

THE NOBLE PATH OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED PEDAGOGY:  
CONNECTING TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL  
WELL-BEING

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an articulation of how the principles of socially-engaged Buddhism, a spiritual practice rooted in the teachings of the historical Buddha that integrates Buddhist practice and social activism, can enrich and enhance contemporary educational practice. It discusses Buddhist epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, psychology, ethics, and practice and relates these things to holistic education, critical pedagogy, SEL, and global education. On the basis of the theoretical understanding represented by that discussion, it articulates several theoretical principles that can be practically applied to the practice of teaching and learning to make it resonate with the theory and approach of socially-engaged Buddhism. In integrating the implications of Buddhist teachings and practices with teaching and learning practice, it draws from bell hooks' notion of "engaged pedagogy" in order to articulate a transformational, liberatory, and progressive approach to teaching called "socially-engaged pedagogy." Socially-engaged pedagogy represents the notion that teaching and learning can be a practical site for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering, both in the present and in the future, as it manifests in the world, exemplified by stress, illness, violence, war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.

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## GLOSSARY

<b>aggregates</b>	the five skandhas which include form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.
<b>bodhichatta</b>	according to Thich Nhat Hanh (2003), it “is our great aspiration to wake up, transform our suffering into compassion and serve all beings as a bodhisattva – a person of great compassion” (p. 39). Etymologically, it means awakened/enlightened/completely open mind/heart/attitude.
<b>bodhisattva</b>	the spiritual ideal, in the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, of a person aspiring to become enlightened and liberated but who forgoes his or her final enlightenment in order to assist others to become spiritually liberated.
<b>conscientização</b>	a word for conscientization, or the development of critical consciousness, defined by Paulo Freire (1970/1997) as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 17).
<b>critical pedagogy</b>	a school of thought relating to educational practice aspiring to political emancipation or liberation from the circumstances of oppression and exploitation. Through the practice of teaching and learning, critical pedagogy seeks to criticise oppression and exploitation and change the world for the better.
<b>deep community</b>	describes the existence of, and an aspiration for, a relational situation where community members recognize and act in

accordance with their profound interdependence with one another.

This term reflects Arne Naess' notion of "deep ecology" (Macy, 1991b, p. 12-13 and Nakagawa, 2000, p. 81).

<b>Dharma</b>	the body of teachings of the Buddha, or Buddhist theory. It can also mean the truth or the way of truth.
<b>dharmas</b>	worldly phenomena.
<b>dukkha</b>	a Pāli term often translated as suffering or unsatisfactoriness. It can also be translated as stress, sorrow, affliction, pain, anxiety, dissatisfaction, discomfort, anguish, misery, or aversion.
<b>emptiness</b>	aligns with the concept of no-self, defined below, since emptiness means that we are empty of a separate, independent self. In order to distinguish this concept from nihilism, it needs to be understood in relation to suchness, defined below. Understanding emptiness and suchness in concert allows for one to reconcile the dichotomous conceptual tension between eternalism and nihilism.
<b>engaged Buddhism</b>	see "socially-engaged Buddhism."
<b>enlightenment</b>	a translation of the term "bodhi," sometimes referred to as liberation, satori (in the Zen tradition), or awakening.
<b>global education</b>	an approach to education that's based upon the interconnectedness of communities, lands, and peoples, the interrelatedness of all social, cultural, and natural phenomena, links between past, present and future, and the complementary nature of the cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual dimensions of the human being. It

addresses issues of development, equity, peace, social and environmental justice, and environmental sustainability. It encompasses the personal, the local, the national and the planetary. Along with these principles, its approach to teaching and learning is experiential, interactive, child-centred, democratic, convivial, participatory, and change-oriented.

**globalization**

a term used to describe the profound interconnection and interrelation of the world's peoples, societies, cultures, political systems, economies, and ecosystems in an era of world-wide travel, communication, and transportation of goods. Globalization allows for cultural and economic exchange and connection between people in different parts of the world, but it is also associated historically with the European colonization of Africa, the Americas, Oceania, and, to a lesser extent, Asia and the oppression and exploitation that accompanied that phenomenon, as well as contemporary economic, social, and cultural exploitation and domination, an increasingly uneven distribution of global wealth and influence, and neo-liberal institutions (e.g., the World Bank) and *laissez-faire* global economic policies (e.g., free trade) that threaten the sovereignty of nation states while enhancing the influence and power of transnational corporations.

**hegemony**

the exercise of power or control over, or the exploitation of, marginalized or oppressed people by those with power; it involves

the production of an outlook or worldview – which takes the form of ideology – that supports the power dynamic.

**holistic education** an approach to education that emphasizes the importance of providing an educational experience that allows students to develop all the aspects of their being, not just the intellectual aspect, while recognizing the interdependence of individuals with their social and physical environments and the primary importance of this relationship to the individual

**justice/theory of justice** a justifiable ethical framework which can reasonably guide the conduct of human beings in community together.

**mind and heart states** experiences, patterns, and tendencies of cognition, emotion, conation, perception, and sensation. Mind and heart states can operate on both conscious and unconscious levels.

**mindful, communicative kindness** when both speaker and listener work together in mutual awareness to deliberately share meaning with one another in ways which support truth and wisdom, unclouded by ignorance, in order to reduce suffering, for speaker, listener, and others, from a perspective of profound respect for, and a sense of communion with, one another and all phenomena. Mindful, communicative kindness incorporates an understanding of the profound interdependence of phenomena, and it derives from a wholehearted aspiration to connect with others and cultivate wholesome mind



and heart states in oneself and others, as well as beneficial circumstances in the world.

**mindfulness**

the moment-to-moment non-judgmental scrutiny of present physical and mental experience, including intentions, perceptions, sensations, emotions, feelings, and thoughts, through calm and focused awareness.

**nirvāna**

a difficult term to define, meaning, roughly, to extinguish a flame. In one sense, nirvāna means the end or absence of suffering, and in another it means a state of being unconditioned by a misconceived sense of separateness from other phenomena. Nirvāna is reality viewed from the perspective of the fundamental interpenetration of all phenomena, or from the perspective of paticca samuppāda. Thich Nhat Hanh (2001a and 1999b) refers to nirvāna as the ultimate dimension or ultimate reality and as the noumenal aspect of reality or the ground of being.

**no-self**

(anātman in Sanskrit and anattā in Pāli) the concept that the self is impermanent and interdependent with all other things and events in the past and yet to arise. Buddhism posits that delusion and suffering arise from falsely perceiving the self as a permanent, discrete construction. The self is, by its very nature, an always-changing configuration and composition of non-self elements.

**noumenal**

adjectival form of noumenon.

<b>noumenon</b>	“a thing as it is in itself, as distinct from a thing as it is knowable by the senses, through phenomenal attributes” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2007).
<b>paticca samuppāda</b>	(pratitya-samupāda in Sanskrit) a Pāli term that has been variously translated into English, inter alia, as “dependent arising,” “universal conditionality,” “Interdependent Co-Arising,” “dependent co-arising,” “conditioned genesis,” “conditioned co-production,” and “dependent origination.”
<b>praxis</b>	the integration of critical reflection and action directed at emancipation or liberation. According to Pepi Leistyna (1999), praxis is, “the relationship between theoretical understanding and critique of society (that is, its historical, ideological, sociopolitical, and economic influences and structures) and action that seeks to transform individuals and their environment” (p. 224).
<b>Right Dialogue</b>	a concept designed to illustrate that there is a receptive, as well as an expressive, component to Right Speech.
<b>samsāra</b>	reality viewed from the perspective of phenomenal existence as it is ordinarily and conventionally understood (i.e., independent and discrete phenomena interacting with each other in accordance with mechanistic laws of physics). Thich Nhat Hanh (2001a) refers to samsāra as the historical dimension or relative reality.
<b>SEL</b>	(social and emotional learning) an approach to education that emphasizes the importance of students developing intrapersonal

and interpersonal competencies (i.e., self-reflective capacities and the ability to recognize what others are thinking and feeling and take that into account) geared towards effective and healthy functioning as an individual in a profoundly social context. SEL is geared towards promoting the emotional and psychological well-being of students and facilitating their development of social competencies that allow them to interact in positive ways with others.

**socially-engaged Buddhism** an attempt to integrate Buddhist spiritual practice with praxis and practical social activism. Socially-engaged Buddhism represents an attempt to use the Dharma and Buddhist practice as a basis for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering as it manifests in the world, exemplified by illness, violence, war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.

**socially-engaged pedagogy** drawing from bell hooks' notion of "engaged pedagogy," the integration of the implications of the Dharma with the practice of teaching and learning in a way that aspires to be transformational, liberatory, and progressive. Socially-engaged pedagogy represents the notion that teaching and learning can be a practical and efficacious site for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering, both in the present and in the future, as it manifests in the world as stress, illness, violence,

war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.

**spiritual liberation** the presence of wholesome mind and heart states (such as wisdom, lovingkindness, and generosity) and the absence of unwholesome mind and heart states (such as ignorance, hatred, and greed), in the context of a profound understanding of the non-existence of a permanent self (no-self) and the dynamic interrelationship of all things.

**spirituality** a practice or a field of inquiry composed of two different parts: (1) the notion that there is a connection between one's complete self, others, and the entire universe, and (2) the notion that there is a mysterious aspect to being that transcends rationality and that we are naturally drawn to contemplate this aspect.

**suchness** a concept that is only meaningful in relation to emptiness, defined above; suchness has been referred to as the phenomenalization of emptiness, or the way that unhypostatized conventional reality appears in the context of an understanding of emptiness.

Understanding suchness and emptiness in concert allows for one to reconcile the dichotomous conceptual tension between eternalism and nihilism.

**sūnyatā** see "emptiness."

**suprarationality** a way of knowing and understanding elements of reality and experience that depends on approaches and methods other than

logic and reason; it involves the suspension of, or lack of reliance on, discursive thought, ideation, and conceptualization.

