

Teaching With Mindfulness: The Pedagogy of Being-with/for and Without Being-with/for

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Introduction

MINDFULNESS HAS WIDELY BEEN USED IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE, caregiving, medicine, and wellness settings as an effective intervention method; examples include stress reduction and behavior therapy (Abbey, 2012; Baer & Lykins, 2007; Stew, 2011), and relationship enhancement (Carson et al., 2004). It is considered to be observational, and a cognitive ability or style (Anicha et al., 2012; Sternberg, 2000). The practice of mindfulness has been measured and assessed in the field of medicine (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004; Solloway & Fisher, 2007). Mindfulness practice is now understood to be a universal practical and interventional method, and currently is deprived of its spiritual and cultural traditions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Non-clinical and non-therapeutic teaching practices in other fields have also been reported, such as education, communications, and social work (Brady, 2008; Gillard et al., 2011; Orr, 2002; Tremmel, 1993; Wong, 2004). Mindfulness is also an important component of contemplative pedagogy, where mindfulness, accompanied by poetry, guided meditation, music, art, etc., is used as a technique for nurturing psychological wellbeing and deep awareness. For example, “in the classroom, these forms of inquiry [mindfulness-based teaching methods] are not employed as religious practices but as pedagogical techniques for learning through refined attention or mindfulness” (Center for Teaching, Vanderbilt University). It is apparent that some clinical and educational practices intentionally avoid identifying the spiritual and religious origins of mindfulness, which is rooted in Buddhist tradition. Yet such a hasty rejection also reflects certain unwillingness and/or an inability to engage in a deeper understanding of mindfulness, especially non-attachment and emptiness, which is the heart of mindfulness. The clinical use of mindfulness as an emotional or behavioral intervention may temporarily resolve participants’ immediate problems, but taking mindfulness as a cognitive concept, a set of controllable mechanisms or measurable abilities, forces the instrumental treatment of mindfulness to work against the principles of Buddhist mindfulness. In Buddhist tradition, mindfulness is less about predictable behavioral procedures and more about organic living relationships involving both our minds and our bodies. Right mindfulness enables a mind-body wholeness and “intensif[ies] awareness, presence, and compassion, and deepen[s] emotional and spiritual experience” (Bai, Scott, & Donald, 2009, p. 332). Non-attachment and

emptiness as principles of Buddhism have implications for mindfulness-based practices; being mindful is on the path to forgetting mindfulness. Meanwhile, in cultivating relationships, Taoist tradition exercises being-with/for and without being-with/for, which reflects non-attachment and the emptiness of mindfulness. If mindfulness in Buddhism is tuned to cultivate a non-attached to the self, then the being-with/for and without being-with/for of Taoism guides us to a state of non-attachment in our relationships. Thus, in this article, drawing on the cultural and spiritual traditions of Buddhism and Taoism, I argue that a pedagogy of mindfulness would cultivate a pedagogical relationship that is being-with/for others and without being-with/for others amid difficult and challenging situations.

Wisdom and experience: mindfulness from philosophy to mundane practice

My initial contact with Buddhism was from the philosophical perspective, and my knowledge about mindfulness and Buddhism has been obtained from books, films, the arts, and scholarly writings. I only understood Buddhist wisdom from the perspective of intellectual analysis and rationality, and metaphysically I acknowledged its meanings, principles, and significance. At the same time, I felt my rational understanding of this philosophical and spiritual tradition to be partial and disconnected, and that I was an outsider who could not incorporate and embody its nature into my own being. I realized that mindfulness couldn't be achieved by understanding, by thoughts alone; it had to come from perceptions, feelings, awareness, and somatic-sensuous engagement with others, an awareness and engagement that Mel Thompson (1999) calls "immediate experience," focusing on "the actual process." As my interest in mindfulness and in Buddhism began to grow, I felt I needed to learn how Buddhist practitioners carried out their beliefs and how mindfulness could be embodied in the trivial and ordinary things we do every day. It is the mundane things people do every day that make mindfulness a living philosophy and a spiritual commitment. In other words, in this research I want to pay special attention to how Buddhism is embodied in our existential beings and interactions. Hence, my new understanding of Buddhism requires a transformation: I need to embrace reason and intuition, rationality and sensibility, mind and heart. Such a transformation is an embodied wisdom, as Thompson (1999) explains: "in meditation, the attempt is made to get a 'feeling' for the teaching, rather than accepting it intellectually" (p. 73). Likewise, mindfulness must be grounded in our somatic-sensuous awareness and engagement with other beings, an inter-being who is attentive, devoted, and empty (Bai, Scott, & Donald, 2009). I found a community of Buddhist practitioners, the *Sangha*, that included monks, nuns, and lay people. From them, I have learned ways to become mindful through meditation.

When I began meditating, I realized how difficult it actually is to simply be aware of what seems so natural and easy; my mind was not fully aware of the present moment but was constantly thinking of something else that was not present. I feel it is critical to understand the etymological meaning of mindfulness in this context, and the cultural and spiritual roots that have nurtured this concept and the practice of mindfulness for thousands of years.

