpest knives in the kingdom through him.'" Then the Buddha said, "This is how we usually deal with our consciousness, it is like stabbing ourselves with three hundred sharp knives. We suffer, and our suffering spills out to those around us (Nhat Hanh 1998, pp. 36–37).

In the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha, a Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (Bodhi 1993, transl. by Narada), great attention is devoted to *citta*, which is the Pali word for consciousness or mind. In an earlier translation of the *Manual of Abhidhamma*, Narada (1959) clarifies that citta is derived from "cit," which means, to think. Broad attention to *citta* is underscored as necessary by both Narada and Bodhi, whereby the last one explains the reasons as follows: "because the focus of Buddhist analysis is experience, and consciousness is the principal element in experience, that which constitutes the knowing or awareness of an object" (Bodhi 1993, p. 27). *Citta* is defined in three different ways: "as agent, as instrument, and as activity" (Bodhi 1993, p. 27). Bodhi (1993) explains, "As

the agent, citta is that which cognizes an object […]. As the instrument, citta is that by means of which the accompanying mental factors cognize the object […]. As an activity, citta is itself nothing other than the process of cognizing the object" (p. 27). Bodhi (1993) explains that the third definition is considered to be the most sufficient perception of the three, because citta is not really an agent or instrument but rather "an activity or process of cognizing or knowing an object" (p. 27). Bodhi further clarifies that the two definitions of citta as agent and instrument are merely included "to refute the wrong view of those who hold that a permanent self or ego is the agent and instrument of cognition" (p. 27). According to Bodhi, Buddhist thinkers want to ensure and clearly establish with these definitions that it is not a self but citta or consciousness, which performs the act of cognition. This citta is the act of cognizing, and that act is necessarily impermanent, marked by rise and fall.

Bodhi (1993) explains that there are different ways of classifying consciousness. Narada provides an example of such a different classification by referring to moral and immoral types of consciousness. Narada (1959) explains, "Some types of consciousness are immoral (Akusala), because they spring from attachment (lobha), aversion or illwill (patigha), and ignorance (moha). Opposed to them are the moral types of consciousness (Kusala), because they are rooted in non-attachment or generosity (alobha), goodwill (adosa), and wisdom (amoha)" (p. 15). Narada (1959) concludes, "The former are unwholesome as they produce undesirable effects (anittha vipāka), the latter are wholesome as they produce desirable effects (ittha vipāka)" (p. 15).

While Bodhi and Narada perceive consciousness as the entire drive behind one's performance, they share in the opinions of Nhat Hanh, Rahula, and Wallace that consciousness is an experience related to one's own experiences rather than others'.

The Dalai Lama's Perspective on Consciousness

The Dalai Lama (1995) identifies consciousness as an important aspect to spiritual growth. He affirms, "On the spiritual path, it is also on basis of this continuity of consciousness that we are able to make mental improvements and experience high realizations of the path" (p. 29). The Dalai Lama continues, "It is also on basis of this same continuity of consciousness—which is often identified with our Buddha-nature—that we are able to achieve the ultimate state of omniscience" (p. 29). It is the Dalai Lama's opinion that consciousness has no end and no beginning. He stresses, "Any instance of consciousness requires a substantial cause in the form of another preceding moment of consciousness. Because of this, we maintain that consciousness is infinite and beginningless" (p. 49).

He presents the definition, which Tibetan thinkers formulated for consciousness, based in earlier Indian sources: "The definition of the mental is that which is luminous and knowing" (p. 124). The Dalai Lama (2005) also emphasizes the importance of cause and effect in the Buddhist perspective of consciousness. He affirms, "Crucial to understanding the Buddhist concept of consciousness—and its rejection of the reducibility of mind to matter—is its theory of causation" (p. 131). He continues by explaining that the issue of causality has long been an important focus of philosophical and contemplative investigation in Buddhism. Buddhism proposes two principal categories of cause. These are the "substantial cause" and the "contributory or contemplatory cause" (p. 131). To illustrate this premise with an example, the Dalai Lama reflects on a clay pot. In the case of the clay pot, the "substantial cause" is everything that turns into the clay that becomes the pot. Everything else, such as the skill of the potter, the potter himself, and the furnace that heats the clay, are contributory or contemplatory causes. He feels that this distinction between the substantial and the contributory cause of a given event or object is of the utmost significance for understanding the Buddhist theory of consciousness.

A Western Perspective on Consciousness: David Hawkins

Consciousness is a growing topic of interest from non-Buddhist sides these days as well. In *Power vs. Force*, Hawkins (1995) agrees with the Buddhist perspective that causality should be seen beyond a deterministic linear sequence, and that the unobservable phenomena should also be considered. Hawkins identifies various levels of human consciousness. In the abovementioned book, he presents a chart with rising levels of human consciousness, starting with shame (20) at the lowest level, and gradually increasing with guilt (30), apathy (50), grief (75), fear (100), desire (125), anger (150), and pride (175); courage (200), neutrality (250), willingness (310), acceptance (350), reason (400), love (500), joy (540), peace (600), and enlightenment (between 700 and 1,000). "The numbers represent the logarithm (to the base 10) of the power of the respective fields" (Hawkins 1995, p. 52). The main point that Hawkins makes in this and other books he wrote on the topic of consciousness is, that anything below the energy level of 200 represents a non-constructive foundational motivation for the individual as well as for his or her surroundings. On the other hand, asserts Hawkins, energy levels over 200 are generally positive, uplifting, and constructive to the wellbeing of humanity. Hawkins' distinction of consciousness drivers corresponds with Narada's perspective, presented earlier, that some types of consciousness spring from attachment, aversion, or ignorance,

while others are rooted in generosity, goodwill, and wisdom. The only difference is that Hawkins has converted the various drivers into levels.