**tathatā**

see “suchness.”

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate the fruits of my practice and this thesis to the benefit of all beings, but especially my wife Meaghan Walls, in whose arms I feel love, and my daughter Zadie McLeod, in whose eyes I see love.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the Study

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to develop, design, and articulate a theoretical vision of educational practice that encompasses the general aspirations, broadly understood, of socially-engaged Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> To do so, I will describe, discuss, and then draw from widely-accepted elements, ideas, and themes present in critical pedagogy, holistic education, social and emotional learning, and global education.<sup>2</sup>

Critical pedagogy, as conceptualized by Paulo Freire (1970/1997) emphasizes the importance of a dialogical relationship between teachers and students, the posing of problems for their mutual consideration and the construction of personal knowledge and meaning (as opposed to the transmission of inert information), and the development of critical consciousness. Holistic education emphasizes the importance of providing an educational experience that allows students to develop all the aspects of their being, not just the intellectual aspect, while recognizing the interdependence of individuals with their social and physical environments and the primary importance of this relationship to the individual (Clark, 1991, Miller, 1990, 1991, and 2006). Social and emotional learning emphasizes the importance of students developing intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies (i.e., self-reflective capacities and the ability to recognize what others are thinking and feeling and take that into account) geared towards effective and healthy

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<sup>1</sup> I should make it clear from the outset that this project is thoroughly theoretical, as opposed to the description of a practical set of strategies justified by theory. For such a practical work, see Kimberly Post Rowe's (2007) *A Settled Mind: Stress Reduction for the Classroom and Beyond*.

<sup>2</sup> Critical pedagogy, social and emotional learning, and global education are discussed in Chapter 6, and holistic education is discussed in Chapter 2.



functioning as an individual in a profoundly social context (Cohen, 1999). Global education emphasizes the importance of personal and social transformation in the context of the profoundly systemic relationships that define our ecological, social, economic, and political contexts (Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, and 2000).

Drawing from these sources, and interpreting them through the lens of socially-engaged Buddhism, I envision education as a process of facilitating students' development and cultivation of wholesome mind and heart states and practices, particularly "mindful, communicative kindness,"<sup>3</sup> as well as a propensity and effective capacity for engaged social action intended to ameliorate suffering. I envision teaching and learning working through a dialogical process of posing problems for consideration; moreover, this process is profitably informed by a foundational understanding of the profound interdependence of phenomena and by principles drawn from Buddhist ethics and practice.

When constructing an approach to education, one needs to answer a central question, which, to use the words of Rebecca Martusewicz (2001), is whether the goal of education "is the reproduction of social structures or the transformation of those structures" (p. 5). This fundamental question is represented by what Martusewicz calls "the debate between approaches to teaching that emphasize transmission of information and those that strive for transformation of the given social structures and relations" (p.4). This thesis will be firmly rooted in the notion that the goal of education should be the

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<sup>3</sup> This phrase is defined in the glossary, and it is introduced in the context of an exploration of Right Speech, an aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path, in Chapter 5. The phrase "mind and heart states" is defined in the glossary and refers to experiences, patterns, and tendencies of cognition, emotion, conation, perception, and sensation. Mind and heart states can operate on both conscious and unconscious levels. Buddhist psychology and the notion of mind and heart states are discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

transformation, not only of social structures, but of individuals and the world as a whole, for the better.

There are problems in the world, ranging from inequality and discrimination to hunger and disease. In my view, the purpose of education is to address problems in the world by providing students with opportunities to develop and hone attitudes, skills, and knowledge that will allow them to capably and ethically take action to positively engage with problematic situations and circumstances in order to mediate and resolve problems, thus transforming themselves, their societies, and the world for the better. In my view, education can and should be a fundamentally transformative project.

This raises several questions, including:

- What situations and circumstances are problematic (i.e., what criteria define what a “problem” is, and what problems are worth contemplating and acting in relation to)?<sup>4</sup>
- What kinds of solutions should be considered when addressing problems (i.e., what criteria define a positive situation or circumstance, and what values underpin these criteria)?<sup>5</sup>
- Is there an approach or are there approaches to contemplating problems and crafting solutions that hold more promise than others (i.e., is there a general format or over-arching process to apply when solving problems, or, simply, how can one positively engage with problems)?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The answer to this question relates to the Buddhist concept of “*dukkha*,” often translated as “suffering,” which is discussed in the context of exploring the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism in Chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> The answer to this question relates to the Buddhist concepts of (spiritual) liberation and “*nirvāṇa*,” which are discussed in Chapter 3, and which also relate to the third and fourth of the Four Noble Truths, discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> The answer to this question relates to the Noble Eightfold Path, which is explored in Chapter 5.

- What implications do the answers to these questions have for educational practice?<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the way that socially-engaged Buddhism answers these questions. In it, I argue that this approach to viewing and approaching problems in the world is an approach that can enrich teaching and learning practice and make it more efficacious. Furthermore, this approach provides a coherent way of viewing and approaching significant problems in the world that resonates with the goals and purposes of transformational teaching.

Socially-engaged Buddhism is a modern conception of social action, rooted in spiritual contemplation, and related to the historical theory and practice of Buddhism. Socially-engaged Buddhism conceives of *dukkha* as the major problem in the world that can and should be addressed by human beings. Dukkha is a Pāli word, often translated as “suffering,” which means “incapable of being satisfied,” and which can also be translated as sorrow, affliction, pain, anxiety, dissatisfaction, discomfort, anguish, stress, misery, and aversion (Dukkha, 2006).<sup>8</sup> The Buddhist approach to the concept of suffering in the world is founded upon the metaphysical notion that all phenomena are fundamentally interrelated and interdependent; therefore, the suffering of one relates to, and has the capacity to cause or condition, the suffering of others and *vice versa*. Socially-engaged Buddhism conceives of suffering as something that is mediated and perpetuated by the

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<sup>7</sup> Answering this question is the foundation of Chapter 7.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will usually translate *dukkha* as “suffering,” unless I intend to highlight a more specific aspect of *dukkha* (such as stress). Therefore, when it appears below, I use the word “suffering” with the intention to convey a broader meaning than it conventionally attracts in English.

mind, as a result of unwholesome mind and heart states, such as hatred, greed, and ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

By training one's mind in ways that cultivate wholesome mind and heart states in oneself, and by interacting with others in ways that cultivate wholesome mind and heart states in them, one can aspire to transform unwholesome mind and heart states into wholesome mind and heart states, thus positively transforming suffering. Educational practice holds potential in this regard as a prospective site for such training. Educational practice can be structured so as to allow students the opportunities to learn how to engage in skillful thinking, speech, and action (as well as other practices described in the Noble Eightfold Path) that has the potential to positively transform their own suffering and the suffering of others. Socially-engaged Buddhism aspires to address and ameliorate the problems inhering in and implied by a spiritual notion of suffering; thus, socially-engaged Buddhism is aimed at liberation in a spiritual sense. Thus, by framing an approach to education in a way that is consistent with socially-engaged Buddhism, education can become a vehicle for facilitating personal or spiritual liberation.

In short, the purpose of this thesis is to look through the lens of socially-engaged Buddhism to see a way of viewing and approaching problems in the world that holds the potential for educators to create spaces and the potential for students to actively engage with such problems in order to become not only life-long learners but “life-long problem solvers” in a spiritual sense of the term “problem.”

#### Framing the Study within a Theoretical Context

Teaching children is one of the most important jobs that one can do. Teachers have the opportunity to impact their students in profound ways, for good or ill. Through

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<sup>9</sup> The Buddhist model of the mind and how this process works are discussed in Chapter 4.

their interactions with students and their approach to teaching, they can cultivate seeds of greed, delusion, fear, anger, competition, and social apathy, or they can cultivate in themselves, their students, and those their students interact with seeds of peace, joy, compassion, love, kindness, cooperation, and social action. Socially-engaged Buddhism holds much promise for informing the practice of classroom teachers and providing a foundation for their approach to teaching children the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to be loving, compassionate, joyful, and peaceful citizens, skillfully working to transform their own suffering and the suffering of others. The teachings and insights of socially-engaged Buddhism provide a solid theoretical and practical basis for teachers to cultivate and facilitate the development of beneficial and wholesome qualities in their students.

When one examines the principles underlying progressive Western pedagogies, they demonstrate much alignment with the principles of socially-engaged Buddhism, and, in fact, Buddhist teachings provide many answers and insights relevant to problems posed by Western philosophical themes, including critical pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> When one looks at Buddhist teachings as principles underlying a philosophical system, rather than a culturally-contingent religion, socially-engaged Buddhism is compatible with progressive Western pedagogies, and I argue here that the application of Buddhist principles improves and extends those pedagogies.

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<sup>10</sup> I use the word “progressive” here in the same way that bell hooks (1994) uses it in *Teaching to Transgress* (p. xv, p. 15, and pp. 157-158), in a way that refers to the notion that it is ethical and emancipatory for human society to “progress” towards a cultural expression that represents and reflects equality, justice, sustainability, and compassion. hooks (2003) refers to “progressive education” as “education as the practice of freedom” (p. xv). Therefore, by “progressive Western pedagogies,” I refer to movements and schools of thought that include (but are not limited to) critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/1997 and Apple, 1979/1990), holistic education (Clark, 1991, Miller, 1990, 1991, and 2006), global education (Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, 2000, Selby 1999, Pike 2000a, and 2000b), partnership education (Eisler, 2000), life-enriching education (Rosenberg, 2003), and timeless learning (Miller, 2006).

For instance, in their theoretical work on global education, Graham Pike and David Selby (1988) draw on ideas from Eastern spiritual traditions, including Buddhism, and they illustrate how these ideas resonate with Western ideas, particularly systems theory and modern physics (pp. 24-28). For instance, they discuss David Bohm's (1980/2002) model of quantum reality as consisting of explicate and implicate orders, a theoretical construct from quantum physics which the Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh (2001a) relates to the Buddhist concepts of historical or relative reality, or *samsāra*, and absolute or ultimate reality, or *nirvāna* (pp. 77-78).