Meanings of mindfulness in Buddhist tradition

Mindfulness is deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy and daily practice. The original meaning of mindfulness was expressed as *Sati* in the Pali language of ancient India; T.W. Rhys Davids used the term "mindfulness" when he translated the Buddhist technical term into English in the late 19th century. At that time, the word mindfulness may have included notions of memory, reminiscence, recollection, and remembrance. Rhys Davids used what was available

to him in his translation (Gethin, 2011). Meanwhile, in some important Buddhist works, mindfulness was described as “bare attention” (Gunaratana, 2002; Nyanaponika Thera, 1962) and was understood as being non-judgmental, only attending to the bare facts of perceptions coming into our senses or minds. For Ven. Henepola Gunaratana, bare attention does not involve thinking; it is the immediate experience of what is happening before engaging in a perceptual process. However, for Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, though he uses the term “bare attention” in his writing, it only serves as the preliminary stage of mindfulness, and as the seed of right mindfulness (Bodhi, 2011). This is a term to which I will return. However, both non-judgment and bare attention are not ends unto themselves; they are essential components of mindfulness. Non-judgmentally and uncritically attending to what is happening is not an effortless act; it requires our full-hearted effort to consciously pay attention to what is happening, including our feelings, emotions, desires, urges, and thoughts. The act of paying full attention to the present usually is difficult for beginners; it requires effort and energy. In *The Art of Mindfulness*, Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) explains:

Mindfulness is the energy of attention. It is the capacity in each of us to be present one hundred percent to what is happening within and around us. It is the miracle that allows us to become fully alive in each moment. (p. 29)

For example, in our daily lives, when we eat our full attention is given to the act of eating; when we drink a cup of coffee, our full attention is on drinking the coffee. If our mind is distracted by something else, we must acknowledge that distraction and then bring our mind back to the act of drinking or eating. Some mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and therapeutic practices that adopt tenants of Buddhist mindfulness wisdom stop here, training minds away from emotions, judgments, desires, and anxiety, and focusing only on breathing (Kabat-Zinn, 2003); this is because many Western MBSR practitioners do not intend to adopt Buddhist traditions and vocabulary (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2000). It would be inaccurate to say that mindfulness is simply being aware without purpose, because the goal of mindfulness in Buddhist tradition is to end suffering. This is to say, rather than mere memory or observation, mindfulness involves a conscience and ethical intuition that does not avoid ethical choice and judgment (Gethin, 2011). The Dharma, the Buddha’s teaching, includes The Four Noble Truths - suffering, the origins of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering - and the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of suffering. The Four Noble Truths, the key principles of Dharma, are shared by various different Buddhist traditions. What is important to note here is that suffering not only refers to pain, stress, and anxiety, but also to unsatisfactoriness and unrest. In Buddhist understanding, suffering occurs because of our cravings, aversions, or ignorance. So by recognizing what kinds of suffering we experience and where that suffering originates, one can end suffering and move from a state of unrest to peace and even happiness. The path that leads to the cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which ranges from wisdom (right view, right attention), and morality (right speech, right action, right livelihood), to meditation (right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration). The word “right” may sound dogmatic and seems to impose one view for others to follow. However, the practice and understanding of “right” by no means demands that one uncritically follow a reductionist checklist of doing or non-doing; rather, “right” refers to an enlightened wisdom informed by contemplation. There is a famous saying of the Buddha:

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it;
 Do not believe in tradition, because they [have] been handed down for many generations; Do not believe in anything, because it is spoken and rumored by many;
 Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books;
 But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it¹ (Indonesia, 1956, p. 39).

Reflected by wisdom, morality, and meditation, the Noble Eightfold Path is also understood as the middle way between two extremes, the sense of indulgence created by satisfying desire and self-mortification by afflicting the body; nevertheless, the middle way does not mean compromise between the two, but rather transcends them both and avoids the errors each involves (Bodhi, 1998). The Four Noble Truths encapsulate the principles of living and suffering; the Noble Eightfold Path gives direction, the doctrine and discipline relationship between the two, which is the Dhamma/Dharma (Bodhi, 1998).

Mindfulness in the Noble Eightfold Path is different from consciousness. Consciousness is not a natural state of mind; it is selective, and involves “consciousness of” something that is usually unexamined (Lin, 2010; Hoyt, 2014). Bare attention is to unfold the state of “consciousness of” and observe what is happening within and around us in the current moment, including the state of “consciousness of.” For example, when I began mindfulness meditation in the temple with other practitioners, I realized how difficult it was simply to be aware of what seemed to be so natural. Our meditation hall was next to the dining hall, and our sitting meditation practice was accompanied by the delicious smell that was always coming out of the kitchen, especially when it was close to lunchtime. In the course of my meditation, I would become fully aware of the smell coming in and fully alerted to it. However, it was not only my sensibility that was awakened, but also my consciousness of such sensibilities when I mentally describe the smell as “delicious,” adding meaning to the particular smell as something desirable. This is not bare attention, but rather an example of consciousness of. I was consciousness of my ability to sense, and I was consciousness of the meanings that I could give to what I had consciousness of.

