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Connecting Inner and Outer Peace: Buddhist Meditation Integrated with Peace Education

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Inner Peace as a Missing Dimension in Peace Education

Connecting inner dimensions of peace education to outer dimensions of peace education is critical for transformative peace efforts aimed at curbing a cultural of violence and moving toward a culture of peace. The cultivation of inner peace can contribute to knowledge paradigms that are supportive of peace and can provide a foundation for social action toward supporting peaceful attitudes, dispositions, values, action-orientations, behaviors and social structures. Contemplative practices/meditations

are essential to education for peace because inner and outer worlds are not mutually exclusive, rather they mirror and reinforce one another. Therefore, inner violence correlates with outer violence; inner peace correlates with outer peace. Aligning both nonviolent means with nonviolent ends is essential for building sustainable, renewable peace. The connection between *being* peace and *doing* peace needs to be more deeply fostered and explored in the field of peace education.

Particularly enlightening for the evolution of peace thinking is Groff's designation of seven types of peace: peace as the absence of war, peace as balances of forces in the international system, peace as no war and no structural violence on macro levels, peace as no war and no structural violence on micro levels (adding community, family, and feminist peace), intercultural peace, holistic Gaia peace, and holistic inner-outer peace. Groff maintains that inner peace is a neglected dimension in peace theory and urges further exploration (Groff 2001; Groff 2002).

It is argued implicitly through this article here that the neglected dimension of inner peace can and should be explored and cultivated in various public schooling contexts, through moments of silence, through mindful reflection, and perhaps through guided visualizations that calm the body, subdue the stirring mind, and bring a sense of general well-being and happiness. Such contemplative practices could provide physiological, emotional, interpersonal, and social benefits that will create a positive

classroom environment and safer school climates; this safe and more inclusive environment can help nurture a culture of peace in a broader U.S. society.

Overall, this article describes major types of Buddhist meditation and elucidates the connections among Buddhist meditative practices and a missing dimension of contemporary peace education—the cultivation of inner peace. In laying the groundwork for integrating aspects of Buddhist meditation within peace education efforts, definitions of peace education are critiqued. The specific techniques of loving-kindness mediation and emptiness meditation are explored through the eyes of scholars of Buddhism and through the eyes of the author who has been a student of Buddhism for about twelve years. The secularization of Buddhist and other contemplative practices for use in U.S. public schools is problemitized given the history of the separation of church and state in the United States. Rooting insight into the radical interconnectedness of all life in Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions, the power of this insight for transforming individual dispositions and actions for nonviolent social change is explored. First an exploration of various conceptions of peace education is necessary.

What is Peace Education Anyway?

Defining Peace Education

Reardon, a prominent peace educator who contributed much to this emergent field, defines peace education as:

> the transmission of knowledge about the requirements of, the obstacles to and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge, and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities (Reardon 1999).

Key words in the above definition help elucidate the essence of Reardon's conception of peace education: knowledge of the requirements of peace must be gained; obstacles and possibilities of peace must be transmitted; a training in skills of interpretation must be part of peace education; development of reflective and participatory capacities must be enhanced; and a focus on applied knowledge for overcoming real life problems and actualizing alternative possibilities is crucial. Reardon maintains that the transmission of knowledge and skills, the enhancement of capacities, and a focus on real life problems and possibilities must propel peace education endeavors. Peace education should be rooted in real world problems and possibilities. The dimensions of Reardon's comprehensive peace education include: an integrated holistic education, a focus on the human context of relationships; ecological and planetary systems consciousness; and organic and developmental learning (Reardon 1988).

Harris, an equally prominent peace educator who has focused mostly on micro community and school efforts, defines peace education as

> Teaching encounters that draw out from people their desires for peace and provide them with nonviolent alternatives for managing conflicts, as well as the skills for critical analysis of the structural arrangements that legitimate and produce *injustice* and *inequality* (Harris 2002: 7).

Harris's (2002) definition differs from Reardon's (1999) by focusing on the "drawing out" of desires for peace instead of "transmission of knowledge" for achieving and maintaining peace. Harris's definition places conflict resolution skills as well as the intellectual capacities for critical analysis of structural causes and conditions for the perpetuation of the absence of peace (with a special focus on positive peace or the absence of structural violence) as central to the aims of peace education. Harris's concern with "critical analysis" is not necessarily different from Reardon's concern for the development of "reflective and participatory capacities for applying knowledge." Both concentrate on consciousness-raising in the process of empowering students and teachers to seek nonviolent means to nonviolent ends and to actualize nonviolent solutions for creating alternative and sustainable futures.

Peace Thinking and Paradigm Shifts

Peace thinking has evolved significantly over that last one hundred years. Shallow definitions of peace convey the absence of war as the sole condition of peace. However, in the 1970's, Galtung (1969) suggested two ways of thinking about peace:

negative peace, or the absence of war (direct violence), and positive peace, or the absence of structural violence (indirect violence). Framing peace thinking in the terms of positive peace brought issues of social justice, human rights, economic inequalities, and developmental issues to the forefront of peace theory and peace education (Ardizonne 2001; Reardon 1988). Peace theory and peace education have expanded to analytically and practically encompass the indirect violence inherent in our economic, social, cultural, and political systems that privilege some at the exclusion of others.