In order to illustrate his theory, Hawkins evaluates well-known world leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi. According to Hawkins' calibrations, Gandhi scored around 700, which he considers close to the top of normal human consciousness. In his review of the levels 700–1,000, Hawkins (1995) affirms that, "at this level, there is no longer the experience of an individual personal *self* separate from others; rather, there is an identification of *Self* with Consciousness and Divinity. The Unmanifest is experienced as Self beyond mind" (pp. 93–94, italics added). Hawkins elaborates

> There's no longer any identification with the physical body as "me," and therefore, its fate is of no concern. The body is seen as merely a tool of consciousness through the intervention of mind, its prime value that of communication. The self merges back into the Self. This is the level of nonduality, or complete Oneness. There is no localization of consciousness; awareness is equally present everywhere (p. 94).

Explaining the possibility of and the path toward attaining enlightenment as the highest humanly attainable level of consciousness, Hawkins (2003) affirms, "The straightest way to enlightenment is through devoted introspection, meditation, and contemplation of the inner workings of the ego so as to understand consciousness. The process is energized by intention, dedication, and devotion, and the total effort is supported by spiritual inspiration" (p. 291).

Furthering his analysis on human consciousness in general, Hawkins (1995) claims that 85% of the human race calibrates below the critical level of 200, while the general average level of human consciousness today is approximately 207. Hawkins (1995) relates the consciousness levels to cultural conditions, and concludes that "energy fields below 200 are most common in extremely primitive conditions" (p. 96); "populations characterized by the low 200s are typified by unskilled labor" (p. 97); "the mid-200s are associated with semiskilled labor" (p. 97); "the high 200s […] by skilled labor, blue-collar workers, tradesmen, retail commerce, and industries" (p. 97); "The level of 300 [by] technicians, skilled and advanced craftsmen, routine managers, and a more sophisticated business structure" (p. 97); "the mid-300s [by] upper management, artisans, and educators" (p. 98); "the 400s are the level of the awakening of the intellect, where true literacy, higher education, the professional class, executives, and scientists can be found" (p. 98); and "500 is a point at which awareness makes another giant leap […]. Here, excellence is common in every field of human endeavor" (p. 99).

While I generally agree with Hawkins' consciousness analysis, I have a bit of a problem with his observation that lower income and educational levels generally calibrate lower in consciousness. Hawkins' opinion may come across as prejudiced, even though there may very well be some solid foundation to his findings. It is not hard to understand that extremely poor people have survival on the mind, and will do whatever it takes to attain that. Yet, Hawkins' perspectives also have quite some common areas with Buddhism. Conform to the Buddhist perspective; Hawkins avers that the problem with low consciousness or low energy levels can be attributed to ego. In his book, *The Eye of the I,* he explains, "While there is a belief in a singular 'me' or 'my', it seems as though one is sacrificing by letting go of the ego/mind. It is viewed as a sacrifice because it is thought to be something unique and precious because it is personal" (Hawkins 2001, p. 109). Hawkins (2001) subsequently warns that we should realize that the ego is impersonal and not unique at all. He alludes that everybody's innate ego operates about the same as that of everybody else. Hawkins goes on to explain that the ego or "self" displays the same traits of self-service, egotism, vanity, deception, and focus on gain of position, possession, status, wealth, renown, praise, and control. This can only change, according to Hawkins, when the ego is modified by spiritual evolution. If no effort toward spiritual evolution is undertaken, the ego will consistently result in energy levels that rank below 200, such as guilt, shame, greed, pride, anger, rage, envy, jealousy, hatred, etc. (Hawkins 2001). In *Transcending the Levels of Consciousness*, Hawkins (2006) explains that we cannot overcome our ego by seeing it as an enemy. It is our biological inheritance, and without it, nobody would be alive to lament its limitations. Hawkins (2006) continues, "By understanding its origin and intrinsic importance to survival, the ego can be seen as being of great benefit but prone to becoming unruly and causing emotional, psychological, and spiritual problems if not resolved or transcended" (p. 23).

Another important analysis Hawkins makes in *Power vs. Force* is the comparison of various religions, and how their collective level of consciousness evolved through history. Christianity, for instance, is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, who calibrates at 1,000 according to Hawkins. However, the religion itself, says Hawkins (1995), has gradually decreased through various misinterpretations and mistranslations, causing some contemporary fundamentalist Christian groups to calibrate as low as 125. Hinduism, based on Lord Krishna's (Hawkins' calibration: 1,000) teachings, now calibrates, according to Hawkins, at 850. Judaism, based on Abraham's (Hawkins' calibration: 985) teachings, now calibrates between 499 and 730. Islam, based on Mohammed's (Hawkins' calibration: 740)

teachings, calibrates at the fundamental level at 130, according to Hawkins. Buddhism, based on the teachings of Buddha (Hawkins' calibration: 1,000), calibrates highest from all religions in these times: "Hinayana Buddhism (the lesser vehicle) still calibrates at 890; Mahayana Buddhism (the greater vehicle) calibrates at 960; Zen Buddhism is 890" (Hawkins 1995, p. 273).

Aside from the classification of "higher" and "lower," Hawkins' Western perspectives on consciousness demonstrate great overall concurrence with the Buddhist perspectives on consciousness, particularly in areas such as causality as a phenomenon that should be perceived in a broader scope than merely linear; ego as a major hurdle toward general human wellbeing, and consequently self as a hurdle toward realizing self as an interconnected part of all that is; meditation and contemplation as sources to elevate consciousness; and the authenticity of Buddhism compared to other major religions.