Older ideas in Western philosophy share commonalities with Buddhist concepts, too. For instance, David Hume's criticism of René Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* formulation ("I think; therefore, I am") mirrors the central Buddhist concept of no-self. Jostein Gaarder (1996) even says, "It's almost uncanny how similarly the two [Hume and Buddha] formulate their ideas" (p. 273). Hume's "bundle theory" posits that there need not be a "self" or discrete, unchanging identity at work in order to give rise to thoughts and consciousness; essentially, his argument is that there is a serial, changing "self," rather than an unchanging, permanent, and discrete identity.<sup>11</sup> Buddhism mirrors this assertion.

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<sup>11</sup> Hume (1739/1978) explained that what we describe as the self is really a series or succession of separate perceptions and states of being each occurring after the preceding one and related to it but not identical to it. He refers to this series as a "connected heap" (p. 207) or "bundle" (p. 252). "There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of demonstration, both of its identity and simplicity... If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable" (p. 251). Hume goes so far as to say that, because of the changing nature of human perceptions, individuals "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (p. 252).

In Buddhism, the attributes of consciousness and thought are included in the five *skandhas*, or aggregates (form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness) that are said to constantly flow between the individual and his or her social and physical environment in a dynamic, constantly-changing way. In Buddhism, one's perception of these things as coalescing in individuals as discrete, permanent selves or identities is misleading, since it doesn't reflect the reality of impermanence and, flowing from that impermanence, the reality of interdependence and interpenetration. Moreover, the perception of a separate, permanent selfhood leads to suffering when one encounters the ontological truth of impermanence, which contradicts one's notion of an unchanging or consistent self.

Other Buddhist teachings, ideas, principles, and practices relate to themes in Western philosophy and pedagogy. Martin Buber's (1970/1996) "I-Thou" existential construct (as a response to the self-other dichotomy inherent in constructions of supremacy and bigotry), and Paulo Freire's (1970/1997) dialogical and liberation-oriented critical pedagogy both align with the ethical implications of the Buddhist notions of no-self, *paticca samuppāda* (dependent origination or interdependent co-arising), and interbeing (interdependence and interpenetration), as well as the practice of mindful, communicative kindness and the notion of Right Speech, which is part of Buddhism's Noble Eightfold Path.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps even more importantly, Buddhist epistemology provides insights that address fundamental epistemological problems raised by post-modernism and post-structuralism. Post-modern and post-structuralist discourse is rooted in the notion that there is necessarily a mediative distance between signifiers (words used to describe

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<sup>12</sup> The notions of Right Speech and "mindful, communicative kindness" are explored in Chapter 5.

things) and the signified (the truth or reality represented by those words) (Sarup, 1989). This results in a plasticity of meaning because of interpretive differences stemming from the epistemological contingency related to that mediative distance. The implication is that objective knowledge is impossible to pin down, because our rational dependence on signifiers to structure our thoughts makes it impossible to experience presence with things as themselves (i.e., there are always words and concepts that mediate our experience and understanding of reality, so we never experience it directly). Put simply, post-modernism destroys the foundation of objectivity by attempting to show that, because of the nature of Western reason, we can never truly know reality directly (i.e., without words and concepts mediating our knowledge of reality).

This is precisely the project of Buddhist mindfulness practice – the aspiration of which is referred to in the Zen tradition as *no-mind* – to access reality directly, without distortion by thoughts, words, or concepts. The aspiration of Buddhist mindfulness practice is to experience unmediated awareness of body, sensations, emotional states, thoughts, and perceptions relating to the external world; this is often referred to as awareness of the present moment. The aspiration to this attainment is crucial to Buddhist practice, since this is an essential part of the way to transcend suffering, which results, in part, from attachment to identity, which is a false construct that distorts one's perception of one's true relationship with reality (which is one of constantly-changing, flowing interdependence, not discrete isolation and separation). This is how Buddhism collapses epistemology and ontology together; only by perceiving, and thus intuitively understanding, the true nature of being can one have knowledge of reality without distortion.



Of course, this relates to educational projects, because educational projects, such as teaching students in public schools, are fundamentally epistemological. Moreover, epistemology is the engine that drives hegemony, since theories relating to how one can develop knowledge and what one knows are crucial aspects of the propagation of ideology.<sup>13</sup> To successfully transmit ideology, one must either appeal to and use culturally accepted ways of generating truth claims, or one must induce one's audience to adopt new ways of generating truth claims that accord with the claims represented by the ideology in question.<sup>14</sup> Oppressive power uses ideology in order to justify its structures in society, and traditional approaches to education get co-opted in this project. When educational approaches are designed to transmit and propagate ideological notions that form the basis for oppressive social relations, they form part of the system of oppression. This is the nature of traditional educational approaches in our society.<sup>15</sup> By critically analyzing epistemology at its ontological foundation, as Buddhism proposes, the possibility of profound critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, arises. Freire (1970/1997) defines *conscientização*, or conscientization, as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 17).

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<sup>13</sup> “An analysis of hegemony is especially concerned with how the imposition of particular ideologies and forms of authority results in the reproduction of social and institutional practices through which dominant groups maintain not only their positions of privilege and control but also the consensual support of other members (even those subordinated) of society” (Leistyna, 1999, p. 221).

<sup>14</sup> Essentially, I am using the term “ideology” here to refer to a subset of epistemology (i.e., a subset which is used to provide a foundation for truth claims that support specific – but arbitrary – power relationships and dynamics).

<sup>15</sup> These traditional educational approaches include an emphasis on memorization and rote learning of socially-constructed and politically-charged “facts,” the encouragement of an attitude of obedience and deference to authority, and educational instrumentalism, or an emphasis on the importance of learning instrumental skills such as reading and arithmetical operations. When unchallenged, such approaches tend to reproduce existing social structures and power dynamics and support the status quo.

In “The Application of Buddhist Principles to Lifelong Learning,” Ian Johnson (2002) indicates that it is not within the scope of his study to “draw out the synergies between the Buddhist approach to teaching and learning and the current streams of thought in more Western-based educational theories (such as humanistic educational philosophy or an emphasis on critical reflection and educational holism)” (p. 110).<sup>16</sup> The “synergies” he refers to definitely exist. The purpose of this thesis is to explore and articulate the relationship between socially-engaged Buddhism and teaching and learning; this articulation will take advantage of such synergies by using widely-accepted “Western-based” contemporary educational theories – such as critical pedagogy, holistic education, social and emotional learning, and global education – to mediate the relationship between socially-engaged Buddhism and teaching and learning. I will use these educational theories to provide a platform for a meaningful discussion of socially-engaged Buddhism in this context.<sup>17</sup>

#### Research Question

How do the principles of socially-engaged Buddhism inform and enrich educational practice in order to make teaching and learning more effective at transforming students, society, and the world for the better?

#### Related Literature

The teachings of the Buddha are known as the *Dharma*, or *Dhamma*. There is a large body of canonical literature related to Buddhism, as well as a vast number of commentaries that make assertions about the principles of the Dharma. Also, there are several different schools or traditions of Buddhist thought and practice. Moreover, in

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<sup>16</sup> “This must be the subject of a further study” (Johnson, 2002, p. 110).

<sup>17</sup> In addition, this articulation can provide a platform for later investigations into those synergies.

recent years, there has been an explosion in the number of Buddhist books written for a Western lay audience.<sup>18</sup> In this thesis, I review a combination of canonical literature and literature written for a Western lay audience, as well as a combination of literature representing different Buddhist traditions, notably Theravādan Buddhism and Mahāyānan Buddhism.

The notion of “socially-engaged Buddhism,” though consistent with historical principles of Buddhism, is a relatively recent one, and I draw from recent literature to explore this newly-arising tradition. As alluded to above, there is a synergy between Buddhist thought and progressive Western ideas, both in and out of educational theory, including systems theory, quantum physics, communicative ethics, and the field of global education. When helpful for fleshing out Buddhist concepts, I will make use of non-Buddhist literature from Western traditions. Moreover, given that I am using educational theories and approaches such as critical pedagogy, holistic education, social and emotional learning, and global education to mediate the relationship between socially-engaged Buddhism and teaching and learning, I will make use of literature relating to educational practice that relates to and describes these theories and approaches.

Given that this thesis takes a philosophical-analytical approach to addressing the question and will involve an extensive review and discussion of relevant literature, it is beyond the scope of this introduction to review the literature thoroughly here; instead, it will be reviewed throughout subsequent chapters of the thesis.

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<sup>18</sup> During my work on this thesis, there have been several articles (including one in the *New York Times*) and a book published that explore the relationship between Buddhism, or mindfulness, and education (Glass, 2006, Boyce, 2007, McLeod, 2007, Leigh Brown, 2007, and Post Rowe, 2007).

## Research Procedures

This thesis takes a philosophical-analytical approach to answering the question, “How do the principles of socially-engaged Buddhism inform and enrich educational practice in order to make teaching and learning more effective at transforming students, society, and the world for the better?” In order to develop, design, and articulate a theoretical vision of educational practice that encompasses the general aspirations, broadly understood, of socially-engaged Buddhism, it involves reviewing literature relating to the question, critically examining the ideas represented in that literature, and formulating an approach that seeks to respond to those ideas by articulating a coherent account of a vision for how socially-engaged Buddhism can inform and enrich teaching and learning practice.

### A Necessary Autobiographical Interlude

In order to contextualize my conceptualization of this thesis, it is important to briefly describe my personal association with Buddhist theory and how I have come to understand Buddhist theory as a coherent and meaningful response to the human condition. Because of its practical response to human suffering, rooted in a non-dualistic conception of all things as being profoundly interrelated, I see Buddhism as a critical aspect of praxis related to emancipation. Moreover, I have come to understand Buddhist theory and practice as powerful tools for personal development, and my exposure to Buddhism has led me to aspire to personal spiritual liberation using the Buddhist tradition as a framework.