Recent calls for a paradigm shift in the field of peace education urge for movement away from defining peace education in the negative as "elimination" or a "lack of". Brantmeier & Lin (forthcoming) maintain that "A new paradigm for peace should embody the generative, integrative, transformative potential of education for peace." (Brantmeier & Lin forthcoming). They offer values, principles, and assumptions to guide this new paradigm shift. One assumption states that, "Inner and outer peace are interdependent dimensions of the human experience. *Being* in peace and *doing* peace are united." (Brantmeier & Lin 2008: 4). This assumption is a necessary consideration for rethinking a paradigm shift in the field of peace education.

In my own work in peace education, I struggle for congruence in both inner and outer peace. I also struggle to infuse peace education approaches with insights from critical social theory—in the context of teacher education training. Critical peace

education, a blending of critical social theory and peace education approaches of Reardon and Harris, can be understood here as education for the elimination of direct, indirect, and structural forms of violence; it aims to transform structural violence--the social, political, economic, and environmental arrangements that privilege some at the exclusion of others. Critical peace education, informed by the work of Freire (1971), includes various stages: raising consciousness about various forms of violence (direct, indirect, structural, cultural); imagining nonviolent alternatives (from social, economic, and political structures to psychological and spiritual methods for attaining inner peace); providing specific modes of empowerment (conflict resolution skills, critical thinking, political participation and mobilization, global perspectives and opportunities); and critical peace education includes enacted plans to move toward a more peaceful and just world through social transformation. The main focus of critical peace education is transformation via consciousness raising, vision, and action. Thus, critical peace education is action-oriented by promoting social and cultural change toward a nonviolent, sustainable, and renewable future. The critical peace educator creates opportunities for students and teachers to understand the complex and variegated nature of violence in our world; s/he provides the space and scaffolding for envisioning and enacting alternative nonviolent possibilities for real world challenges (Brantmeier 2004).

Truly, peace thinking and peace education efforts need to continue to draw from various intellectual fields and traditions in order to build a more vibrant, relevant, and visionary approach to the challenges of a globalized world. A new paradigm for peace education needs to branch out, synthesize, integrate, and innovate. Drawing from world wisdom traditions is but one thread of possible innovation.

Self Disclosure and Limitations

I attempt to write this paper, not from a scholarly place with a guise of objectivity, not solely from a practitioner's place, but from a place somewhere in the grey middle. As a Euro-American male born into a Catholic family in the rural U.S. Midwest, I surely cannot claim to be a Buddhist by cultural birthright, nor do I solely consider myself a Buddhist. Surely my cultural lens filters Buddhist teachings in unique ways. My experience with Buddhist meditation stems from twelve years of study, reflection, and practice in both Tibetan and Zen styles of meditation. My desire to learn more about Buddhist meditation traditions has goaded me to seek opportunities to study in India on three occasions.[1] I have studied in India at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives on two separate occasions and once at the Tushita Retreat Center in Dharamsala. I also studied with the Dalai Llama as part of the *Kalachakra* Ceremony in 1999 in Bloomington, Indiana. My other experiences in Buddhism are comprised of a day retreat

[1] I also am interested in other forms of meditation, including Yogic, Sufi, Christian, and Native American practices.

at a Zen Center in Sydney, Australia, study in Thailand, and visits for meditation purposes and to study at the Zen Center, the Tibetan Monastery, and the Tibetan Cultural Center in Bloomington, Indiana. Almost daily sitting meditations for the last several years ground my practice.

If my descriptions of Buddhist meditation do not hold steadfast to respective meditation traditions, please forgive me. My eclectic spiritual practice leads to a certain degree of hybridity in experience and interpretation. Accordingly, I will try to stay to the pathways as described by both spiritual practitioners and scholars of Buddhism. As a cognitive exercise, this paper attempts to briefly summarize various schools and traditions of Buddhist meditation, to contemplate the problems of secularizing Buddhist meditation, and to provide a rationale for the use of certain types of Buddhist meditation as tools in peace education.

At its heart, this paper aims to discuss the cultivation of inner peace as a powerful tool for building a peaceful world. The paradox of course is that with words, I aim to point at what some say is the unnamable—beyond words. Some words from the Zen tradition clarify the paradox, "Most people are very attached to words and speech. So we cure this sickness with word-and-speech medicine" (Mitchell 1976: xi).