Bodhisattva

In their statements above, both the Dalai Lama and Hawkins refer to the attainment of expanded and purified consciousness as the roadmap to enlightenment. The Dalai Lama even calls it "omniscience." The state of being enlightened is referred to in Buddhism as "Bodhisattva," as briefly explained before in this article. Bercholz and Kohn (1993) refer to a Bodhisattva as an "enlightened being," and explain, "In Mahayana Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is a being who seeks Buddhahood through the systematic practice of the perfect virtues […] but renounces complete entry into *nirvana* until all beings are saved" (p. 315). The Dalai Lama (1995) elaborates, "[F]or a Bodhisattva to be successful in accomplishing the practice of the *six perfections*—generosity, ethical discipline, tolerance, joyous effort, concentration, and wisdom—cooperation with and kindness towards fellow sentient beings are extremely important" (p. 65).

Attaining Expanded and Purified Consciousness

Attaining expanded and purified consciousness is only possible when a person deliberately strives toward achieving an amplified degree of wakefulness. While there are various ways to attain expanded and purified consciousness, this review will be limited to two Buddhist-based exercises.

The Seven-Point Mind Training

Wallace and Tegchok explain a Tibetan-based instrument toward expanded and purified consciousness in several of their books. The training (Wallace 1992, 2001) entails the following seven steps:

1. Training in the preliminaries. In this stage, the practitioner should reflect on four thoughts that turn the mind toward higher aspirations and better focused priorities: (1) the value and preciousness of human life, in order to understand the gift of having a body and all the opportunities it provides; (2) death and impermanence, in order to understand the fickleness of everything including ourselves; (3) the unsatisfactory nature of the cycle of existence, in which the practitioner enhances his or her awareness of *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth, and all the suffering it brings; and (4) Karma, which is the Sanskrit word for "action," according to Wallace (2001).

2. Cultivating ultimate and relative Bodhicitta. Wallace (2001) explains *Bodhicitta* as follows: "The Sanskrit word *bodhi* means *awakening*, and one who is awake is called a *Buddha*. *Citta* means *mind, heart,* and *spirit*, so I translate *Bodhicitta* as *a spirit of awakening*" (p. 65). Ultimate Bodhicitta pertains to the nature of reality and insight into reality. Relative Bodhicitta is the compassionate and altruistic dimension of practice.

3. Transforming adversity into aid to spiritual awakening. Through this point, the practitioner learns to integrate Dharma into the good and bad parts of life. Suffering is no longer avoided or rejected but used as a pathway to awakening. Self-centeredness is unmasked as the source of all evil, and the focus shifts to the kindness of others.

4. A synthesis of practice for one life. Within this step lies the practice of maintaining alertness on ultimate and relative Bodhicitta, familiarizing the mind with possible tragedy, remaining devoted to spiritual practice, rejection of self-grasping and self-centeredness, and staying true to spiritual awakening.

5. The criterion of proficiency in the mind training. This point explains the criteria for assessing one's progress in spiritual practice. It focuses on one aim: releasing the sense of self-grasping entirely, as this is the source of all problems.

6. The pledges of the mind training. This step alerts the practitioner on a number of behaviors to avoid: dismissal of vows, dangerous situations to practice mind training, and restricting mind training to good times alone. It calls for moderate behavior, even after spiritual awakening; abstinence of negative speech about—or judgment of others; releasing focus on rewards of any kind; avoiding poisonous food; refraining from self-righteous thinking, malice sarcasm, mean-spiritedness, overbearing of others, self-flattery, pretense, disrespect of enlightened beings, and thriving on others' misfortune.

7. The precepts of the mind training. This point elaborates on ethical guidance in developing strength of

purpose and purity such as continued maintenance of Bodhicitta (awakened mind); continued practice of Dharma in good and bad times; alertness and swift dismissal of mental afflictions; attaining proper guidance and remaining true to the practice.

Vipassana

Vipassana as a teaching/method given by the Buddha himself is mostly associated with Theravada Buddhism, but today it is a method used in various denominations of Buddhism. It is one of the most neutral, non-religious methods of bringing about attention, awareness, and mindfulness. Wrye (2006) explains that Vipassana, a system of mindfulness techniques, draws attention to the breath and to every object of consciousness without preference or selection, as in free association. Vipassana, or mindfulness meditation, is practiced to a continuously increasing degree in America. Business people, academicians, but also prison inmates, seem to experience significant transformations when engaging in this meditation practice. *Publishers Weekly* (Martinez 2008) and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Rickey 2009) write about the practice of Vipassana among prison inmates and how this practice helps them break their cycles of anger and revenge. In *McClatchy Tribune Business News*, Anderson (2009) describes a setting, where she joined a group of six men and four women, all very busy people from the business and academic world, who deliberately created space in their hectic schedule for Vipassana meditation.

Goenka (2006, 2008) makes a strong statement for Vipassana as a useful instrument toward expanded and purified consciousness of people from all religions, cultures, and backgrounds. To that regard he affirms that nothing is objectionable in practicing the technique of concentration of the mind by observing one's natural, normal respiration, without adding any sectarian verbalization or any visualization, and imagination. He wonders which religion could possibly object to observing one's natural respiration. In extension, he also feels that nobody could possibly object to purifying the mind at the deepest level, by objectively observing the interaction of mind and matter within oneself, at the level of body sensations, because that, too, is universal. Goenka, who has established a large number of Vipassana institutes around the world, underscores an important value of Vipassana, which is the emerging awareness of craving for pleasant sensations and aversion for unpleasant ones.