Before I studied Buddhism, I was deeply distrustful of religion, in the sense that religious institutions are, by their very nature, ideological and tend to be susceptible to

corruption and abuse by those with self-serving and sometimes oppressive agendas. At the same time, I had dedicated my intellectual career to exploring the nature of truth and reality and seeking a justifiable ethical framework which could reasonably guide the conduct of human beings in community together, or, in other words, a theory of justice. This exploration and quest had always been framed by an over-arching philosophical orientation; I sought to understand metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, and ethics. In the course of exploring the nature of truth and reality, I studied physics in the Faculty of Science at the University of Alberta, and my quest for a theory of justice led me to study law in the Faculty of Law at the same institution and to article and practice as a lawyer in British Columbia for several years. A thorough description of my studies, insights, and the development of my philosophical outlook would take too long to describe and would involve a detailed examination of too many diverse academic disciplines, so it is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, some sense of where it led me is necessary to frame an understanding of my embracing the study of Buddhist theory.

In short, my progress along the path of “footnotes to Plato,”<sup>19</sup> in search of a meaningful response to the human condition and an effective program aimed at emancipation, led me instead to rather undesirable and depressing outcomes: existential angst and the plasticity of meaning and absence of truth represented by post-structuralism and postmodernism (Tarnas, 1991).

As for existential despair, my studies of domination and oppression led me to conceive of the Self/Other dualism contemplated by existentialism as central to the construction of oppression when applied to marginalized groups in human

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<sup>19</sup> Alfred North Whitehead (1929/1969) asserts that, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (p. 53).

communities;<sup>20</sup> however, existentialism left me without a model of non-dualistic relationship (although Buber's concept of *I-Thou* relations holds the promise of profoundly respectful relationship, which will be explored in relation to Buddhist practice in Chapter 5). Furthermore, the *pour-soi/en-soi* dualism applied to an individual's psyche, and the resulting ontological choice – between being (which is a reified and contingent existence) and nothingness (which although authentic, involves non-being and depends upon the reified *en-soi*), leads to a sense of angst and despair (Donovan, 1990).

As for ascertaining reality and describing a positive ethical framework for human action and interaction (i.e., articulating a justifiable theory of justice), Derrida's (1967/1973) deconstruction of Saussure's concept of the sign as a structural relationship between the signifier (a word meant to represent a thing or concept) and the signified (the thing or concept that the signifier is meant to represent) leaves one with no solid epistemological or ethical ground on which to stand (Sarup, 1989). Derrida (1967/1973, 1967/1976, and 1967/1978) asserts that there are only “floating signifiers, pure and simple, and no determinable relation to any extra-linguistic referents at all” (Sarup, 1989, p. 3).

Since we use signifiers (words and language) to attempt to describe reality and ethical principles, the fact that, according to Derrida (1967/1973, 1967/1976, and 1967/1978), signifiers can never represent any actual things or concepts, unmediated by other signifiers, means that we can never experience unmediated access to reality; therefore, Derrida's view of language and the non-existence of a real relationship

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<sup>20</sup> Oppression is conceptually operationalized through the Self/Other dualism when the subject – the dominant group in the oppression dynamic – objectifies the “other” and makes it the repository of negative qualities, like when colonizers construct indigenous peoples as “primitive” so they can view themselves as “civilized” in contrast. This, along with other ideas introduced here, is explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

between any signifier and the signified results in a denial of the possibility of presence (Sarup, 1989 and Tingle, 1992). “The objective reality (the objective distinctions of individual beings) is always mediated by the linguistic and semantic articulation” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 39).

Furthermore, Western philosophy and language is fundamentally based on an assumption of the possibility, and perhaps necessity, of presence. For this reason, Derrida (1967/1973) calls Western philosophy “logocentric” (p. xli), “pointing out that it is committed to a belief in some ultimate ‘word’, presence, essence, truth or reality which will act as the foundation for all our thought, language and experience”; however, “Derrida argues that such transcendental meaning is a fiction” (Sarup, 1989, p. 40).

With the above understanding of the state of contemporary Western philosophy as a foundation, I discovered and started to study Buddhism. Buddhism, in particular, Zen Buddhism, is a practical philosophical tradition that deals with many of the same themes or philosophical problems dealt with by existentialism and post-structuralism (e.g., the suffering inherent in the human condition and the possibility of presence). In fact, many concepts in Buddhist theory seem to be tailor-made intellectual (though *suprarational*,<sup>21</sup> or non-conceptual) antidotes to the despair of existentialism and the groundlessness of post-structuralism. Despite the fact that the Buddhist tradition pre-dates the Western conceptions of both existentialism and post-structuralism by over two-thousand years, many of its concepts seem like specific responses to the problems explored by Western philosophy in the last hundred or so years.

Though some of these synergies will be explored in Chapter 5, a detailed examination of the relationships between Buddhist concepts and the intricacies of the

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<sup>21</sup> “Suprarationality” is defined in the glossary and discussed in subsequent chapters in more depth.

concepts and thinkers briefly alluded to above is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. I offer the foregoing to reveal my attitude towards Buddhist theory. I conceive of Buddhist theory as a deeply practical philosophical framework that holds the potential to address the most compelling problems articulated by Western philosophical discourse to date. Accordingly, I view Buddhist theory through a distinctly non-religious lens, seeking to take from it a secular, though spiritual, understanding of its explanation of reality, the human condition, and justice (i.e., a justifiable ethical framework which can reasonably guide the conduct of human beings in community together).

Incidentally, after studying Buddhism for several years, I have come to view its worldview as significantly more profound, sophisticated, elegant, straightforward, practical, and convincing than the *Weltanschauung* of the West.<sup>22</sup> Of course, I have come to my study – and practice – of Buddhism from a thoroughly Western upbringing and understanding of the world and my relationship with the world and its various inhabitants and components. Needless to say, this too colours my interpretation and understanding of Buddhist theory and concepts.

### Potential Contributions of the Research

This study articulates a way of approaching teaching practice that uses a Buddhist philosophical paradigm, episteme, worldview, or *Weltanschauung* in a way that holds promise for the construction of a theory relating to educational practice that conceives of teaching and learning as truly transformational, liberatory, and progressive social practices.

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<sup>22</sup> I use *Weltanschauung* here to mean worldview in a sense that extends beyond and includes various scientific paradigmatic understandings of the nature of reality. It alludes to the larger, over-arching worldview of the West that has provided a foundation for the various paradigms and epistemes that have characterized different stages of Western history since classical antiquity. In a sense, I use it in a way that encompasses the entirety of Whitehead's (1929/1969) figurative "series of footnotes to Plato" (p. 53).



### Limitations of the Study

This thesis is an articulation of the theoretical framework on which I base my teaching practice, as well as a call to others to consider this framework (or one similar to it) as a potential foundation upon which to base their own practice. Obviously, my teaching practice necessarily includes practical elements ranging from planning units and lessons to the organization of my classroom environment and my choice of classroom management strategies, and I have written practical curricular materials for use in the classroom and other educational settings (McLeod, 2007 and British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2007); however, the strict purpose of this thesis is to articulate and justify the theoretical foundation for those practical approaches to teaching and learning. Therefore, this thesis does not provide ideas and suggestions for specific lessons, units, instructional approaches, classroom organization, or class management strategies. The principles articulated in the following chapters call for further work examining and exploring the practical implications of those principles, including particular instructional, management, and organizational strategies and approaches, as well as ideas for curricula, units, and lessons. Fortunately, as the conclusion of Chapter 7 indicates, this work is well under way.

This thesis involves taking concepts and ideas from Buddhism, a tradition originating in the East, and using them to formulate and articulate ways of informing and enhancing practice in contemporary pedagogy – an institution thoroughly rooted in the historical particularity of Western culture. This thesis represents a process of engaging that institution and Buddhist theory in what Joanna Macy (1991a) calls a “mutual hermeneutic,” which brings the profound “contrasts in [the] origins and purposes” of the

two paradigms (Buddhism and contemporary pedagogy) to the forefront (p xii). The very fact that this project is rooted in an Eastern tradition, as opposed to a Western tradition, raises the possibility that it may encounter some ethnocentric resistance and criticism.

Of course, the historical influence of Buddhism has transcended culture and particular historical contexts, spreading throughout India, Asia, and, now, even the West (Goldstein, 2002). Moreover, the historical Buddha intended his message to transcend culture and religion and to reach all people.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, as Macy (1991a) puts it in relation to Buddhism and systems theory, “Despite the obvious contrasts in their origins and purposes, each of them – early Buddhism and contemporary systems theory – can clarify what the other is saying” (p. xii). In the case of socially-engaged Buddhism and contemporary pedagogy, there is the potential for much more than clarification; there is the potential for the profound enrichment and enhancement of educational practice, for the benefit of students, teachers, and their families and communities.

This project also raises the thorny issue of the separation of religion and religious ideas and education. Chapter 2 deals with this issue directly. Suffice it to say here that, as it is conceptualized in this thesis, Buddhism is not “religious” in such a way that attracts legitimate criticism from those who advocate maintaining a secular approach in designing and implementing curricula in public school. Some words from Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005a), the medical doctor who founded the practice of “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction,” shed some light on this issue.

The way I see it, Buddhism itself is not the point. You might think of the Buddha as a genius of his age, a great scientist, at least as towering a figure as Darwin or

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<sup>23</sup> The history of Buddhism, as well as biographical details about the historical Buddha, is discussed in Chapter 3.