Understanding the meaning of mindfulness as bare attention should also be distinguished from concentrating² on something. In the ancient Indian work *The Bhagavad Gita*, the author refers to meditation as the exercise of calming one’s wandering mind. Krishna, the mindfulness master, compares the activity of the mind with a flame in the wind; the mind “wanders, restless and diffuse in its search for satisfaction without, lead it within; train it to rest in the Self” (Easwaran, 1985, p. 107). It is our desires, gratifications, or even aversions that lure us away from the present moment, from our full attention to what we do now and what surrounds us. This is not to say that there are ontological gaps between desire/aversion and mind/feeling, or that desires and aversions can be separated from our mind and body as isolated components. Rather, this understands human emotion as an essential part of our mind-body, that all are intertwined together to constitute our being. Desires or aversions are not things we need to push away, to eradicate, but rather it is important to realize that the self is not just a rational being, but also a somatic one; as a result, we must attend to the wholeness of the self, and fully observe what is happening. Such attention and awareness require a non-judgmental and

unselective orientation, or a “passive awareness” involving no techniques, strategies, or even abilities, as Jiddu Krishnamurti (1975) points out. Krishnamurti argues that meditation is not concentration, for concentration is exclusion. Desires, or even urges to be free from desires, are fleeting and nonpermanent. This is to say, what is contemplated is the contemplation itself; what is concentrated on is the effort of concentration itself. The difference is that bare attention is to attend to what is happening now, and not to be selective; conversely, concentration on something is selective. An example is concentrating on the image of a lotus to train one’s mind not to wander off. Concentrating on an image in order to keep a “calm” mind or heart bypasses the necessary steps of understanding the forces that cause suffering and the cessation of suffering, two steps the Four Noble Truths illuminates. Mindfulness guided by the Four Noble Truths is to be of “lucid awareness of the present moment” (Bodhi, 2011), observing and recognizing our bodies, feelings, consciousness of, and mental objects, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. It is an awareness that is clear and not disoriented or puzzled, calm but not unsettled or anxious, soft but not rigid or aggressive (Sujiva, 2009). To fully understand mindfulness, it is essential to experience and live through this clear awareness of the process of suffering; as a result, we are able to become calm, relaxed, and peaceful. This is a pathway by which we can “master and restore ourselves” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987b), or bring the heart to home (Sujiva, 2009) and know who we are.

This section has explained the meaning of mindfulness, distinguishing it from consciousness and concentration; next, I will discuss the four foundations of mindfulness practice, that is, the four observations of our body, feelings, consciousness, and mental objects.

Right mindfulness and its four foundations

Right mindfulness as the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path is a meditation approach; right mindfulness is built upon four foundations - contemplations of the body, feeling, consciousness, and mental objects (Nyansatta Thera, 1994). The first foundation - the contemplation of the body – is explained by Nyanasatta Thera: “thus he lives contemplating the body in the body internally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body externally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body internally and externally” (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanasatta/wheel019.html>). By way of breathing, the contemplation of the body is to observe one’s own body and another’s body, to understand the impermanence of the body, body postures, materiality, and one’s relationships with others (including both human and nonhuman, and the environment). The contemplation of feeling is to observe the rising and passing away of feelings. Our six sense bases - eyes, nose, ears, tongue, body, and mind - cause visual forms, smells, sounds, tactual objects, and mental objects. By contemplating feelings, we recognize that feelings are fleeting and ephemeral; attaching to them leads to suffering in the form of craving, aversion, or ignorance. Even our consciousness, the third contemplation, is neither neutral nor eternal. Like our feelings, our consciousness is consciousness of; it is our perception of something. As noted above, consciousness is consciousness of but not mindfulness. “Consciousness of” is very common in our daily lives; for example, when we hear sound when we write, it is our ears that hear the sound and our minds begin to become conscious of that sound - pleasant, disturbing, or irritating – and the meanings we associate with that sound. The contemplation of consciousness is to recognize the factors of origination and dissolution of our consciousness of, and to be clearly aware of their impermanence. After contemplating the body, the feeling, and the consciousness (of the mind), the last foundation points out the core of mindfulness: to contemplate mental objects. Mental

objects in the Buddha's teaching can be the very existence of everything, to observe things as they really are (*Vipassana*), including contemplating the first three contemplations as they are (e.g., body, feeling, consciousness) and things we can see or observe. Mental objects also refer to things we cannot see or observe, the abstract, the Dharma, and Buddha's teaching. Observing mental objects is to be mindful of our accumulated aggregate of clinging to things, feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and the consciousness to which we are used. However, while these mental objects have their rising moments, they also have their disappearing moments. This contemplation leads to enlightenment with regards to several important concepts in Dharma, such as emptiness, impermanence, and interpenetration. The Chinese version of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the contemplation of mental objects, is translated as “观法无我”. To observe and contemplate Dharma, I must let go of the illusional self, and thus realize that there is no self. This, I think, more accurately and plainly depicts the meanings of this foundation. Stating that there is no self when contemplating Dharma means learning that the body, feeling, and consciousness are not the self because they come and go and are impermanent. When we know the Dharma, we learn that everything in the world is marked by emptiness, no clinging, no attachment, and no control. Feelings arise and pass away, and the body comes into being and passes out of existence; consciousness is a learned thought, built upon our perceptions and experiences. Also, emptiness, non-duality, and the non-self are key concepts in the *Heart Sutra*, a widely cited Buddhist text:

Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form, the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness. Here, Sariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness; they are not produced or stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete. Therefore, Sariputra, in emptiness there is no form, nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness; No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; No forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind. (Conze, 1988, quoted in Low, 2006, p. 137)

Emptiness is form and form is emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form, and vice versa. This statement highlights the non-dichotomy of the nature of things. Emptiness is not nothingness or is it taken at face value, and we cannot reduce emptiness to mere emptiness. The *Heart Sutra* mentions, “all dharmas are marked with emptiness.” Here it states that dharmas are “marked” with rather than “are” emptiness because emptiness is seen as a “descriptive system” (Robinson, quoted in Cook, 1977) and dispositional (Hershock, 2012), rather than a primary or essential term of entities or existence. Buddhism does not deny the existence of a tree or a person, but what makes a tree a tree and a person a person is emptiness, and even the existence of the tree or the person is temporary and unfixed. Who am I? Am I the person with this particular name? Is my name I? There are other people who also have the same name as mine. Or is my appearance I? Or is my thinking I? From contemplation of the body to contemplation of the consciousness, we know that the body and our thoughts are not permanent either. Thus, the self is in a flux of change. Buddhism teaches that there is only incessant change, and no real and permanent entities or existence; all dharmas are marked with emptiness precisely because there is the law of change, and change upon change: “change itself at any point comes about as a result of other events which act as the environment of the one point and condition it, causing it to assume a new, different, momentary form” (Cook, 1977, p. 40). A

change evolves from other events, and all dharmas emerge from co-dependent originations.

The Law of Dependent Origination is another key concept; it points out the emptiness of both the self and other. It says: “when this is, that is. Once this arises, that arises. When this is not, that is not. Once this ceases, that ceases” (quoted in Shulman, 2007, p. 298). This explains that life and the phenomena around us are dependent upon other factors; in a set of relations, the arising or ceasing of other factors conditions change. A phenomenon arises due to a combination of conditions that contribute to its change and formation. Self and other do not possess permanent entities except in the process of becoming; thus, they are interdependent beings, “interconditioned” by each other, and “for something to be empty means to be empty of independent being, which is synonymous with existing only in dependence upon the other” (Cook, 1977, p. 42). Thus, the formation of self-identity is not autonomous, permanent, or fixed. One becomes a non-self and egoless when observing mental objects. Peter Hershock (2012) discusses the notion of interdependence when he interprets Hua-yen Buddhism master Fazang³:

For Fazang, it was clear that if all things are truly empty of any independent and abiding self, nature, or essence, then interdependence must be understood as entailing interpenetration. That is, interdependence is not a contingent, external relationship; it is constitutive or internal” (p. 36).

Chinese monk Fazang claims that the notion of emptiness (e.g., interdependence) also represents the interpenetration of all elements. For example, Fazang demonstrates to Empress Wu the interpenetration of macrocosms and microcosms using the golden lion statue in the courtyard of the Empress:

In each of the lion’s eyes, in its ears, limbs, and so forth, down to each and every single hair, there is a golden lion. All the lions embraced by each and every hair simultaneously enter into one single hair. Thus, in each and every hair there are an infinite number of lions....The progression is infinite, like the jewels of Celestial Lord Indra’s Net: a realm-embracing-realm ad infinitum is thus established, and is called the realm of Indra’s Net. (quoted in Odin, 1982, p. 17)

So, what is the golden lion? Is it the image? The gold? The statue? First there is gold, and then it is processed to take on the look of a lion. The golden lion ceases to exist if the gold is taken out of the lion form, so the lion is empty. The look of the golden lion includes (the shape of) its eyes, ears, limbs, and hair, and every single one of them together composes the golden lion. It is this simultaneous and mutual embracement and reflection of each other, demonstrating that all of these elements interpenetrate one another, seizing and embracing the qualities of the conditions made possible by gold, a material with both stability and mutability (e.g., gold can be molded into a lion, ring, necklace, etc.). Thus, Fazang and his Hua-yen Buddhism resonate with both process theory and complexity theory in that they regard the part as a whole and the whole as a part, and everything as interdependent and the cause of everything else in the process; the flow of cause is two-way or multidirectional. The part (the eye, limb, leg, hair) penetrates the whole (the statue of the golden lion) and each of these qualities has reflections of the other. For Fazang, “interpenetration results from a situation in which the cause includes the conditions within itself while at the same time, being a result itself of other

causes, its qualities are being absorbed into the other” (Cook, 1977, p. 68).

Accepting emptiness and interpenetration and contemplating mental objects is to recognize our five aggregates of clinging: material form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness; these result in five hindrances - anger, sloth, torpor, agitation, and doubt - that tend to distinguish like from dislike, favor from disfavor, satisfaction from dissatisfaction. These are the mental objects. As noted above, self and the other are not external to one another, and are not alienating entities or essential existence. The self is the other, good is bad, and satisfaction is dissatisfaction; it is our attachment to each of these that stops us from truly seeing the interpenetration of each into one another. Knowing this, it is not difficult to see the emptiness of these hindrances.