A Brief Overview of Schools and Traditions in Buddhist Meditation

The two most basic schools of Buddhism are the Theravadic and the Mahayana, otherwise known as the "Lesser Vehicle" and the "Greater Vehicle" respectively. As far as I can tell, the fundamental distinctions are geographic, cultural and methodological in nature. In Thailand, for example, the majority of the population is of the Theravadic tradition. Most Tibetans in-exile in India and elsewhere, are of the Mahayana tradition.[2] A distinguishing feature of the Mahayana school is the *boddhisatva* vow to renounce one's personal enlightenment until all sentient beings attain enlightenment—thus the term "Greater Vehicle." Smith (1991) writes:

> For the Theravadans, the ideal was the *arhat*, the perfect disciple who like a lone rhinoceros, strikes out alone for *nirvana* and, with prodigious concentration, proceeds unswervingly toward that goal. The Mahayan ideal, on the contrary, was the *boddhisatva*, 'one whose essence (sattva) is perfected wisdom (bodhi)"—a being who, having reached the brink of nirvana voluntarily renounces that prize and returns to the world to make nirvana available for others. (Smith 1991: 124).

Such a distinction is challenged by some Theravadans who claim that once one attains *nibbana* (Pali word for Nirvana), he/she naturally extends loving kindness to all and seeks the liberation of those who are still caught in the wheel of *samsara*--the spinning

[2] As part of Tibetan cultural beliefs, one should treat all sentient beings as we treat our mothers because in all actuality—based on the law of reincarnation-- at one time an ant could have been your mother. Thus, loving kindness should be extended to all sentient beings that one encounters; one should treat all like her mother.

wheel of suffering. The enlightened one cares for those who still cling to desire, attachments, or those who make distinctions between the satisfactory and unsatisfactory in both the Theravadic and Mahayanic traditions—so these Theravadans claim. Just as a Catholic sometimes disagrees with a Protestant, a Sunni with a Shiite, so too do Buddhist schools disagree about the way to attain enlightenment and the responsibility one has to others.

In both schools, the practitioner seeks liberation from suffering with the ultimate achievement of enlightenment being nirvana. Meditation is a tool for attaining the state of *nirvana*. Conze (1956) states the purposes of Buddhist meditation:

> On the way to Nirvana, they (meditations) serve to promote spiritual development, to diminish the impact of suffering, to calm the mind and to reveal the true facts of existence (Conze 1956: 11).

Conze (1956) expands the narrow view of the word "meditation" by distinguishing among three different Buddhist meanings: mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Thus, embedded within the word "meditation" are various meanings and meditation practices; the cultivation of mindfulness and intention, concentration for steadying the mind, and wisdom for understanding a deeper reality. One can integrate various meditation practices into approaches to cultivating inner peace.

Two Basic Types of Buddhist Meditation

Buddhist meditation, called the "science of the mind" by the Dalai Llama, is a variegated practice according to distinctive traditions and interpretations of the path and purpose of meditation. The two basic most rudimentary distinctions are mindfulness and emptiness meditation. Mindfulness meditation has an object of concentration, such as the breath in Zen meditation or a *mandala* Tibetan tantric traditions. The object of concentration is used as a means for training the mind or cultivating certain mental skills or psycho-emotive states and dispositions.

For example, I was taught by Zen practitioners prior to several Zen meditation experiences that I should focus on the breath coming in an out at the tip of my nose. I was instructed to count to ten on the in-breaths. This type of meditation can be considered mindful in that a point of focus is chosen and when the mind inevitably wanders from the focal point, one gently brings mindfulness back to the focus of concentration. The purpose of this type of meditation is to sharpen the mind's ability to concentrate on a single-object for prolonged periods of time.[3] One can develop great powers of concentration through this type of calm, focused meditation. Another Zen practice teaches mindfulness through walking meditation. In the book *Peace is Every*

[3] In the yogic tradition, this one-pointed concentration is sometimes referred to as *samadhi*, though some may argue that *samadhi* is much more than one-pointed concentration; it is union with the Ultimate (Varenne 1976).

Step, Thich Nhat Hanh offers an array of walking mindfulness meditations aimed at cultivating concentration, inner peace and meditative equipoise in motion.

However, some consider mindfulness meditation a stepping stone to something more. From a Tibetan cultural tradition, the Dalai Llama (2000) writes:

> In Buddhism, we combine single-pointed meditation with the practice of analytic meditation, which is known as *vipasyana*, a penetrative insight…By recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of different types of emotions and thoughts, together with their advantages and disadvantages, we are able to enhance our positive states of mind which contribute toward a sense of serenity, tranquility, and contentment…Reason thus plays a helpful part in this process (Llama 2000: 7).

From this perspective, single-pointed concentration on impermanence for example, becomes an analytic process that leads to understanding and insight or wisdom. The state of concentration is harnessed to channel thought towards insight about states of mind, the nature of emotional reactions—basically, experiments in the "science of the mind" are conducted. Anecdotes to negative states of mind such as lust after the body or greed are applied to counteract the negativities. Cultivation of compassion, insight, wisdom, and altruistic intent are among the goals of various practices in Tibetan Buddhist[4]

[4] This is a specific reference to meditation practice in the Gelupta order, one of several orders in Tibetan Buddhism.

mindfulness meditations. The power of concentration is harnessed and used to evoke understanding and to create desirable psycho-emotive states and dispositions.