Enlightenment

I decided to include the topic of enlightenment at this point, because it may "enlighten" the reader somewhat on the intended interpretation of "expanded and purified consciousness" in this article. Perhaps, the most important statement to be made here is that enlightenment, just like most other topics inside and outside Buddhism, is subject to a wide range of interpretations. As an illustration, Brazier (2002) discusses at least eight versions of enlightenment in his book *The New Buddhism*. He makes the crucial distinction that enlightenment can be seen as a means to an end or as an end onto itself. When seen as a means to an end, enlightenment is intended to perform acts that will benefit others. As an end to itself, enlightenment is seen as the reward of any practice leading thereto. Brazier explains that in Western Buddhism, enlightenment is mostly seen in the last interpretation, and has therefore become an ultimate value. From his own analysis, Brazier lists several perceptions of enlightenment as they are perceived in different cultures, such as (1) escape from recurring rebirth, (2) the realization of interconnectedness of everything, (3) a roadmap to eternal life, (4) a justification for shortcomings as long as the goal (enlightenment) is achieved, (5) a return point from spiritual wandering, (6) a perception of oneness, (7) passive detachment, and (8) submission into helplessness.

It is obvious that some of these perspectives of enlightenment do not "sell" very well in the West, where people are very action oriented and do not favor seeing themselves as helpless. Yet, the above enumeration of various enlightenment interpretations can help make the reader understand that phenomena such as "enlightenment," "expanded and purified consciousness," or "awareness" can be subject to multiple interpretations. "Expanded and purified consciousness" as interpreted in this article—specifically due to the fact that it includes work settings where people perform and serve—facilitates some of the above interpretations of enlightenment. Interpretations 3 and 4 especially, are highly useful for the consideration of expanded and purified consciousness used in this article, as these two interpretations consider the phenomenon "bodhisattva" (enlightened being), which is a very helpful one in social settings. To a lesser degree, interpretations 5 and 6 can also be considered useful here, as they bring the idea of becoming enlightened within reach, and they underscore the idea of interconnectedness, which is also highly useful in work environments. Interpretations 7 and 8 are ultimately passive, highly dependent, and will have little appeal in the high-performance Western society. These passive interpretations will therefore not be considered within the context of "expanded and purified consciousness" to be used in this article.

Some Other Important Buddhist Values

It is impossible to review all values that are important in Buddhist practice. However, a selection of values will be

presented below, based on most frequently surfaced terms during the literature review and in-depth interviews with the eight Buddhist scholars mentioned before.

Impermanence

Impermanence is a concept that is foundational in many of Buddhist literature. Landesman (2008), for example, asserts that an enlightened mind transcends notions of gender, considers life's fundamental impermanence, and views all phenomena as void of permanent natures. In comparing various Eastern religions with each other, Netland (2008) also points out the Buddhist belief in impermanence, which is contrary to Hinduism and Jainism. In the Buddhist view, according to Netland, there is no fixed concept of self, but rather a sequence of impermanent, dependently arising moments of consciousness. Yoneyama (2007) links the concepts of impermanence and emptiness together when he theorizes that emptiness does not mean physical absence but rather the impermanence of being. Yoneyama (2007) clarifies that all things are in a state of perpetual change, not only in the material world, but also in the world of thinking, feeling, and emotion.

Rinpoche reflects on impermanence as a means of coping with attachment. He suggests that we can overcome this source of suffering by realizing that everything passes and therefore, is "empty." On a personal note, I tend to agree with Rinpoche's holistic perspective as a motivator toward abstaining from clinging to titles, positions, and other fickle values in life. The idea of impermanence is highly useful in the workplace, because it can help people realize that the positions, titles, and honors they chase may be admirable, but are not lasting, hence not worth backbiting for. The realization of impermanence can also be helpful to be more relaxed in a volatile work environment where lay offs and personnel shifts are rampant. Impermanence has a lot in common with one of today's most popular buzzwords, change. Nothing lasts—everything changes—everything is impermanent.

Karma

In an effort to clear the misunderstanding that sometimes exists about karma, Thondup (1995) explicates that, unlike what many uninformed Westerners think, karma is not some curse experienced by the people in the East, but rather the law of interdependent causation. Thondup considers it important to believe in karma, because our belief in it will withhold us from engaging in negative acts that we can avoid, because they will foster negative results, and we do not want to be victimized by our own doing. Rinpoche (1993) adds that believing in karma will also make us realize that, whenever we harm others, we harm

ourselves, and whenever we bring them happiness, we bring ourselves future happiness. Perceiving karma within the Buddhist belief of multiple lives, the Dalai Lama adds, "Whatever external causal conditions someone comes across in subsequent lives result from the accumulation of that individual's actions in previous lives" (Gyatso 1980, p. 49).

Karma may seem to be a far-fetched concept for the workplace, but is it? It seems to be closely related to the golden rule, which most Americans are familiar with: "Do unto others as you would others do unto you." Yet, while the golden rule does not suggest ramifications for one's actions, karma does. The idea of karma can be very useful in workplaces as an understanding that the way we treat stakeholders will come back to us in some way. It may cause workers to think twice before engaging in unethical and harmful practices toward others.

Non-harming (Ahimsa)

Nhat Hanh (1998) feels that we have so much hate and violence in the world because we do not nurture love and compassion. He considers non-harming a crucial principle toward more love among people. Kabat-Zinn (1994) shines some more light on living up to non-harming by explaining that we often harm out of fear, but that we should confront those fears and take responsibility for them. I think this is a strong perspective that makes a lot of sense in workplaces. Politics and backstabbing are often practices by people who fear for their positions.