The right mindfulness and its foundations establish the vision of mindfulness as a foundation of the Buddha’s teaching on the Noble Eightfold Path, essential to understanding the Four Noble Truths. The last foundation of mindfulness is especially useful in highlighting the interdependence (emptiness) and interpenetration among things and beings.

In the following section, I will address the notion of human relationships manifested in Interbeing and the Four Immeasurables.

Mindfulness, Interbeing, and the Four Immeasurables

The interpenetration principle can be observed at different levels. This interpenetration principle is made clear in Thich Nhat Hanh’s book when he considers the self, other relationships, and existence. He says: “peace is every step: the path of mindfulness in everyday life,” which draws our attention to the interconnectedness and interdependence of things and beings. For instance, when first looking at a piece of paper, we could relate it to a cloud, sunshine, rain, a tree, the poet, a logger, heat, the earth, etc., because all of these make the piece of paper possible. He points out:

Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. ‘To be’ is to inter-be. We cannot just *be* by ourselves alone. We have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is. (p. 96)

Thus, mindfulness-based practice in Buddhism is not limited to clearing the mind and being a person free from suffering. It sees the self as a relational self, and the meaning of self is deepened because of constitutive others. Seeing the interconnectedness and interpenetration, being compassionate for the self is being compassionate for others, and vice versa. Mahayana Buddhism, one of the main schools of Buddhism, believes that each person is a Bodhisattva who has the potential to become enlightened, to become a Buddha, and who has compassion for their fellow human beings (Sri Dhammananda, n.d.) because we are interbeings and interdependent. Being compassionate is not just for ourselves, but also for others to the utmost. To the utmost, the self in Buddhism is emptiness. The Four Immeasurables of Buddha’s teaching: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity, are used in Buddhist prayer to wish the self well, and then to wish well to others nearby, to family members, friends, and everybody one knows - including enemies - and then to all sentient beings. Venerable Sujiva believes that these Four Immeasurable attitudes and wishes are the foundation of good companionship and human relationships. While certainly we cannot measure one’s attitudes with regards to these four aspects, the Immeasurable in a Buddhist text refers to all immeasurable

sentient beings. For example, no matter how big or small the compassionate deed of a Bodhisattva, he or she is a Bodhisattva. There is no degree of difference in terms of compassion: compassion is compassion. Seeing that everything is connected and one is in the other, the mindfulness of Buddhism begins with self-cultivation, and eventually one is mindful of all sentient beings.

The first two Immeasurables are easier to understand than the latter two. The third, empathetic joy, is for others. One should be happy for others when they are lucky, fortunate, and happy. It is especially difficult for someone to feel happy for others if one is struggling with food, water, illness, or shelter, but one should still feel happy for those who are fortunate enough to have everything (seemingly). Jealousy may hinder empathetic joy. Equanimity is the tranquil state of mind: no delusion, anger, like or dislike, but this is not indifference or apathy. With equanimity in mind, we learn not to attach to fame or praise, suffering or loss, success or failure. Then we develop our deeper tranquility and mindfulness; equanimity is also the foundation of true loving-kindness, compassion, and empathetic joy, the first three Immeasurables⁴.

Is compassion nature or culture? One can argue in both directions. Meditation (right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration) encompasses three of the steps on the Noble Eightfold Path. Through meditation, we learn more clearly about ourselves, others, why we do what we do and think what we think. For example, Krishnamurti, J. (1975) points out that the beginning of meditation is self-knowledge:

If I don't understand the ways of my thoughts, of my feelings, if I don't understand my motives, my desires, my demands, my pursuit of patterns of action, which are ideas - if I do not know myself, there is no foundation for thinking; the thinker who merely asks, prays, or excludes, without understanding himself, must inevitably end in confusion, in illusion. (p. 134)

In this sense, I agree with Venerable Sujiva that the Four Immeasurables require practice. With loving-kindness, Buddhist teaching gives clear reasons for and directions on how we can orient ourselves to be ontologically at peace with the self and other. The practice is more about approaches, and not about the meanings of compassion, joy, or loving-kindness. Loving-kindness, Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) reminds us, is to be: “aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals” (p. 12). Commitment to non-violence is the first *precept* for practitioners to follow in thinking and action. This training starts with establishing inner peace and doing nonviolence within ourselves and from ourselves.

Practitioners usually begin with breathing and relaxing the body, then move to clearing the mind to achieve right perceptions and clear awareness. Practicing loving-kindness toward oneself has nothing to do with being selfish; rather, when one is happy, it is possible to wish happiness to others and help others to be happy. This is based upon the understanding that all sentient beings are interconnected; we are a part of each other, and we do not have to like anyone when we wish them well (Salzberg, 2011). No killing is allowed, and nonviolence is a process, not an end; we live through it every day. As Thich Nhat Hanh states: “peace is not an end. It can never come about through non-peaceful means” (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1998, p. 17). In other words, peace is not a result to be learned, but a lived experience reflected in our daily words and actions. Such peace and no harm to others should not be limited to physical harm; rather, all

other human activities and interactions such as argument, debate, and living with others should follow the same rule, especially when one is encountering and dealing with difference.