On the other hand, emptiness meditation, distinct from meditation on emptiness, privileges the cognitive-emotive place prior to thought, or the calm, undifferentiated foundation of thought. Quoting from the Zen tradition might once again be helpful here, "This means that if you are thinking, you can't understand Zen. If you keep the mind that is before thinking, this is Zen mind" (Mitchell 1976: xii). In the Zen meditation tradition, not thinking is crucial to attainment of *satori*. *Satori*, the name of enlightenment in the Japanese Zen tradition, is possible and reachable from moment to moment. Soen-Sa suggests:

> People desire money, fame, sex, food, and rest. All this desire is thinking. Not thinking is not suffering. Not suffering means world peace. World peace is the Absolute. The Absolute is I (Mitchell 1976: 4).

This emptiness meditation, distinct from meditation on emptiness—a mindfulness form of meditation-- suggests clearing the mind of all thought as a prerequisite to enlightened living. Thought, as illustrated in the numerous Zen *koans*, becomes an obstacle to attainment, insight, or understanding. Assuming you do not remember your past lives, one effective way to understand emptiness meditation is to think of what you thought of

before you were born. This perhaps gives one a momentary glimpse of what empty mind is like.

There are many different kinds or traditions of Buddhist meditation that vary in their approaches. Most aim toward a common goal—insight and/or liberation from suffering-- though the methods vary. Just as multiple personalities comprise a given society, so to do multiple ways of meditation comprise Buddhist meditation. Understanding the distinction between mindfulness and emptiness meditation is one important step toward understanding how Buddhist meditation, or more appropriately, a secularized meditation shaped after Buddhist meditative methods, might be used by peace educators to promote the conditions of inner peace in ourselves and fellow humanity.

Two Specific Buddhist Meditative Techniques for Peace Education

The contemplative practice of sitting on a meditation mat, at one's office desk, or in one's school desk, calming the mind, focusing, and breathing alone have physiological and psycho-emotive benefits that make the practice of meditation worthwhile and worthy of the attention of educators at all levels, K-16. More disciplined and focused practices, be they mindfulness or emptiness meditation, provide opportunities for students to more deeply explore the worlds of meditation. First, I will describe two specific techniques of meditation through the eyes of scholars and then share personal experiences related to these two meditative techniques.

Metta Meditation

Metta Meditation, or loving-kindness meditation, can be a powerful technique to cultivate non-differentiation between the desirable and undesirable. In *Loving Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness,* Salzberg (1995) describes the structured technique of *metta* meditation. First, one cultivates loving kindness towards oneself by appreciating her/his positive aspects. When this feeling of loving kindness is generated toward oneself, then one cultivates a feeling of gratitude and loving kindness for a person whom they deem desirable--perhaps a friend, partner, or a historical figure of great admiration. After one holds this person in the mind's eye and experiences all of the associated emotions (maybe a sense of caring, love, gratitude, respect, etc…) and extends loving kindness toward that person, then one brings a neutral person to mind; someone who she is ambivalent toward. After cultivating a sense of loving kindness toward this person, the focus of attention is turned toward someone deemed undesirable. Loving kindness is also extended to this person. In this way, we learn to not differentiate between ourselves, our loved ones, those we feel ambivalent about, and our enemies. Extending *metta* to one's enemy is particular difficult and important. Salzberg (1995) comments:

> This is a very powerful stage in the practice, because the enemy, or the person with whom we have difficulty stands right at the division between

> the finite and the infinite radiance of love. At this point, conditional love unfolds into unconditional love (Salsberg 1995)

Love that is unconditional is boundless and free and has the power to radically transform all who touch it. Such a love must be applied with discipline. Gandhi believed love, a limitless and unconditional love, to be the creative principle that would ultimately conquer violence. He also taught that love should be the impetus for action in nonviolent resistance. Gandhi (1930) relays, "The force to be so applied can never be physical. There is in it no room for violence. The only force of universal application can, therefore, be that of *ahimsa* or love. In other words, soul-force" (Gandhi 1930: 319). In this quote, Gandhi translates *ahimsa*, traditionally translated as nonviolence, as love. In a Gandhian theory of peace and nonviolence, loving kindness is the soul-force that motivates and guides action toward positive social change. If peace education aims to transform the violent into the nonviolent, the world of suffering into one of more happiness, loving-kindness emerges with radical and revolutionary powers of social transformation. A technigue for actualizing nonviolence must be tipped with love, "Satyagraha is pure soul-force….The Soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love. If someone gives us pain through ignorance, we shall win him through love" (Gandhi 1917: 319).

Nonviolent social action, armed with unconditional love cultivated through *metta* meditation, holds a potential to transform our world and those who live in it.

Salzberg makes a very important and often overlooked point:

> A way to discover intimacy with ourselves and all of life is to live with integrity, basing our lives on a vision of compassionate nonharming. When we dedicate ourselves to actions that do not hurt ourselves or others, our lives become all of one piece, a "seamless garment" with nothing separate or disconnected in the spiritual reality we discover (Salzberg 1995).