Einstein, who, as the Buddhist scholar Alan Wallace likes to put it, had no instruments other than his own mind at his disposal and who sought to look deeply into the nature of birth and death and the seeming inevitability of suffering. In order to pursue his investigations, he first had to understand, develop, refine, and learn to calibrate and stabilize the instrument he was using for this purpose, namely his own mind, in the same way that laboratory scientists today have to continually develop, refine, calibrate, and stabilize the instruments that they employ to extend their senses – whether we are talking about giant optical or radio telescopes, electron microscopes, or positron-emission tomography (PET) scanners – in the service of looking deeply into and exploring the nature of the universe and the vast array of interconnected phenomena that unfold within it, whether it be in the domain of physics and physical phenomena, chemistry, biology, psychology, or any other field of inquiry.

In taking on this challenge, the Buddha and those who followed in his footsteps took on exploring deep questions about the nature of the mind itself and the nature of life. Their efforts at self-observation led to remarkable discoveries. They succeeded in accurately mapping a territory that is quintessentially human, having to do with aspects of the mind that we all have in common, independent of our particular thoughts, beliefs, and cultures. Both the methods they used and the fruits of those investigations are universal, and have nothing to do with any isms, ideologies, religiosities, or belief systems. These discoveries are more akin to medical and scientific understandings, frameworks that can be examined by

anybody anywhere, and put to the test independently, for oneself, which is what the Buddha suggested to his followers from the very beginning. (pp. 25-26)

### The Program of the Following Chapters

Chapter 2 is entitled “Engaging the Whole Student: Holistic Education and Spirituality.” It defines and describes spirituality and its importance to human development, defending an approach to education that takes spirituality into account. It reviews Parker J. Palmer’s ideas about teaching from a place of identity and integrity, discusses themes from the field of holistic education, gives a brief introduction to socially-engaged Buddhism as a spiritual practice, and introduces bell hooks’ notion of engaged pedagogy.

Chapter 3 is called “Introducing the Dharma: Buddhist History and Philosophy.” This chapter describes socially-engaged Buddhism in detail, explaining its ideas, teachings, and tenets and describing its historical roots and emphasizing its existence as a practice. It addresses topics such as impermanence, interdependence, no-self, *paticca samuppāda*, emptiness, mindfulness practice (comparing the Buddhist notion of mindfulness to post-structuralist/post-modern ideas about epistemology), and the idea of nirvāṇa/samsāra (comparing these two conceptions of reality with Bohm’s [1980/2002] implicate and explicate orders).

Chapter 4, called “Buddhist Psychology: Cultivating Wholesome and Skillful Mind States,” explores Buddhist psychology and its implications for teaching and learning. It describes the Buddhist understanding of how the mind can work to create and perpetuate suffering through the habitual reinforcement of unwholesome or unskillful mind and heart states, and it discusses how one can put effort into cultivating wholesome

or skillful mind states that have the potential to positively transform suffering. It takes the position that the skill of cultivating skillful mind states can be learned and taught. In particular, Chapter 4 shows that the Buddhist understanding of the mind can provide the foundation for a model of teaching and learning that facilitates the cultivation of wholesome mind and heart states and the prevention and abandonment of unwholesome mind states. Essentially, it argues that education can facilitate the cultivation of mental well-being and the liberation from suffering.

Chapter 5 is entitled “Buddhist Ethics and Practice: Implementing ‘I-Thou’ in Encounters with Reality.” This chapter describes elements of Buddhist ethics and practice, including the Noble Eightfold Path and the four brahmavihāras, illustrating how they are justified by Buddhist philosophy and exploring their implications. It explores the similarities between the Buddhist notion of non-duality and Martin Buber’s (1970/1996) concept of “I-Thou/I-You” relations as opposed to “I-it” relations, comparing how these two notions propose a solution to oppression and suffering that arises from conceptions of separation rooted in seeing the world through the lens of separation between self and other. It is written in an aphoristic style (reminiscent of Nietzsche’s [1886/2002] style in *Beyond Good and Evil*) in order to illustrate two things: (1) Buddhist practice, which is founded in the Dharma - a theoretical framework that transcends rationality, itself transcends thinking and doing (i.e., it can’t be directly transmitted through words), and (2) that meaning making, or learning, is as much the responsibility of the reader (learner) as the writer (teacher). This style sets the stage for the Chapter 7’s advocacy of a profoundly dialogical relationship between teachers and students by simultaneously providing an ethical and experiential context for it.

Chapter 6 is called “Progressive Western Pedagogy: Transformational Teaching and Learning Geared Towards Liberation and Well-Being.” It reviews and discusses elements and themes from contemporary Western educational theory in order to provide a lens through which to view socially-engaged Buddhism in order to see its potential for informing and enriching educational practice in order to make teaching and learning more effective at transforming students, society, and the world for the better. It examines critical pedagogy, Graham Pike and David Selby’s (1988, 1999, and 2000) conception of global education, and social and emotional learning in order to articulate elements of contemporary Western pedagogy that align with socially-engaged Buddhism and to provide a foundation based on well-known and accepted pedagogical literature and theory for Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 is entitled “Principles for Teaching and Learning for Personal and Societal Well-Being.” It describes the conclusions that can be drawn from the preceding chapters, tying threads of discourse together and proposing principles that provide a foundation for an approach to teaching in a way that resonates with the principles of socially-engaged Buddhism. It draws on elements and themes from critical pedagogy, Graham Pike and David Selby’s (1988, 1999, and 2000) conception of global education, bell hooks’ (1994) conception of “engaged pedagogy,” and social and emotional learning and relates them to the exploration of socially-engaged Buddhism in the preceding chapters in order to articulate principles that can be applied to the process of teaching and learning and goals that provide direction to the process of teaching and learning.

## CHAPTER 2: ENGAGING THE WHOLE STUDENT: HOLISTIC EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY

Today, many, if not most, people, particularly non-religious people, assume that the separation between church and state, and, therefore, religion and public school, is a good thing for education. In fact, it is one of the cherished notions of the average secular humanist or liberal democrat. To these people, the secularization of public school curricula serves two vital, liberal-humanistic purposes: by not having school curricula support the views of one particular religion,<sup>24</sup> the separation of religion and school protects the religious freedom of students and their families, and it prevents the propagation of religious dogma in schools. To others, of course, the separation of religion and school is a bad thing, because it prevents their particular views about religion and religious truth from being presented as part of the set of knowledge claims advanced in public school curricula. Many of those same people see the separation of religion and school as the reason that public schools fail to properly train students in matters of morality, and they point to this as one of the causes of social problems and upheaval evident in contemporary society. Looking past both of these positions, one sees that the separation of religion and school – or the removal from public education of religious, and therefore, spiritual, discourse – has become dogmatic in the same way that many religious ideas have.

This dogmatism fails to serve students' interests, because it closes off the possibility of addressing spiritual issues in the context of various public school curricula; this, in turn, limits the potential learning and growth that can be facilitated by that set of

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<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, the historical discourse in relation to this issue, particularly in the United States, usually involves the feared marginalization of a particular sect or denomination of Christianity, rather than religions other than Christianity, thus the terminology "separation of *church* and state."

curricula. Instead of the dogmatic separation of religion and school, one can conceive of an approach to education that incorporates spiritual issues and aspirations – i.e., spiritual learning outcomes – into public school curricula, while at the same time guarding against the danger of religious indoctrination in schools and protecting the religious freedoms of students and their families. Such an approach to education would better serve the needs of both teachers and students, because it would provide them with tools and opportunities to address one of the fundamental parts of their identity – the spiritual aspect of their identity.

### Distinguishing Spirituality from Religion

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Then are dreamt of in your philosophy.

- Hamlet in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act 1, Scene 5 (Shakespeare, 1999, p. 143).

For the purposes of this discussion, “spirituality” is a practice or a field of inquiry composed of two different parts. One part of spirituality is the notion that there is a connection between “one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 83 and Steingard, 2005, p. 228), and the other part of spirituality is the notion that there is a mysterious aspect to being that transcends rationality and that we are naturally drawn to contemplate this aspect (Palmer, 1998, Palmer, 2004, and McLeod, 2002). Neither of these assertions is unique to any particular religion, creed, or dogma; in fact, both are quite consistent with various faith traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Taoism), and movements within faith traditions (e.g., Islamic Sufism, Christian mysticism, Jewish Kabbalah), as well as contemporary, secular scientific theories and paradigms, in



particular, but not limited to, systems theory (Pike & Selby, 1988 and Macy, 1991a) and quantum physics (Selby, 1999, Stapp, 1971, Capra, 1977 and Bohm, 1980/2002).<sup>25</sup>

It can be persuasively argued that religion is one of the most divisive factors known to humankind, and religious dogma and differences have certainly been at the root of many of history's greatest tragedies, as well as a host, if not the majority, of conflicts in the present (Harris, 2005). Harris' (2006) biggest criticism of religion is the irrationality of various religions' differing truth claims, an irrationality that does not allow for reasoned dialogue in relation to their various competing truth claims. This certainly lends weight to the position of those who support the separation of religion and school and the secularization of public education.

However, this criticism does not preclude the inclusion of spiritual outcomes in public school curricula. Many people acknowledge a clear difference between religion and spirituality, with spirituality exhibiting many characteristics that differentiate it from religion, including its informal nature, its inclusive and nondenominational nature, its universality, meaningfulness, and timelessness, as well as its general emphasis on interconnection and inner peace and calm, rather than emphasizing specific sets of truth claims to be accepted on faith (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). There are certain spiritual

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<sup>25</sup> Pike and Selby (1988) distinguish between what they call the "systemic paradigm" and the "mechanistic paradigm," and Wikipedia distinguishes between "systems thinking," which it compares to "holism," and "reductionism." (Systems Thinking, 2006). Ron Miller (1990) also distinguishes between holism and "scientific reductionism." Steingard (2005) distinguishes between "spiritually-whole systems" and "partial-systems" in the same way (p. 231). It is important to note that systems theory and quantum physics are among scientific paradigms that have replaced older, obsolete paradigms, such as Newtonian mechanics, but that, nevertheless, many of the older paradigms continue to provide the basis for many popular cultural assumptions about the natural world.