Once again taking the holistic stance, The Dalai Lama (1978) alerts us that, due to our countless births, every being has been our mother, but also our friend, wife, husband, lover, relative, and so on. Based on that insight, we should recollect their kindness, and repay this kindness with compassion and love, and at least refrain from harming them.

While it may not always be easy in work environments to refrain from harming especially on a larger and non-immediate scale, the understanding of the concept may help workers, especially managers, consider their long-term business decisions more conscientiously. The notion of non-harming may encourage holistic thinking and reviewing the bigger picture instead of only immediate returns on investments.

Ethics

The underlying thought of ethics is captured in most other Buddhist values. In every action, there is an expectation of respect toward all life and nature in general. The Dalai Lama (1995) describes morality as the act of guarding our body, speech, and mind from indulging in unwholesome

activities, and claims that this will furnish us with mindfulness and conscientiousness. The Dalai Lama maintains that mindfulness and conscientiousness can help us to avoid negative and destructive physical and verbal actions for ourselves and others. The thereby underscores that morality is the foundation in Buddhist practice. Swearer (2006) concurs that Buddhist ethics, with their focus on overcoming desire and greed, do have large-scale consequences and ecologically beneficial effects. Indeed, ethics are the foundation of Buddhism on which all other values and actions are based.

Ethics are a frequently discussed topic in American workplaces since the fall of some major corporations and the 2008/2009 economical crises. Time and again, since the new millennium started, Americans have been facing ethical misconduct from major businesses, causing them to question the direction of capitalistic business practices. At an increasing rate, business schools are incorporating ethics into their curricula, and organizations that perform ethics-based workshops for workforce members flourish. Ethics are not specifically Buddhist based, but they fit in well with the entire package of Buddhist practices toward greater quality of life at work, and they are high in priority for all Buddhists.

Kindness and Compassion

In a comparison between Buddhism and psychoanalysis, Wrye (2006) points out that Buddhism values loving kindness or compassion (metta) by supporting the capacity to recognize diverse realities and tolerate seeming polarities and ambiguities. Kornfield (2002) reviews compassion as an important human value and claims that compassion decrees the power of a tender and merciful heart in the face of the sufferings of the world. It arises whenever we allow our heart to be touched by the pain and need of another. An interesting but logical linkage between compassion and non-harming is made by Rinpoche (2000) when he states that compassion will not only prevent us from harming others, but also drives us to benefit these others as much as we can.

In a presentation on Ted.com (Technology, Entertainment and Design), Goleman talked about the discouragingly low levels of compassion among American workers. He presented an example of a group of Theology students who were preparing to present a sermon on the Good Samaritan. On their way to the presentation hall, each of them passed a man who was moaning, clearly in need of help. None of the students stopped, in spite of the topic of their pending sermon. Goleman stated that people in America have forgotten to pay attention to others in their strife to be successful. In workplaces, the realization of compassion may not only enhance the quality of workers' relationships with one another, but it may benefit the wellbeing of the organization overall, as compassion may lead to greater collaboration with colleagues in need.

Mindfulness

Our mind has been compared with many things. Gates (2005) asserts that the mind, according to Buddhist teachings, is like a monkey because it constantly picks up and maintains evaluative, analytical, and judgmental thoughts. It often thinks about the past, the future, wants, hurts, and so on.

Mindfulness is strongly represented in all Buddhist traditions. Kabat-Zinn (2003) even claims that mindfulness is the fundamental stance of attention that underlies all streams of Buddhist meditation. Kabat-Zinn (2003) elaborates that the actual practice of mindfulness is always nested within a larger conceptual and practice-based ethical framework, oriented toward non-harming.

Hays (2007) explains mindfulness as a state of acute awareness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness in everything going on around oneself, while minimizing the effects of self and ego. Hays (2007) maintains that mindfulness can be achieved when we reduce egoistic barriers to perception, and realize the existence of our interpretive filters, biases, and other internal processes, such as wants, needs, and defensive tendencies.

In the workplace mindfulness could lead to many advantages for the worker, such as greater concentration; more joy in the moment; the ability to remain calm in turbulent situations; and a greater ability to link occurrences with one another, which will help to detect patterns.

Right Livelihood

When discussing right livelihood, the common factor that emerges is also mindfulness, but then in the sense of expanded awareness about the effects of our actions. Nhat Hanh (1998) warns that we should earn our living by doing what we are passionate about, so that we can experience joy. Gross (1992) interprets right livelihood as that we should not be consumed by our work, but also that we should not engage in work that is harmful. Valliere (2008) adds yet another dimension by asserting that right livelihood also entails efficiency in using resources, taking responsibility for consequences, and remaining honest and peaceful in the attainment of our livelihood.

As Valliere indicated, the advantage of right livelihood manifests itself at a macro-level. Once a person becomes aware of this virtue, he or she will start contemplating on the work done, and the effects of this work to the near, intermediate, and distant, current and future environment. It may cause people to shift their jobs or to change their entire career. It will help people make more conscious decisions in their livelihood.

Charity

Buddhists consider charity a universal concept. Rahula (1959) criticizes the shortsightedness of labeling charity under one single religion or philosophy, causing distinctions between, for instance, Buddhist charity and Christian charity. He claims that charity cannot be sectarian: it is neither Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, nor Moslem. Lopez (2001) claims that charity should be directed to pure causes that are geared toward a brighter future.