Thus, nonviolent action in the world begins with loving oneself, extending that love to others, and acting without a seem between nonviolent thought and nonviolent action. The spontaneous flow of love becomes inherent in every action. With a "recognition of the fundamental unity of all life" we move forward with loving kindness. *Metta* meditation holds a possibility for the transformation of the aversions and afflications of differentiating between the satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Starting with loving kindness extended to oneself, which is often hard to do for many people, we radiate this loving kindness outward to others who we deem less desirable. Friendliness then becomes unlimited. Conze (1956) writes, "Then as he feels friendliness again and again, he should achieve and even mind towards the four persons, --i.e., himself, a dear person, an indifferent person, a foe—and bring about the abolition of the barriers between them."

(Conze 1956: 128). With such even mindedness and cultivation of friendliness, kindness extends freely and unconditionally.

The mind and heart seeds cultivated through *metta* meditation allow one to curb negative reactions to given individuals or situations. For example, in the past a particular cafeteria worker who I found particularly displeasing because of her mood, temperament, and differential treatment toward white people bothered me considerably for the better of part of a year. Each day I would see this person, she would smile through what I perceived as subtley racist eyes at the various international and students of color she interacted with. I felt a sort of comradery that she wanted to build with me because of my light skin color, though I cannot validate this claim through actual proof. I would always experience a moment of uncomfortable hesitation when walking by because I did not really want to say hi, yet I felt obligated to. Through a series of walking meditations each morning, I eventually found it possible to recognize my negative emotional aversion to her, reflect on how she feels suffering just as all sentient beings do, and acknowledge that she in part might be a product of her conditioning. After sending loving kindness toward her mentally before seeing her each day, I found it much easier to acknowledge her presence with a friendly hello and to engage in short conversations with her. By not differentiating between her and someone I found desirable, I was able to treat her more equally and fairly—for my preconceived notions of this southern Indiana woman with a

Southern drawl could very well have been integral to my assumptions about her being racist. As a matter of fact, since I have observed her having what seemed to be friendly conversations with people of other races.

This *metta* meditation I used to embrace this woman was not only something I used when on the meditation mat during morning ritual and a technique I used as I walked toward the cafeteria each morning. It was a quick method I used to overcome my discomfort with her presence. Recognizing my own assumptions, through a contemplative practice of reflection on the causes of how I was feeling, was also a form of mindfulness meditation practice. This reflection process and extension of loving kindness has helped me to build a more healthy relationship with this individual.

Mindfulness meditation, or concentrated meditation that uses the mind (to either still the mind, train the mind, or) to complete a process of thought for the cultivation of positive emotions becomes very beneficial to prevent, resolve, or transform conflict situations into mutually beneficial outcomes. By lessening aversion to certain people or situations, one can more peacefully interact with others and build relationships with mutual respect, dialogue, and understanding. One can more fully understand and embrace the self in all creatures, and all creatures in the self, "And so he dwells, recognizing himself in all, suffusing the entire world with a heart linked to friendliness, far-reaching, gone great, unlimited, free from enmity or malice" (Conze 1956: 129).

Emptiness Meditation: Mindfulness and No Mind

Insight into emptiness is cultivated through no mind and through mindfulness meditation.

Let's begin with a mindfulness meditation on the concept of emptiness.

> According to *Nagarjuna*, insight into emptiness is what really dispels the fundamental ignorance or misperception of the world, so this point relates directly to the third axiom: that all phenomena are empty and devoid of inherent existence. This axiom tells us that although our normal perception leads us to believe that things are permanent and real, enjoy some kind of independent existence, through analysis we find that in reality they lack these qualities. (Llama 2000: 30).

The Dalai Llama, among others, makes the important distinction between appearance and reality. This distinction helps to more fully gain insight into the concept of emptiness. From a perception limited by time and space, "things in the world" appear to be independent and permanent. If analyzed, the reality of "things in the world" including our own selves suggests that everything is impermanent and relational in its existence.

For example, I look out our front window next to my computer and see the sun shining brightly on the jade green leaves of a second year mulberry tree. I might think to myself, "What a beautiful mulberry tree. It exists independently from the lamb's ear

plant growing next to it." However, upon closer examination, I realize that both share the same soil nutrients because of intertwining root structures. Both mulberry tree and lamb's ear plant thrive because of water, sunlight, nutrients, adequate space to grow--among other things. Both lack inherent self-existence because both exist because of multiple processes and elements that contribute to their growth. And they have grown much from last year, and will be far from their present state next year. Vibrant with green and growth last year, the vica vine hanging on the front porch withers brown and nears the end of its growth cycle; all organic "things of the world" grow, change, decay, and eventually die. Life or existence is dependent on the "other" in order to survive (co-dependent arising). Non-plant elements comprise that which has been designated as "plant." Thus, "plant" lacks inherent self-existence because the plant's existence is contingent and relational. In other words, plant is "empty" of inherent self-existence; it exists in relation to a vast cosmic web of processes and elements that comprise its nature and inform its growth and change.