This 'web' philosophy, which is that the world cannot be understood as a construction built from a set of unanalyzable [, or indivisible,] basic entities or qualities (or at least from basic entities or qualities that can be precisely located in space and time) is closely connected to the 'bootstrap' philosophy, which asserts that the structure of nature is determined by the requirement of consistency among the relationships of the web, rather than by laws that govern some primitive substance or quality. The web or bootstrap philosophy represents the final rejection of the mechanistic ideal. (Stapp, 1971, p. 1319)

“truths” (i.e., rationally-justifiable principles relating to the interconnection of people and things in the world and the mystery of being) that can be the subject of reasoned dialogue (despite the suprarationality of the mystery of being)<sup>26</sup> that has the potential to transcend religious dogma. The universality of the “golden rule,” or ethic of reciprocity, in religious texts and philosophy (e.g., Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative) is but one example of this principle (Hick, 1992, Kant, 1785/1964, Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2006, and Universality of the Golden Rule, 2006). As Albert Einstein said, “If the believers of the present-day religions would earnestly try to think and act in the spirit of the founders of these religions then no hostility on the basis of religion would exist among the followers of the different faiths. Even the conflicts in the realm of religion would be exposed as insignificant” (Dukas & Hoffmann, 1979, p. 96).

#### The Importance of Spirituality to Education: Educating the Whole Student

For education to be truly engaging and motivating, the curriculum utilized to pursue the ultimate goals of education must engage and motivate the student’s true self, as opposed to some façade or a projection of an aspect of the student’s self. Furthermore, this engagement of the student with the curriculum will be more thorough and, therefore, more efficacious if the curriculum engages the student’s entire being. As bell hooks (1994) maintains, “To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 13).

According to Ron Miller (1991), holistic education “nurtures the development of the whole person; it is concerned with intellectual as well as emotional, social, physical,

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<sup>26</sup> “Suprarationality” is defined in the glossary and is defined and discussed further in Chapter 3.

creative/intuitive, aesthetic, and spiritual potentials” (p. 3).<sup>27</sup> This vision of education holds promise, because it aims at the engagement of all aspects of the student’s identity with the curriculum. Moreover, in holistic education, the student’s wholeness is placed in the context of the larger whole that the student is a part of. According to Edward T. Clark, Jr. (1991), holistic education is fundamentally based upon “an assumption that everything in the universe is fundamentally interconnected. I suggest that this assumption represents the essence of holistic education in all its manifestations” (p. 53). Relating this notion to the definition of spirituality proposed above, it becomes clear that holistic education, conceived this way, is fundamentally spiritual. Clark (1991) agrees when he says, “holistic education is fundamentally spiritual in nature” (p. 61). Moreover, this fundamental spirituality is part and parcel of the vision that holistic education has for engaging the whole student in his or her education, and, crucially, this vision does not stand in contrast with the principle that public school curricula should be secular in nature.

I have wrestled more with a more subtle distinction – that between spirituality, as I have defined it,<sup>28</sup> and religious belief and ritual. The holistic literature frequently points out that its emphasis on spirituality does not necessarily imply an endorsement of any specific religious tradition or practice; hence, holistic education does not threaten the important principle of separating church and state. (Miller, 2006, p. 7).

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<sup>27</sup> bell hooks (1994) similarly refers to wholeness as a “union of mind, body, and spirit” (p. 14). Both of these conceptions are reminiscent of the First Nations concept of the holistic medicine wheel, which has quadrants representing the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of a person (Mussell, Nicholls, & Adler, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Ron Miller (2006) defines a “spiritual worldview” as “a *reverence for life*, an attitude of wonder and awe in the face of the transcendent Source of our being (Miller, 1990, 154)” (p. 6).

Parker J. Palmer (2004) notes the therapeutic and political efficacy of “reaching in towards [one’s] own wholeness, reaching out towards the world’s needs, and trying to live [one’s life] at the intersection of the two” (p. 25). The essence of this idea is that one can aspire to personal wholeness and meaningful connection with the larger whole that one is part of (i.e., the world) at the same time. Moreover, Palmer (1998) contends that taking such an approach to teaching is pedagogically efficacious as well. He claims that, “*good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher*” (p. 10). He defines *identity* as “an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute [one’s] life converge in the mystery of self”, and he defines *integrity* as “whatever wholeness [one] is able to find within that nexus as its vectors form and re-form in the pattern of [one’s] life” (p. 13). These notions resonate nicely with the definition of spirituality proposed above.

In fact, Palmer’s vision of teaching from a place of identity and integrity is fundamentally spiritual, and Palmer argues that teaching in this way has the potential to sustain a teacher’s sense of self and vocation in the face of the various profound challenges that face teachers. Moreover, Palmer (1998) asserts that teaching in a way where one connects with one’s true self allows one to authentically connect with subject matter and students alike, creating the potential for rich learning on the part of one’s students. He calls this listening to the “teacher within,” and he conceives of it as a thoroughly contemplative and spiritual activity (p. 29). According to Palmer (1998), “we can speak to the teacher within our students only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves” (p. 31). To Palmer (1998), this is partly a process of modeling

education in the classical sense: an “attempt to ‘lead out’ from within the self a core of wisdom that has the power to resist falsehood and live in the light” (p. 31).

Miller (1990) agrees with this conception of education when he rhetorically asks, “Shouldn’t ‘education,’ in keeping with the Latin root of the word, aim to *draw forth* the latent intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual qualities that lie within the human personality” (p. 2)?<sup>29</sup> Palmer (2003) argues that teachers are “guides” for their students and that “to educate is to guide students on an inner journey toward more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world. How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guides to scout out that inner terrain” (pp. 75-76)? In short, Palmer argues that learning is a fundamentally contemplative and spiritual process and that teachers need to be in tune with that process themselves in order to be able to teach well.

#### Socially-Engaged Buddhism: An Example of Non-Religious Spirituality

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description... If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism.

-Albert Einstein (as quoted in Das, 1997, p. 1)

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<sup>29</sup> This is a fundamentally constructivist view of education, and Miller (1991) contrasts it with the view that the purpose of education is to transmit information by “imparting certain facts and skills to those students smart enough (and disciplined enough) to learn them” (p. 1). He further points out that the end goal of this transmission is to “enhance the economic and technological capacity of the nation so that we can compete with other nations and ultimately defeat them” (pp. 1-2). Heesoon Bai (2001) points out that, “Rare is a school mission statement that does not mention economic progress... In the current context of economic discourse, economic progress means competitiveness in the global market economy feeding the monoculture of consumer capitalism” (p. 95). Not only does a transmission approach to education miss the mark pedagogically; it plays a fundamental role in propagating contemporary exploitative and competitive economic relations.

Buddhism is known to many people as one of the major religions of the world; however, this label is somewhat deceptive and disputed by many Buddhist practitioners and scholars alike (Sumedho, 1995 and Harris, 2006). The argument of such practitioners and scholars is that Buddhism is a non-theistic exploration and explanation of the conditions of life, universally experienced by all, and it has philosophical and psychological implications that are not faith-based in the way that the truth claims of religions are. Buddhism is based on an inquiry-based approach consistent with the scientific method (although conceived over two thousand years before Francis Bacon was born). Moreover, Buddhism is not dogmatic in the same way that conventional religions tend to be. The title of Harris' (2006) article, "Killing the Buddha," refers to the koan (teaching riddle)<sup>30</sup> which tells that Ninth-Century Zen master Lin Chi said, "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him" (p. 73). Much like the old adage not to mistake the finger for the moon (Nhat Hanh, 1998a and Bai, 2001), one point of the koan is to look beyond the form of the teaching to see the substance of the teaching, to avoid, as Harris (2006) puts it, turning "the Buddha into a religious fetish" and missing "the essence of what he taught" (p. 73).

There is a Buddhist teaching story that illustrates Buddhism's emphasis on avoiding restrictive dogma.

The philosopher Vatsigotra asked, 'Is there a self?' and the Buddha did not say anything. Vatsigotra persisted, 'Do you mean that there is no self?' but the Buddha still did not reply. Finally, Vatsigotra left. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, was puzzled. 'Lord, you always teach that there is no self. Why did you not say so to Vatsigotra?' The Buddha told Ananda that he did not reply because

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<sup>30</sup> "Koans" are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Vatsigotra was looking for a theory, not a way to remove obstacles. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, pp. 17-18)

The point of the above story is that dogma is anathema to Buddhist teaching properly executed. Buddhist teachings are meant to be explored, examined, and then accepted or rejected by the individual practitioner, on the basis of his or her experience (Capra, 1977 and Nhat Hanh, 1998a).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Buddhist teachings are meant to be fundamentally practical, as opposed to theoretical; at its foundation, Buddhism is a spiritual *practice*, meant to be lived rather than debated. A foundational practice of Buddhism is the practice of mindfulness, which, described by Heesoon Bai (2001), is the direction of one's "'bare attention' to the moment-by-moment arising and passing of perception, sensation, emotion, thought, and so on" (p. 91).

The justification of this practice as a means to spiritual liberation is based on a deceptively simple, yet profoundly original argument that makes Buddhism unique among major spiritual traditions. A detailed analysis of this argument and some of the key Buddhist teachings drawn from it is beyond the scope of this chapter and will be left for Chapter 3; however, a brief summary of the argument will provide a context for the introduction of the notion of socially-engaged Buddhism, which follows this summary.