Loving-kindness, compassion, and joy for others are considered to be good characteristics of a Bodhisattva who is to inter-be with others; however, the fourth Immeasurable, equanimity, forces the compassionate human relationship to a halt. The first three Immeasurables teach human love and good intent toward others, yet such caring for others reflects a human attachment to our “good will.” Equanimity is a clear and detached state of mind that works effortlessly towards others. It is mindfulness without being mindful, a giving up of the rationalities and reasons for what is needed to be mindful. The mind stops here, or there is no mind.

Below, I will use the notions of being-with/for and without being-with/for from *Zhuangzi* to explore the meaning of equanimity and further explain the pedagogical implications of being-with/for and without being-with/for.

Fasting the mind and being-with/for and without being-with/for in *Zhuangzi*

As a follower of Lao Tzu and *Dao*, *Zhuangzi* was known to use stories to explain his thinking and philosophies. In *In the World of Men*, *Zhuangzi* told a story about Confucius and his disciple Yen Hui, who were discussing how Hui could help a tyrant king to become a better leader. Hui had three rules: first, he would be a good companion of men if he could be outwardly compliant and do what others do; second, he would be a good companion of Heaven if he could be inwardly direct; third, he would be a good companion of ancient principles if he could work through the examples of antiquity. Listening to his reasons and explanations, Confucius asked Hui to reflect on his rules and consider if they might obscure him from truly understanding what he needed. Instead, Confucius advised Hui to fast his mind so as to clear his thoughts. In retelling this story, *Zhuangzi* presents the idea of fasting the mind through Confucius:

Make your will one! Don't listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don't listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind.
(Watson, 1964, p. 54)

Listening with our ears, we only hear the sounds that our ears pick up and that conform to our perceptions or habits; listening with our minds, we only hear what the mind can understand, which may narrow our vision. As a result, we unintentionally limit what we are able to hear, see, or understand according to our conscious or unconscious selections. Fasting the mind requires us to stop planning, guiding, or working towards a direction proven by our ears and our calculated thoughts; it frees our minds from the attachment to what works for us. Further, Confucius suggests using the spirit to listen, and only the spirit - that is, the *chi*⁵ - which has no shape or form and rests on nothing; it only flows with the *Dao* that can truly empty the mind. Fasting the mind eliminates any preconceived understanding of what might work; it is similar to meditation in Buddhism, an effort to empty the mind.

The act of fasting also denotes a forgetting of the construction and conception of self and other. In the story of Confucius and Yen Hui, fasting the mind resembles forgetting the “me” and the rules. Such fasting of the mind is especially helpful when we think about equanimity and relationships of non-attachment, or even friendship, which can be seen from *Zhuangzi*'s

work. For instance, in Chapter 6 of *Zhuangzi, The Great and Venerable Teacher*, Master Sang-hu, Meng-tzu, and Master Ch'in-chang, three friends, say to each other: "Who can join with others without joining with others? Who can do with others without doing with others? Who can climb up to heaven and wander in the mists, roam the infinite, and forget life forever and forever?" (Watson, 1964, p. 82). This passage vividly captures the central understanding of friendship in Taoism, a friendship and relationship that follows the *Dao* and emptiness. Brian Lundberg (1998) nicely translates "joining with" into "being-with" and "doing with" into "being-for." To me, such a translation highlights both the action and existential grounding that illustrate the human relationship of interbeing, because the notion of being has more connotations, existence, identity and prediction (Coutinho, 2004, p. 95).

In his analysis of the meaning of friendship in *Zhuangzi*, Brian Lundberg (1998) asks us to look beyond the apparent principles of Taoism that value the solitary hermit or abandon social conventions; instead, he argues that *Zhuangzi* is deeply concerned with friendship and human relations through the concepts of being-with/for and without being-with/for. It is commonly understood that true friendship requires sacrifice, altruism, and caring; however, such attributes of friendship indicate desires and expectations that require the other to yield to loyalty and predetermined values of friendship. Lundberg argues: "*being-with* someone is at [the] bottom of treating that person instrumentally to accommodate one's own *needs*. Likewise, *being-for* someone becomes a matter of *being-for* oneself; we do for others so that they do for us" (p. 216). Returning to the notion of fasting the mind, with ears and minds we can only think of friendship as being based upon our preconceived understandings of companionship, friendship, and what is good for others. It is our "sedimented perceptors" (Slattery, 2006) that assume and filter for us in understanding friendship.