The concept of emptiness is both difficult to explain and hard to grasp. Through prescribed analytical reflection/meditation, one more fully understands "emptiness" as a concept. However, mere conceptual understanding does not ensure a compassionate and kind action-orientation towards "beings and things of world." Realization of the lack of inherent self existence of all phenomena does not necessarily ensure nonviolent actions in

the world, though it can only help us to see how our existence is dependent, which in turn can activate a sense of universal compassion and responsibility for all "beings and things of the world." The radical interconnectedness of all life, or as Gandhi puts it, "The rock bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of nonviolence is belief in the essential oneness of all life" becomes the insight and knowing that informs our actions in the world. An ethic of other-centeredness naturally permeates our choices.

No Mind

Think what you thought before you were born. If you do not remember past lives, a rather blankness comes to mind after this thought. This stillness, or mental place of "No Mind," is a valid and important form of emptiness meditation. If one thinks of the Latin phrase, *tabula rasa,* one can think of this state of mind as "blank slate mind." A tasteless Zen *koan* helps out here, "Original nature has no opposites. Speech and words are not necessary. Without thinking, all things are exactly as they are. The truth is just like this (Mitchell 1976: xi). Without thinking, all things are exactly as they are. The cultivation of deep calm of mind, deep peace of mind, manifests in the stillness of No Mind. A thoughtless realm of awareness offers a deep stillness and presence. Lao Tsu, a Chinese Taoist, describes this space of awareness as letting the mud settle to discover the clarity of consciousness:

Do you have the patience to wait

Till your mid settles and the water is clear?

Can you remain unmoving

Till the right action arises by itself? (Mitchell 1988: Verse 15).

For example, normally we are like a glass of water filled with mud. The mind is very unclear, like when one shakes the glass of water filled with mud. If we sit quietly and bring the thoughts habitually back to the space of awareness of No Mind, the mud settles to the bottom of the water glass and the water once again becomes clear. The right answers to our questions arise naturally, from a calm state of inner peace.

Such centeredness and stillness cultivated from No Mind can be beneficial physiologically, mentally, and emotionally. The ground of existence, this still, centeredness and yet nameless "space of awareness" has a rippling effect on one's being. On a more rudimentary level, just sitting down and calming the body positively affects the speed of thoughts and brings about a sense of physiological relaxation or peace. Even if the space of No-Mind awareness is not accessed, the slowing and calming of the habits of mind become beneficial for ones general well-being. Degrees of stillness of the mind and relaxation of the body arise from simply focusing on the breath and gently leading thoughts back to the breath as they inevitably wander away to the past or toward the future. A disciplined approach to bringing the mind back to the thought one had before

birth will be beneficial to the practitioner in the long run. Some suggest it is the pathway to world peace, "People desire money, fame, sex, food, and rest. All this desire is thinking. Not thinking is not suffering. Not suffering means world peace. World peace is the Absolute. The Absolute is I" (Mitchell 1976: 4).

Religion and Public Education: Secularizing Buddhist Meditation?

In a U.S. context, separation of church and state become critical when considering the potential of meditation as a tool for peace education. Public schools are *suppose* to keep religion as separate from affairs of state, though hidden and sometimes explicit religious curriculum and instruction enter into the public sphere. Such a dichotomy between church and state is highly contested. The problem of religious practice in public schools in the forms of school prayer, the teaching of biological evolution, and positions on abortion all represent fundamental secular-religious tensions that complicate the schooling of American children. The majority of Americans identify as Christian. Thus, Buddhist meditation is highly suspect and definitely not is/would not be wholeheartedly accepted as a normative cultural practice. However, contemplative, meditative practices have a long history in many of the world's faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Native American religions, and Buddhism. Perhaps some middle ground, a more inclusive and secular middle ground, can be found that would satisfy various religious traditions.

Secularizing meditation emerges as paramount to integrate the practice into mainstream schooling. Contemplative practices, the use of analytically prescriptive or reflective thinking, are part of nearly every world religion, and definitely part of modern schooling. These practices are not so far removed from meditation practices. In fact, it could be argued that such an integration of meditation is already apparent in the form of guided visualization, mindfulness in the classroom, and other creative techniques to engage students in learning. With a little guidance, "contemplative practices" become meditations in and of themselves, capable of transforming physiological, conceptual and affective domains. In the article, "Meditation, Social Change, and Undergraduate Education," Steven Rockefeller (1994) affirms the benefits of such contemplative practices.

> Contemplative disciplines may help some people become less frenetic and more centered, more aware of the goodness and beauty of their own being, more appreciative of the intrinsic value of other beings, more responsive to suffering, more attentive and mindful, more open to I-thou relationship and meaning (Rockefell 1994: 2).

Rockefeller sees the benefit of "contemplative practices" as physical in the form of a more relaxed physiological state and potentially much deeper in the form of a de-centered ego or a relational way of viewing and living in the world.