#### The Buddhist Teaching of No-Self

The argument starts with the startlingly simple premise that all things are impermanent. This premise, which much of Buddhist meditation practice is designed to investigate, leads logically to the notion of no-self, which, though it is not one of the

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<sup>31</sup> According to physicist Fritjof Capra (1977), the Buddha "insisted on freedom from spiritual authority, including his own, saying that he could only show the way to Buddhahood, and it was up to every individual to tread this way to the end through his or her own efforts" (p. 86). This is also the point of the Kālāma Sutta, which is discussed further in Chapter 7 in relation to cultivating critical consciousness.

famous “Four Noble Truths” of Buddhism, is the central philosophical pillar of Buddhist teachings. Essentially, since all phenomena are impermanent manifestations, made up of combinations of elements, all things are fundamentally interrelated and interdependent. Capra (1977) refers to this as “the unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events, the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness” (p. 117). In Buddhism, this idea is traditionally referred to as dependent origination, or as the Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) calls it, “interdependent co-arising” (p. 221). Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) also refers to this state of affairs as “interbeing,” and it has profound ontological and ethical implications (p. 225).<sup>32</sup> Because each phenomenon that arises is the result of a plethora of differing causes and conditions, it is dependent upon, or interdependent with, those causes and conditions; furthermore, each phenomenon, in turn, acts as cause or condition for future phenomena, thus creating a relationship of interdependence with those subsequently-arising phenomena as well.

To use a human being as an example, consider that human beings are composed of various elements (both in the sense of chemical elements and in the sense of various parts, including the physical body, emotions, volitions, perceptions, memories, and thoughts). Buddhism traditionally refers to them as the five aggregates or *skandhas* of “form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 176). From moment to moment, each of these elements change, giving a dynamic character to the way that the various elements of a particular human being come together in the manifestation of that being’s existence at any given moment (that which Palmer refers to as the “evolving nexus” of identity). For instance, a person’s feelings and

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<sup>32</sup> *Paticca samuppāda*, the term for which “dependent origination” is a translation, is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The ethical implications for this state of affairs are explored in Chapter 5.



emotions change from moment to moment, as do that person's thoughts and memories. Also, as time progresses, the physical processes that take place in a human body ensure that the physical make-up of a person changes from moment to moment, in subtle ways such as the expulsion of carbon dioxide and the inhalation of oxygen, and in dramatic ways such as growth from childhood to adulthood and death.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) compares the body to a river that, though it constantly flows by, is composed of different drops of water at each moment. This is remarkably similar to David Hume's criticism of René Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* formulation ("I think; therefore, I am"). As discussed in Chapter 1, Hume's "bundle theory" posits that there is a serial, changing self, instead of a permanent, discrete identity (Hume, 1739/1978 and Swain, 2006). This is the essence of the Buddhist notion of no-self. Since the "evolving nexus" of the self is *impermanent* (and is therefore really no self at all) and *interdependent* with all other things and events in the past and yet to arise, Buddhism posits that delusion and suffering arise from falsely perceiving the self as a permanent, discrete, "identical" (not identical *to* anything but identical in the sense of being able to sustain an ongoing and unchanging identity) construction. The self is, by its very nature, an always-changing configuration and composition of non-self elements (Nhat Hanh, 1998a). As Joanna Macy puts it, "What I am, as systems theorists have helped me to see, is a 'flow-through.' I am a flow-through of matter, energy, and information, which is transformed, in turn, by my own experiences and intentions" (1991b, p. 12).

#### No-Self and Mindfulness Practice

The Buddhist practice of mindfulness, which aspires to direct and complete awareness of the present moment, unmediated by words, thoughts, or concepts, addresses

the psychological dilemma of impermanence and no-self by attempting to transcend the mind's tendency to extend the notion of identity into the past and future, which is inherently misleading in light of the insights described above. By focusing and concentrating awareness and attention on the sensations and experiences of the present moment, the practitioner of mindfulness can avoid the psychological illusion of a permanent discrete self extending an identity, unchanged from the past, into the future, and thus avoids the delusion and suffering that accompanies such an illusory perception of self. Moreover, careful and meticulous mindfulness provides a platform for considered, ethical action, based on an awareness of the likely implications and consequences of present actions on future conditions. In this way, the practitioner of mindfulness can effectively aspire to act in a way that will reduce the possibility of future suffering, both for self and for others, since their interdependent relationship means that suffering for one will lead to suffering for others and *vice versa*.<sup>33</sup>

#### Mindfulness Practice and Social Engagement

This aspiration to reduce suffering in the world is the origin of socially-engaged Buddhism. Socially-engaged Buddhism is Buddhist practice that is rooted in the actual problems of people and even animals and ecosystems in the world. It seeks not to transcend these real problems but to mindfully *engage* with them, seeking to transform conditions that might lead to future suffering into more favourable or beneficial conditions, likely to lead to peace, joy, and freedom from suffering. Seeing the profound interdependence of things and events in the world and the impact that present causes and conditions have on the future, the practitioner of socially-engaged Buddhism seeks to influence both his or her own internal, psychological conditions (for instance by

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<sup>33</sup> Mindfulness is discussed further in Chapters 3, 5, and 7.

cultivating wholesome mind and heart states like lovingkindness and compassion) and external, social and environmental conditions (for instance by seeking to avoid violence and activities that lead to unnecessary pollution or the exploitation of others) in ways that will decrease the likelihood of suffering in the future.

Joseph Goldstein (2002) sums these ideas up by identifying three aspects to what he calls the “One Dharma of Western Buddhism;”<sup>34</sup> according to him, “*the method is mindfulness, the expression is compassion, and the essence is wisdom*” (p. 13). In this formulation, *mindfulness* represents connection to and awareness of the present, *compassion* represents the natural tendency to respond to suffering by wanting to help, and *wisdom* represents our ability to perceive impermanence and to understand the causes of suffering and distinguish opportunities to end it.

#### The Fundamentally Constructivist and Transformative Nature of Holistic Education

Holistic education is a fundamentally constructivist way of approaching teaching and learning. When one examines Palmer’s (1998) and Miller’s (1990, 1991, and 2006) conceptions of education as leading wisdom out from within the self or drawing forth a student’s potential, it is clear that they conceive of education as *facilitating*, not *dictating*, the holistic growth of the student. This process of holistic growth involves the student constructing new knowledge, skills, and ways of being on the basis of his or her learning experiences, rather than the teacher merely transmitting knowledge or information to the student. Moreover, this approach to education allows for the potential of the transformation of existing oppressive and exploitative political, social, and environmental conditions. When students are allowed to genuinely participate in the construction of

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<sup>34</sup> “Dharma” is the name used within the Buddhist tradition for the body of teachings of the Buddha. Sometimes it is used to denote truth or the way (path to truth). It is defined in the glossary and discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

knowledge, as opposed to the consumption of knowledge, they are better able to resist oppression and systems of domination.

Feminist and African-American author bell hooks (1994) calls this counter-hegemony (p. 2).<sup>35</sup> She describes her experiences as a student in all-black grade schools, where she “experienced learning as revolution” and education as “the practice of freedom” (pp. 2-3). Her description of the teaching and learning that went on in those schools is fundamentally constructivist, and she describes herself as reinventing herself at school; moreover, she describes the “mission” of her teachers at those schools as “antiracist” and describes “a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anticolonial” (p. 2). She contrasts this with her experience of education as an African-American at “racist, desegregated, white schools,” where the teachers reinforced racist stereotypes and marginalized African-American students (p. 3). There, she experienced education as the reinforcement of domination and racism. Furthermore, education was not connected or connective; it was reduced to the transmission of information, rather than the holistic development of the student.

Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to the antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be a threat to white authority. (hooks, 1994, p. 3)

This is evocative of Alfie Kohn’s (2003) description of *transmission-oriented* character education. He criticizes character education as being overly concerned with obedience and compulsion. The kind of character education that he criticizes is closely

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<sup>35</sup> She describes her and her African-American peers’ devotion to learning as a “counter-hegemonic act.”

aligned with “conservative ideology” and the Christian “doctrine of original sin” (pp. 183-184).<sup>36</sup> Conversely, he argues that “the process of learning does indeed require that meaning, ethical or otherwise, be actively invented and reinvented, from the inside out” (p. 189).

### A Holistic Approach to Teaching and Learning: Engaged Pedagogy

Influenced by both the critical pedagogue Paulo Freire and the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, bell hooks (1994) conceives of an approach to teaching and learning that she calls “engaged pedagogy” (p. 13). Wanting to avoid an approach to education that Freire (1970/1997) describes as the “banking concept” (p. 53), and attracted to his assertion that “education could be the practice of freedom,” she compares Freire’s notion of “praxis,” or the union of action and reflection, with “Thich Nhat Hahn’s philosophy of engaged Buddhism, the focus on practice in conjunction with contemplation” (hooks, 1994, p. 14). Her project is to frame education in a way that emphasizes wholeness, education as “striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world” (p. 15).

Like Palmer (1998), hooks (1994) thinks that teachers need to model wholeness and the practice of contemplative learning for students, and like Freire (1970/1997), she thinks that students need to actively participate in the process of sharing knowledge with their teachers.

Progressive, holistic education, ‘engaged pedagogy’ is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively

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<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Kohn (2003) refers to some of the tactics of character education as “Skinnerian” (p. 182), and this leads to a natural comparison of Christian doctrine with behaviourism, with heaven being the ultimate reinforcement and hell being the ultimate punishment.

committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. (hooks, 1994, p. 15)

This allows teachers to “make their teaching practices a site of resistance” (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Freire calls this practice of resisting, or critically reflecting upon and then acting to transform, oppressive elements of reality “conscientization” (hooks, 1994, p. 14).

Moreover, this type of holistic, progressive, transformative, engaged pedagogy allows for the construction of true community amongst its participants (hooks, 2003).<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

Despite the fact that our liberal-democratic political paradigm has practically fetishized the separation of religion and public education, spirituality has much to offer the practice of teaching and learning. It allows for teachers to connect with their own wholeness and a genuine sense of identity and integrity, as well as with their students and subject matter. Integrating spirituality into pedagogy also allows students to experience an essential aspect of their whole selves and allows them opportunities to perceive their interdependence and interconnection with the larger whole that they are a part of, as well as opportunities to contemplate the mystery of being. Furthermore, it allows for engagement with and complete and authentic participation in the process of constructing knowledge and transforming the world for the better. Not only should spirituality not be excluded from the curricula of public education; incorporating spirituality into education is necessary for education to be truly engaging, participatory, and transformative.