A Taoist friendship transcends the normal understanding of the emotional bond between friends, mutual altruistic acts between friends, or even the conception of being friends: that is, forgetting the friendship. There are many stories about Hui Shi in the book *Zhuangzi*, who was Zhuangzi's debate opponent, and whom Zhuangzi always outsmarted in their philosophical dialogues. However, Hui Shi and Zhuangzi were by no means friends according to our conventional definition of friendship: there was not the intentional support that friend's offer, emotional caring that friend's express, nor any altruism involved. They were commensurate debate opponents and partners; one gave meaning to the other, even though it was not expressed in caring, altruistic, or friendly means. However, it was through such long-term dialogues and debates that they were able to develop a togetherness that could not be translated into any bond, yet also could not be separated by force because there was no attachment-togetherness there to be detached. Zhuangzi was deeply saddened when Hui Shi died. One day, when he and his student passed Hui Shi's grave, he told the story of a carpenter, Shi, to express his loneliness after losing Hui Shi:

There was a man from Ying who, if plaster as thin as a fly's wing got on the end of his nose, would have carpenter Shi slice it off. Carpenter Shi, rousing the wind with his whirling hatchet, would slice it off in compliance, ridding the plaster from the nose completely and without injury, while the man from Ying stood there without losing his composure. Lord Yuan of Song heard of this, summoned Carpenter Shi and asked, "Could you try doing this for me?"

Carpenter Shi replied, "I used to be able to slice like this, however, my partner is

long dead.” Since the death of the master, I too am without a partner. There is no one with whom I can speak to.
(quoted in Lundberg, 1998, p. 215)

Like Carpenter Shi, Zhuangzi lost a great partner with whom he developed his debate skills, his wisdom and understanding of the world, and a deep companionship that by no means would be understood as friendship, at least as we commonly define it. The companionship between Zhuangzi and Hui Shi was at odds with the normal understanding of friendship; it was casual, spontaneous, and an example of one being with another but without being-with the other, being for the other without being-for the other; it was a companionship that followed no doctrines, no perceptions, no understandings, and even had no self. Hui Shi was the true debate opponent of Zhuangzi, but at the same time he was the true friend of Zhuangzi because it was he who enabled Zhuangzi to be Zhuangzi, and not anyone else. Friendship and opponents interpenetrate one another, are interconnected, empty; friendship and opponent is “being a result itself of other causes, its qualities are being absorbed into the other”, as Fa-tsang would explain. One is the other. When Hui Shi was alive, their friendship was a form of forgetting friendship, a friendship of *Dao*, as it says: “the fish forget each other in the rivers and lakes, and men forget each other in the arts of the Way (Dao)” (Watson, 1964, p. 84). This is the friendship of being-with and being-for without being-with and being-for. Such friendship requires an ease of intentions and purposes, and a freedom of emotions, or more adequately, an emotive *wuwei* (Lundberg, 1998) that allows a relationship to take its own natural course.

Mindfulness and being-with/for and without Being-with/for as pedagogy

The act of becoming mindful has profound pedagogical implications. The practical nature of meditation has been proven to be valuable in classroom practice, especially when working with challenging students or dealing with difficult issues, although it risks being understood merely as a therapy useful in distress situations. However, one can move beyond its therapeutic use. For instance, Yuk-Lin Renita Wong (2004) uses mindfulness-based critical social work pedagogy to work with the discomfort arising in classrooms when difficult and controversial topics are introduced. As a minority female professor who teaches a majority of white, middle class students on issues of diversity, privilege, oppression, and social justice, Wong had been confronted with anger, discrimination, and even protest of her authority as a teacher when students became uncomfortable and resisted examining their perceptions and relationships to those topics. Some students viewed her work as “white-washing,” and when they received low grades, organized to see the School Director and challenge Wong’s authority to give grades and decide on course content. Contemplating such difficulties, Wong took insight from her own mindfulness practice and learned to deal with her own feelings of discomfort and vulnerability as a minority female teacher in a challenging classroom. Moreover, she also began to teach her students to recognize their own discomfort and emotions, to relax into and befriend their discomfort, to practice the deep listening of mindfulness to truly understand what causes discomfort or anger. Only when students fully embrace their own discomfort and emotions can change happen and teaching moments occur. It is natural for people to run away from discomfort; however, practicing mindfulness in teaching enables students to give their full attention to what is happening inside and outside, to face the here and now, thus engendering a challenging and a turning point for meaningful pedagogy. Nurturing her students with mindfulness skills and guiding them through learning the course materials, Wong practices the

pedagogy of being-with and being-for; letting her students take their own paths when engaging with difficult learning through their inner dialogues, Wong's pedagogy also teaches without being-with and being-for since she does not take the lead in her students' own journeys of engaging with discomfort.

In my own teaching, I have learned to give students time to become friends with their doubts, their wonders, and even their difficulties. As a teacher, I do have the impulse to tell them what they should understand, where to look for answers, or what the purposes are for a given text or film used in class. Practicing mindfulness, however, I give myself time to clear my mind and offer my students the chance to fast theirs before they rush in for answers or solutions. Along with mindfulness-based pedagogy, instead of concentrating on answers, I encourage students to ask stimulating philosophical and pedagogical questions. An example of a question I ask is: what are the explicit or implicit values that guide my teaching of diverse learners? If students try to brush off difficult questions, I present follow-up questions such as: what does that make you feel when you...? Yet, such pedagogy also risks allowing students to get "off the track" of the route they are supposed to follow, to stray away from the learning objectives that the catalogue and syllabus establish. I have found, however, that the learning that allows one to get "off-track" and to meander is also enduring. Outside of class, students often carry their doubts, questions, and excitement to online blogs and off-topic research, and share their learning and additional research with broad audiences. For example, I require a bi-weekly entry to a blog on topics that relate to class work. I do not grade their right or wrong explanations of the issues they choose to discuss with others, but during the exchange of ideas between themselves and other students, sometimes even with their own students (many of my students are in-service teachers), these bloggers develop deeper dialogues with themselves and with others.