The distinction between a "contemplative practice" and a meditation remains ambiguous and problematic as presented in this article. Are the two fundamentally different? Connotatively, yes. People are much more likely to accept a contemplative practice as a legitimate instructional means over meditation. Perhaps equating meditation with prayer, something that I have often been successful with in Christian circles, might be beneficial. However, the practices of Buddhist meditations that I am familiar with are much different than prayer in Christianity because the recipient of prayer is usually an external, abstract entity, namely God, and the object of Buddhist meditation generally is more close to one's individual human psychology and cosmic connectedness. Nonetheless, Rockefeller's use of the term "contemplative practice," though problematic, grounds meditation and equates it with more familiar and acceptable terms to an American public. Such use of this term is more palatable.

Rockefeller proposes directions for creative social change via democratic revolution, new ecological reconstructions of thinking, and living, and an awakening to the sacredness of the earth. (Rockefeller 1994). He sees social change occurring through both reconstructing the social environment and through changing "character orientations through transforming… awareness, attitudes, and values" (Rockefeller 1994: 2). He situates the practice of meditation in a dialogic process of thought and social action,

> In an American culture the challenge is to set the practice of meditation in the context of a worldview that affirms a healthy balance between inwardness and activism, concentration and going forth into relationship, quiet contemplation and social responsibility (Rockefeller 1994: 2).

Meditation thus emerges as a way to balance our inner lives within our social spheres of action and influence. From a place of centeredness, we then engage in more enlightened action in our socio-cultural, political, and environmental spheres of our lives.

The problem with such a simplistic vision of the use of meditation as a transformative social change agent is neglectful of the macro economic and political structures that impinge on people's ability to survive and pursue their own version of the good life. Habermas (1987) explains the process of structures shaping and forging subjectivities as the "system" influencing the "lifeworld." Structural violence in the form of economic and political systems that privilege the few, sedate the many, and neglect the majority are rampant. Comparing the amount of information systems in America and Canada in relation to Sub-Saharan Africa proves this point quite well. Comparing the life expectancy of Canadians or Americans to our fellow humans in Sub-Saharan Africa will also prove this point well. Meditation can be used as a transformative tool for socially enlightened action, but can it serve to change the economic systems and institutions that

perpetuate inequality? Once again, we are reminded that social change is sometimes a small, slow, and local phenomenon.

The problems posed by religion are many if the inclusion of meditation as a mainstream cultural practice will indeed manifest. Buddhist meditation, or as some say, the "science of the mind," is extremely rational and scientific in its approach to understanding the nature of existence and the antidotes to suffering. Vast arrays of Buddha images in Tibetan temples and even simple statues of the Buddha invoke some form of deity worship that often sits uncomfortably with Christians who follow the commandment of "Though shall not commit idolatry." The bowing to the Buddha statue does not necessarily have to mean the worship of a strange deity in the form of a statue. It can simply mean the acknowledgement of an ideal state of consciousness. Joseph Campbell once conveyed that bowing to the form of a deity was recognizing the state of consciousness represented in it in one's own self. True, many traditions of Buddhism invoke Green Tara, White Tara, and the Medicine Buddha as part of their practices. This can be a bit scary to someone coming from a different cultural background.

However, bare bones Buddhism, in my interpretation, is an extremely rational process that hangs its strength on the power of reason and analytic thought. Critical thinking is core to Buddhism because one critically dissects and synthesizes the nature of existence, the law of impermanence, the difference between appearance and reality, the

law of karma, the concept of emptiness and interdependent arising to come to an understanding of our positionality in a vast cosmos. The problem that the religiosity of Buddhism poses can be tempered by the rationality used in many Buddhist meditations; a rationality that can hardly be considered outside the boundaries of many other world religious traditions, and definitely not outside secular traditions that hang their hats on rationality.

Religious values and practices need to be presented in secular terms in order to gain their acceptance in public schools. They have been throughout the time of secular schooling. The 14th Dalai Llama of Tibetan Buddhism agrees with this position, "I think the best thing is to develop secular ethics. Simply make clear the essential human values: a warm heart, a sense of caring for one another. These values can be taught without referring to a religious point of view." (Llama 2000: 88). Buddhist or not, rational or contemplative practices that promote a calm body and mind, perhaps insight into how we are all related and different, are and can be beneficial to children in U.S. schools and schools elsewhere. In the chapter, "Toward the Mainstreaming of American Dharma Practice," Kabat-Zinn (1998) demystifies meditation and provides an example of the natural tendency for school children to meditate:

> I like to make the point that meditation is really about paying attention. There's nothing particularly magical or mystical about it—everybody is

> capable of paying attention—only it's gotten a bad reputation because when you stare out the window in the second grade, and the teacher catches you at it, what does she yell at you? (Kabat-Zinn 1998: 487).

Paying attention does not have to be magical or mystical, it can be mere moment to moment awareness.

Toward Closure: Interconnectedness, Buddhist Meditation & Peace Education

Radical Interconnectedness as an Approach to Nonviolent Social Action

> If all the people in the world understood themselves, they would attain the Absolute. Then the world would be at peace. World peace is Zen. (Mitchell 1976: 4).