Indeed, charity should be considered as a human virtue and not necessarily tied to one religion or another. Yet, this virtue is high in Buddhist perspectives, and ties in well with the other virtues of non-harming, ethics, compassion and kindness. It also ties in with the karma aspect in that showing mercy and granting when not expected will ultimately be rewarded. Charity in the workplace can be shown in many ways. In many American workplaces today, employees are encouraged to spend time on community wellness work and various local charitable projects during certain times of the month or year, with continued pay. As will be explained by two Buddhist business leaders later in this article, charity can be included, and works contagious once it is part of the organization's culture.

Interdependence and Interconnectedness

Interdependence and interconnectedness are also highly significant in Buddhism, and are becoming increasingly popular in American corporate circles. In his book "How to See Yourself," The Dalai Lama (2006) explains interdependence in a simplistic and well-understandable way: "All phenomena—helpful and harmful, cause and effect, this and that—arise and are established in reliance upon other factors" (pp. 67–68).

In his book "What Makes You Not A Buddhist," Khyentse, who was also interviewed for this study, presents a simple summary of what makes a person a Buddhist. One of Khyentse's strongest convictions seems to be that nothing exists inherently, which entails that everything is interdependent and interconnected. Salzberg (2006) explicates that the awareness of interconnectedness can lead people toward altruism. This is not hard to understand: if we are all part of one another, then doing good to you equals doing good to myself. Michalon (2002), finally, illustrates how an awareness of interconnectedness can reverse egotism in mature persons. He states

> [A]n individual mature in his/her sense of self, in a mid-age crisis 'more centered on the discovery of the unsatisfactory nature of human life, the discovery of human mortality…, the deep question of the meaning of life', can, with a Buddhist approach, derive

tremendous insight into the nature of his/her non-enduring self, his/her interconnectedness with the rest of the world and the reason for his/her existential suffering (pp. 209–210).

With the rise of the workplace spirituality movement in America since the 1990s, the awareness of interdependence and interconnectedness has been tremendously popularized. Nurturing this mindset is beneficial in the workplace, because it helps workers at all levels better cope with the increasing diversity that has also entered workplaces globally, due to increased outsourcing, and migration of people and companies. Nurturing a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence can also help workers to respect each other more, be more willing to work in team settings, and decrease thoughtless discriminatory practices that usually come forth from a segregated mindset.

Wholesome View

The concept of a wholesome view is prominent in multiple dimensions in Buddhist thought. Lhundup (2002), for instance, links environmental sustainability to the wholesome view of Buddhists, while Phan (2003) takes it a step further: he incorporates the concept of wholesomeness in an analysis of the influence of Buddhism on Christianity, and concludes, "Buddhism tempers the elements of fixation, irrationality, emotivity, and violence in Christian thinking and presents a peaceful, reasonable, wholesome mode of being present religiously to the contemporary world" (p. 495). Phan (2003) elaborates

> In an age when religious fundamentalism and sectarian strife are more virulent than ever, the healing critique of Buddhism has perhaps a more central role to play than the classical dogma of Christianity, at least at the forefront of history, whatever the ultimate shape of 'the divine plan of salvation' (p. 495).

As mentioned under the sub header "Right Livelihood," a wholesome view is of tremendous importance in today's work environments, because it may cause executive-level managers, especially those in potentially hazardous industries, to reconsider their long-term plans and include measures to better ensure the wellbeing of the near, intermediate, and far environment and living entities in mind.

Collaboration

The Dalai Lama covers the importance and skillfulness required for successful collaboration among human beings perfectly with a simple example. He states

> [D]ealing with others is a very complex issue. There is no way that you can come up with one formula that

could solve all problems. It's a bit like cooking. If you are cooking a very delicious meal, a special meal, then there are various stages in the cooking. You may have to first boil the vegetables separately and then you have to fry them, and then you combine them in a special way, mixing in spices and so on. And finally, the end result would be this delicious product. Similarly here, in order to be skillful in dealing with others, you need many factors. You can't just say, 'This is the method' or 'This is the technique' (The Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998, p. 87).

Richmond (1999) presents the advantage of collaboration in more work-related terms, and states that opening oneself to others is generous and enhances mutual understanding. He feels that sharing information at work also leads to greater connectivity. One can question whether this is always the case, especially in a volatile or highly competitive environment where people are often after each other's position. Yet, putting in an effort toward enhanced collaboration may results in surprising advancements for the organization, and a greater sense of personal gratification.

Fairness

As fairness is highly related to ethics, we could suffice with a reference to the comments presented under the "Ethics" header. However, there is a statement made by Ch'en (1968) that fits well as a support phrase for fairness: "Since moral conduct stands at the head of the three-fold discipline, it may be taken as the starting point of Buddhist culture. The kernel of the Buddhist discipline is expressed in the words, 'Not to commit any sin, to do good, [and] to purify one's own mind, that is the teaching of the Buddha'" (p. 33). Each of the elements in the threefold discipline as mentioned above, contributes to the quality of fairness.

Figure 1 shows the values discussed in this article.

Buddhism and Work

The first question that could be asked here is, "Is there any place at all for religion, or any compassion-based philosophy if you will, in the workplace?" If so, how important should that place be, and who should determine that? Questions such as these could lead to a separate article altogether. Yet, they are interesting and important enough to spur a contemplation regarding contemporary perspectives on this issue. I will engage in that dialog later on. Fact is that a review of supportive literature on Buddhism and its applicability in the workplace delivers a great number of results. It seems that the interest in Buddhist practices as instigators to positive transformation of the work

environment is growing. Johansen and Gopalakrishna (2006) confirm the increasing popularity and importance and attribute this to the continued globalization of work and the expanding economic power and influence of Asian nations. Johansen and Gopalakrishna (2006) share the opinion that it is adaptability, which is one of the hallmarks of Buddhism that forms the main contributing factor to its spread and applicability around the world.