To be mindful in teaching is to *be* with others; it is an existential pedagogy of what we teach, less about understanding the concept of being with others and more about embodying such a concept, living through it and remaining open-minded to the *being* that others may define. For example, one student reflected on how she could use her white privilege in teaching: "we can use our privilege to 'help' the underprivileged, but we must resist the temptation to try and bring them up to our level" (Course work, online discussion). In her reflection, she shows her empathy for those who are underprivileged, but at the same time her pedagogy is not to instruct others to be like her. Another student pointed out her own inadequacy and fear as a teacher of teaching students who are blind because she cannot really relate to them. She realizes: "I was uncomfortable teaching this student, because I do not know how to make him feel comfortable in a classroom [;] he was new." In this passage, she addresses her own vulnerability in the zone of the unknown, and that the unknown is a two-way street for both her and her blind student. However, these subtle pedagogies of nurturing one's own being-with/for others and without being-with/for others are not valued or carefully examined in the current educational climate that is oriented for specific outcomes and objectives, and for "achievement" that is measurable. I prefer to believe that embodied mindfulness truly helps us to become better teachers, and that non-mindfulness practitioners could also use mindfulness in their teaching. My students are not mindfulness practitioners, but that does not prevent them from engaging with mindfulness-based pedagogy. Robert Tremmel (1993) uses the art of Zen in his classes. He has found that the "paying attention" in meditation is helpful for his students in developing their "reflective practice" (Schön, 1983). Zhuangzi reminds us that *Dao* is the one we follow, not the particular meditation techniques that many therapeutic approaches try to inform on the form itself. *Dao* cannot be named. The *Dao* balances forever-flowing, converging, and diverging movements

between opposites without desires to reach/be the opposite (Li, 2009a). Informed by mindfulness, a pedagogy listens with spirit (as Confucius explains) and even forgets being-with and being-for others in the process of teaching. A pedagogy that can be considered as empty as Buddhist teaching instructs, in ways that are not fixed, permanent self-righteousness, but also an interpenetration that allows the teacher and the learner to interact, merge, and grow.

Conclusion

Engaging mindfulness in practice does not have to cause one to avoid addressing the spiritual and cultural traditions that give deep meaning to this practice. Healthy discussion and critique at the college level about religious and spiritual practices, without indoctrination or discrimination, preserves academic freedom and promotes academic inquiry (Thomas & Bahr, 2008). In addition, mindfulness-based pedagogy translates ideas into “every step” of our teaching; understanding mindfulness as merely conceptual fails to ontologically merge our bodies and minds. For Buddhists, “you cannot ‘go out’ in this way until you have truly gone in” (Low, 2006). Teaching with mindfulness transforms our philosophies and beliefs regarding who we are; it cultivates a pedagogy of knowing and being that is constantly in a state of renewing or fasting. It brings about different horizons of teaching that knowing alone does not ensure. The wise Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, says:

If you are a scholar and you work only with your intellect, you might interpret a teaching in one way. But if you are a real practitioner, your practice will help you to discover the depth of the teaching and to touch the insight brought about by the practice. Then you have another, completely different way of presenting the same teaching. (Shambhala Sun, 2010, July)

Teaching with mindfulness is an embodied pedagogy; it allows us to pay full attention to the ongoing pedagogical process and to have a clear awareness of our teaching minds and bodies. It restores the interconnectedness of our philosophical mind and affective teaching body, allowing us to be sentient beings that inter-be with others in non-attachment ways. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) explains such a profound embodiment: “to be consciousness or rather to be an experience is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other people, to be with them instead of being beside them” (p. 96). Practicing mindfulness in the classroom is not to borrow an idea or a method, or to mediate on difficult dialogues or situations. Rather, it starts with ourselves, transforming our own being and understanding not just of others, but of ourselves. It connects with our existential selves and substantiates our embodied responses to others. Teaching with mindfulness transforms our knowing to being-with/for and without being-with/for, reflecting an engagement of both mind and body (Hoyt & Slattery, 2009). Meanwhile, we should cultivate a pedagogy of being-with and being-for that transcends the boundaries and conventions of friendship, attachment, and self or other; it should be enlightened by non-attachment, the emptiness of Buddhism mindfulness, and the Taoist wisdom of fasting the mind. It is such cultural and spiritual traditions of Buddhism and Taoism that inform a pedagogical relationship that is being with/for others and without being with/for others.

Notes

¹ This excerpt is from the book *2500 Buddha Jayanti*, which was published to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's parinirvana.

² This concentration is not the same as the right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path.

³ Fazang is also spelled Fa-tsang in other texts.

⁴ I am grateful to one of the reviewers who pointed out this insight.

⁵ Chi is an important concept in ancient Chinese philosophy; it refers to the origin of the universe, such as the chi of *yin* and *yang* that act on one another, and reach to harmony and the existential meaning of personhood (Fung, 1948).

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