The previous quote from Zen conveys the need to understand ourselves. A quote from a foundational Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita,* conveys the need for non-differentiated awareness:

> Arming himself with discipline,
> Seeing everything with an equal eye,
> He sees the self in all creatures
> And all creatures in the self (Stoler: 67).

Plato's maxim "know thyself" lays the foundation for a process of self-examination that both Buddhists and Hindus suggest opens one to understanding of the essential and radical interconnectedness of all life. In "seeing the self in all creatures and all creatures in the self" one moves beyond a dualistic interpretation and experience of the world and insight into the unity of all is cultivated. The self and the other are non-differentiated. In order to understand Gandhi's theory of peace and nonviolence, we must revisit the foundation from which the theory is built--- the Hindu belief in a unified existence that stems back to the ancient *Upanisads* and to the *Bhagavad-Gita.* Notice how Gandhi reiterates ancient ideas,

> I believe in non-duality, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives….. The rock bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of nonviolence is belief in the essential oneness of all life. (Gandhi 1924: 390).

Through the eyes of Gandhi, the technique for achieving nonviolence stems from a firm understanding of non-duality and the unity of all life. Often quoted by members of the Tibetan Gelupta order, Nagarajuna—a second century Buddhist saint, provides insight into the grasping of self,

> One who does not grasp onto "I" or "mine,"
> That one does not exist.

> One who does not grasp onto "I" and "mine,"
>
> He does not perceive (Garfield 1995: 247).

Not existing and not perceiving convey a loss of "self" into the fabric of the "others." With duality transcended, violence against the other becomes an act of violence against the self and is deemed an undesirable course of action in the transformation of a conflict situation.

An understanding of the fundamental and radical interconnectedness of all life must serve as a rock bottom foundation for peace education endeavors. Without this sense of unity, of commonality, of collective humanity or of collective planetary coexistence, the value of "other" life forms lessens and acts of violence against the "other" are justified; human normative structures prioritize life forms and hierarchies are created to justify the domination, oppression, or killing of the "other" based on positions of privilege established in those hierarchies. Such human designations become reified in time, morph into "natural" law, and form the basis for harmful discrimination.

Granted, we sort and select on a daily basis those things we deem appropriate to consume for the enhancement of life; life indeed does feed on life. However, the degree of harm that we do, I believe, is essential to consider when making our survival and consumer choices. How harmful we are when we sort and select in the dirt and concrete

world of daily existence is of utmost importance to consider when building a world where violence is minimized and more peace is actualized.

Buddhist meditation becomes a tool that multiplies the potential for nonviolent thoughts, attitudes, values, dispositions, actions-orientations, and behaviors in the world. Because its aim is the liberation from suffering through deep insight into the nature of existence, it holds the potential, not the all-curing prescription, to transform one's understanding and relatedness to others, both human and nonhuman, in the world. From deep insight into the nature of self and the nature of existence, nonviolent thought, action, and disposition just might flow naturally, effortlessly. Thus, Buddhist forms of meditation emerge as very useful tools for peace educators.

Buddhist Meditation Integrated with Peace Education

Teaching contemplative practices to students in schools is beneficial. The processes of reflection on the content and process of learning are helpful to ensure the absorption of knowledge and understanding of the process of absorbing knowledge that constitutes the learning experience. To more fully cultivate holistic human beings, I argue that the inclusion of meditative techniques and practices of various religious traditions of the world could be beneficial to more fully develop compassionate and caring human beings. The separation of church and state does not have to mean the

separation of children and adults from contemplative practices/ meditative techniques that might be helpful to their holistic development as human beings.

Buddhist meditation techniques, among others, can be integrated into peace education efforts to cultivate inner peace. The extension of friendliness and loving kindness to all can be cultivated through disciplined meditative techniques that aim to reduce the barriers we place between ourselves, friends, neutrals, and foes. Contemplating how we are related to other sentient beings and non-sentient inorganic matter brings us to an understanding of the radical and subtle interconnectedness of all life—which serves as a foundation for nonviolent action. Without so much differentiating among various people and "beings and things of the world," perhaps we can recognize the necessary and important role that all beings serve on the planet, and to not be so earth-centric, the necessary and important role the earth plays in a vast cosmos.

Understanding the essential unity of all life provides the necessary foundation for nonviolence in the world because violence against the "other" is then understood as violence against the "self." Buddhist meditation, though not the sole form of meditation capable of doing so, offers the potential for understanding the interdependence of all life, thus deeming violence as an unsuitable and an illegitimate means to resolve conflict. It also offers mindful attunement--a helpful tool for everyday living. The world can benefit

from the extension of loving-kindness and a deeper understanding of how we are all related as a planetary family. Peace education can surely benefit from harvesting and using the rich meditative means and insight of all the world's great wisdom traditions: Native American; Islam; Hinduism; Judaism; Confucianism and Taoism; Christianity; Sikhism, Jainism; Paganism; and other global indigenous traditions. Inner peace, an often neglected dimension of education for peace, is necessary for a sustainable and renewable culture of peace for the children of the world.

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