The general idea seems to be that there should be a more people-focused approach in workplaces, with more breaks for rejuvenation of energy, and more positive reinforcement. Smedley (2007) treats us to the advise of the Venerable Ajahn Brahm that we should take a break from stressful tasks and give positive feedback to staff in order to bring enlightenment to the workplace. While the term "enlightenment" may seem somewhat far-fetched for the workplace, this article aims to underscore the importance of findings ways to nurture and work toward expanded and purified consciousness.

In the following section, I will briefly review four steps of the Eightfold Path in light of workplace performance. These four steps are right livelihood, right thinking, right mindfulness, and right action.

Right Livelihood

Reviewing Buddhist perspectives on work as livelihood, Valliere (2008) considers work to have at least three functions: (1) to give a person a chance to utilize and develop his talents; (2) to enable a person to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining with other people in a common task; and (3) to bring forth the goods and services needed for a decent existence.

Valliere (2008) also explains that Buddhist entrepreneurs see right livelihood as the foundational direction of their venture creation and as the guidance in their daily practices.

Right Thinking

Opinions about the place of business in the life of a Buddhist vary. Many religious thinkers and practitioners feel that business manifests itself in a highly materialistic world, and that there should not be any place for materialism in religion. Yeshe (2004) reviews the various misconceptions that exist about materialism and religion in general and finds that there are many people who feel that one should exclude the other, because they are each other's opposites. Yeshe (2004) also comments on the statements that a spiritual person should abandon all comfort from his or her life. He then concludes that these considerations are all erroneous and too extreme. He contends that Buddhism is not so much interested in what you do than in why you

Fig. 1 Buddhist values contributing to expanded and purified consciousness
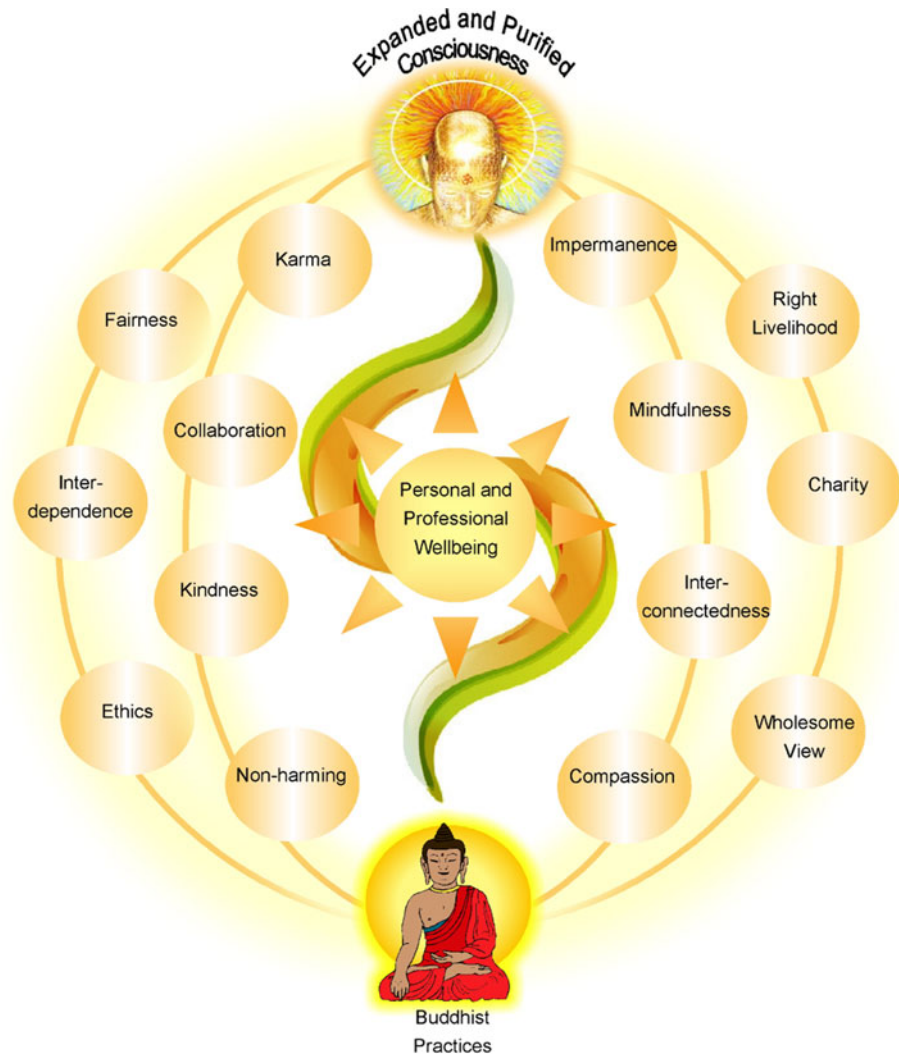
do it—your motivation. In other words, the mental attitude behind an action is more important than the action itself.

Quatro (2004) seems to concur with Yeshe's statements above, as he makes a point in favor of applying Buddhist principles in the business environment. Quatro reviews the manifestation of Buddhist precepts in business performance, and affirms that Buddhism endorses skill development and right livelihood in the sense of ahimsa or non-harming, which entails refraining from killing, stealing (or taking the not-given), sexual misconduct or covetousness, untruthfulness, and intoxication. In other words, the recurring Buddhist theme that others and oneself are not harmed. In addition, it is Quatro's opinion that Buddhist business practitioners, through observing the Buddhist values, celebrate the principle of interdependence and interconnectedness, which is so prominent in the contemporary organizational spirituality movement.

Roach (2000) also endorses the opinions posted above. More convincingly, he does this from an experiential perspective, as he once managed the Diamond Division at

Andin International, a New York-based business. First and foremost, Roach stresses that he kept quiet about his Buddhist beliefs in the workplace. He subsequently enumerates the three principles that drove his performance as vice president of the company: (1) The business should be successful, which means that it should make money. There is nothing wrong with making money. A person with greater resources can do much more good in the world than one without. (2) We should use the money wisely and keep our minds and bodies in good health. (3) We should be able to honestly say that our business has meaning.

Roach summarizes the Tibetan Buddhist perspective on business as follows:

> [T]he goal of business, and of ancient Tibetan wisdom, and in fact of all human endeavor, is to enrich ourselves—to achieve prosperity, both outer and inner. We can enjoy this prosperity only if we maintain a high degree of physical and mental health. And over the length of our lives we must seek ways

to make this prosperity meaningful in a larger sense (p. 5).

Roach's perspectives may not be applauded by all Buddhists, as they seem to encourage the materialistic mindset and the strife for financial prosperity. Yet, Roach's statements could make sense if reviewed against the background of doing the right thing: making money by engaging in an activity that promotes general wellbeing. They may definitely make sense to American Buddhists, given the ideology of capitalism in which they were born and raised.

Right Mindfulness

While business and work are considered laudable in Buddhism, especially when implemented for the betterment of life in general, there should also be some caution in our attitude toward work. Nhat Hanh (1998) warns for workaholism. He states that we have a tendency to form habits, even out of cumbersome matters. This is why we mentally cling to our work all the time and forget to enjoy simple things like flowers and drinking tea. Metcalf and Hately (2001) agree with Nhat Hanh's assertions and add that we also have a tendency to hold on to whatever once worked for us, even if it does not anymore. All the above authors advise that we should realize that it's right thinking that leads to right action.

In order to make the work experience a gratifying one, there are some self-awareness questions that Buddhism proposes. Using these exercises can be very helpful in determining whether one is in the right place, doing the right thing, or not. Richmond (1999) explains that these exercises address various emotional stages, such as anger, fear, frustration, and boredom. Others work on how we interact with people, or on the speed and pace of our activity. All of them are designed to awaken the fundamental spiritual (not specifically Buddhist) inquiry. The questions are: Who am I? What am I doing here? How can I fulfill my life's potential? Richmond clarifies that these practices are all based on the conviction that we have the resources we need to make that inquiry come to life, and that the circumstances of our daily life can be the raw materials in that effect (pp. 5–6). Richmond stresses that it does not require a person to be or become a Buddhist in order to benefit from these practices.

Right Action

On a larger scale, Richmond (1999) reviews the problems in American business. He points out that much of capitalism's wealth and job creation is fueled not by Fortune 500 corporations but by small businesses. He explains that the capitalistic system can be a profitable one for those who succeed, but can be mercilessly cruel to those who encounter less fortune. Richmond (1999) then stresses the win–lose mentality that lies at the foundation of capitalism: if I win, you will have to lose. He also reflects on the attempts that American business people have made to convince the Japanese that this win–lose mentality is the best parameter for success in business. Yet, he also states that the capitalistic mentality suffers from the lack of a moral compass.

Richmond's concern about the extreme harshness of the win–lose mentality in American business is echoed by Shen and Midgley, who consequently highlight the concept of the Buddhist middle path, which involves taking a course that avoids perceived extremes. Shen and Midgley (2007) maintain, "Buddhism defines extreme views as distorted or incomplete knowledge seized upon by human beings" (p. 191).

Reflecting on Richmond's earlier mentioned need for a moral compass on an even greater level than just in business, The Dalai Lama (2005) comments that, due to today's comprehensive and massive challenges, we need a moral compass we can use collectively without getting bogged down in doctrinal differences. The Dalai Lama then provides some guidelines for finding that moral compass:

> We must begin by putting faith in the basic goodness of human nature, and we need to anchor this faith in some fundamental and universal ethical principles. These include a recognition in the preciousness of life, an understanding of the need for balance in nature and the employment of this need as a gauge for the direction of our thought and action, and—above all—the need to ensure that we hold compassion as the key motivation for all our endeavors and that it is combined with a clear awareness of the wider perspective, including long-term consequences (p. 199).

Embracing the statement above from The Dalai Lama, Richmond (1999) affirms, "When we believe that the world makes us, that it determines what we can and cannot do, then we see ourselves as small and weak. But when we understand that we make the world—individually and together—then we become formidable and strong" (p. 253).

The common point that both the Dalai Lama and Richmond make above is, that we should not merely let our environment or the contemporary ideology drive our behavior and decisions, but we should think and feel for ourselves, reflect on our moral values, and behave accordingly, for this will make us strong.

Conclusion

Consciousness has become a topic of increasing interest against the background of mounting unethical business

practices, specifically in the US. This article reviewed an Eastern (Buddhist) and a Western (Hawkins) perspective on conscious, and basically concluded that there were many commonalities in the perspectives. It was, for instance, found that both the Dalai Lama and Hawkins referred to the attainment of expanded and purified consciousness as the roadmap to enlightenment. For those among the readers who are interested in adopting Buddhist philosophy as a guiding practice in personal and professional performance, the concepts reviewed in this article, impermanence, karma, non-harming (ahimsa), ethics, kindness and compassion, mindfulness, right livelihood, charity, interdependence, wholesome view, collaboration, and fairness, may serve as a solid starting point in the direction of expanded and purified consciousness.

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