Fortunately, socially-engaged Buddhism provides an example of a non-religious and non-dogmatic spiritual platform from which to engage in mindful, compassionate, and wise

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<sup>37</sup> Palmer (1998) also emphasizes the importance of teaching and learning in community. This is explored further in Chapter 7.

holistic teaching and learning in a way that holds the potential to teach in ways that engage students in a truly participatory mode of learning and being that has the potential to transform themselves and their world for the better.

## CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCING THE DHARMA: BUDDHIST HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

### Spiritual Liberation: Socially-Engaged Buddhism as a Liberational Practice

This chapter articulates a description of socially-engaged Buddhism as a contemporary practical philosophical system, founded in the historical tradition of Buddhism, which provides a framework for practitioners to think, speak, and act in ways that will lead to a reduction of suffering and, potentially and eventually, to spiritual liberation. Of course, this requires a conceptual understanding of what “spiritual liberation” means. It is related to the Buddhist concepts of enlightenment and *nirvāna* (Sanskrit) or *nibbana* (Pāli). While “enlightenment” is a translation of the term “*bodhi*,” which strictly means “awakening,” *nirvāna* connotes an image of “extinguishing a flame,” and it means the “end or absence of undesirable things, such as suffering” as well as “Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed” (Keown, 2003a, ¶1).<sup>38</sup> In one sense, *nirvāna* means the end or absence of suffering, and in another it means a state of being unconditioned by a misconceived sense of separateness from other phenomena. In this latter sense, it implies a deep understanding and radical acceptance of one’s impermanence and consequently profound interrelationship and interpenetration with the rest of existence; in this sense, *nirvāna* can be conceived of as the state of being enlightened or awake to the true nature of reality.<sup>39</sup> “*Nirvana* is a radically transformed state of consciousness” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 110).

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<sup>38</sup> “The Buddha’s choice of the word Unbinding (*nibbāna*) – which literally means the extinguishing of a fire – derives from the way the physics of fire was viewed at his time. As fire burned, it was seen as clinging to its fuel in a state of excitement and agitation. When it went out, it let go of its fuel, growing calm and free. Thus, when the Indians of his time saw a fire going out, they did not feel that they were watching extinction. Rather, they were seeing a metaphorical lesson in how freedom could be attained by letting go” (DeGraff, 1996, p. 6).

<sup>39</sup> *Nirvāna* is distinguished from *samsāra* below.



To Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a), *liberation* is “the ability to go from the world of signs to the world of true nature” (p. 125). By “signs,” Nhat Hanh (1998a) refers to the “outward appearances” of things, by which they appear to “exist separately of one another” (p. 108);<sup>40</sup> he refers to this as “relative or worldly truth”, as opposed to “absolute truth” (p. 121). Relative truth refers to the lens of understanding reality where one focuses on the separate, discrete existence that phenomena have, whereas, absolute truth refers to the lens of understanding reality where one focuses on the interdependence, interrelationship, and interconnection of seemingly separate phenomena. This distinction is similar to David Bohm’s (1980/2002) distinction between the explicate and implicate orders.<sup>41</sup> When he says “the world of true nature,” Nhat Hanh refers to the world perceived through the lens of absolute truth, or ultimate reality.

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana (2001) describes spiritual liberation in terms of nibbana, or “permanent happiness.”

The third truth [of the Four Noble Truths, which will be discussed in Chapter 4,] teaches us that happiness is wiping out all negative states of mind – all desire, all hatred, all ignorance. When we at last succeed in putting out the internal fires that burn our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, then we experience total happiness, total peace. (p. 47)

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<sup>40</sup> “When we perceive an object, in Buddhist terms, we see its ‘sign’ (*lakshana*). The Sanskrit word ‘lakshana’ also means ‘mark,’ ‘designation,’ or ‘appearance’” (Nhat Hanh, 2001a, p. 23). “Signlessness means to transcend the confines of perception and mental discrimination. When people are unable to see the interdependent and empty nature of all dharmas, [used here to mean phenomena,] they perceive dharmas as being separate and independent phenomena. This exists apart from that, this is independent of all other dharmas. Looking at dharmas in such a way is like taking a sword of mental discrimination and cutting up reality into small pieces. One is then prevented from seeing the true face of reality” (Nhat Hanh, 1991, p. 459).

<sup>41</sup> In *Transformation at the Base*, in comparing the notions of relative and absolute truth to Bohm’s orders, Nhat Hanh (2001) refers to the realities understood through these lenses as “ordinary and ultimate reality” and the “historical dimension” and the “ultimate dimension” (p. 77). These notions are also related to the distinction between nirvāna and samsāra, which is discussed below.

Gunaratana (2001) focuses on the elimination of negative states of mind to develop an understanding of nibbāna or spiritual liberation. He also refers to the “tools” needed to help one wipe out negative states of mind like greed, hatred, and ignorance; these tools include the opposites of the negative mind and heart states: generosity, loving-friendliness, and wisdom (p. 49). To Gunaratana (2001), the “bliss of this state [nibbāna, or spiritual liberation] is indescribable. Its single characteristic is peace. It is not born, not created, not conditioned” (p. 49). Similarly to Nhat Hanh, Gunaratana (2001) stresses the importance of this state not being characterized by “the fault of seeing things as permanent, as satisfactory, or as possessing an inherent self or soul” (p. 49).

In *One Dharma*, Joseph Goldstein (2002) discusses several different Buddhist conceptions of the “liberated mind” and “liberation” in the spiritual sense. He asserts that nibbāna is characterized by the qualities of “relief, release, peace” (p. 158). He describes views of liberation ranging from what he describes as “stages of purification” and “stages of enlightenment” to “sudden awakening,” as well as views that see the true nature of mind as being already liberated at an essential level (pp. 157-181). After his review of several different Buddhist conceptions of nibbāna, nirvāna, or liberation, he concludes that they have a common foundation. “Nirvana has been described as ultimate peace, the supreme silence, the end of suffering, complete freedom, the Unborn, absolute emptiness, the all-good, stainless beauty: same elephant, different words” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 181).

For the purposes of this thesis, I chart a course towards this common foundation of nirvāna and define “spiritual liberation” as the presence of wholesome mind and heart states (such as wisdom, lovingkindness, and generosity) and the absence of unwholesome

mind and heart states (such as ignorance, hatred, and greed),<sup>42</sup> in the context of a profound understanding of the non-existence of a permanent self (no-self)<sup>43</sup> and the dynamic interrelationship of all things. This definition is reminiscent of the definition of spirituality proposed in the previous chapter, which defines spirituality as a practice or a field of inquiry consisting of both the notion that all things in the universe are interrelated and the notion that there is a mysterious aspect to being which we are naturally drawn to contemplate and that transcends rationality.

These conceptions of spirituality and spiritual liberation root themselves in the notion of what I call here “suprarationality” or what Tobin Hart (2004) describes as “contemplative knowing” (p. 28). He defines “contemplation” as

a third way of knowing that complements the rational and the sensory. The contemplative mind is opened and activated through a wide range of approaches—from pondering to poetry to meditation—that are designed to quiet and shift the habitual chatter of the mind to cultivate a capacity for deepened awareness, concentration, and insight. Although various practices may evoke different kinds of awareness, such as creative breakthrough or compassion, they share in common a distinct nonlinear consciousness that invites an inner opening of awareness. This opening within us in turn enables a corresponding opening toward the world before us. Through a fresh lens, our worldview, sense of self, and relationships may be powerfully transformed. (Hart, 2004, p. 29)

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<sup>42</sup> More is said about the concept of “mind and heart states” in the discussion of Buddhist psychology in Chapter 4.

<sup>43</sup> The concept of “no-self” is introduced in Chapter 1 and discussed in Chapter 2. It is discussed further below and in Chapter 5.

This reliance on contemplation, or suprarationality, is manifested in the Zen practice of using koans, or teaching riddles, to develop “Zen understanding” or Zen consciousness (Barrett, 1996, p. 134).<sup>44</sup> “A koan is generally some statement made by an old Zen master, or some answer of his given to a questioner” (Barrett, 1996, p. 134). The contemplative, as opposed to intellectual or logical, tension created by koan riddles, is necessary, because, according to D. T. Suzuki, the

worst enemy of Zen experience, at least in the beginning, is the intellect, which consists and insists in discriminating subject from object. The discriminating intellect, therefore, must be cut short if Zen consciousness is to unfold itself, and the koan is constructed eminently to serve this end. (Barrett, 1996, pp. 136-137)

For the purpose of this thesis, “*suprarationality*” is a way of knowing and understanding elements of reality and experience that depends on approaches and methods other than logic and reason; it involves the suspension of, or lack of reliance on, discursive thought, ideation, and conceptualization. Methods of contemplation and gaining access to one’s capacity for suprarationality include, but are not limited to, insight, intuition, concentration, and mindfulness. Suprarationality includes contemplation as defined by Tobin Hart (2004), including his description of the human capacity to know through “silence, looking inward, pondering deeply, beholding, witnessing the contents of our consciousness, and so forth” (p. 30).

Suprarationality, in particular, the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, holds the potential to address some of the problems with epistemology relating to the relationship between language and knowledge described by post-structuralism and postmodernism.

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<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, the title of the chapter dealing with koans in *Zen Buddhism*, is “The Reason of Unreason: the Koan Exercise” (Barrett, 1996, p. 134).

For the purpose of this thesis, *mindfulness*, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5, means the moment-to-moment non-judgmental scrutiny of present physical and mental experience, including intentions, perceptions, sensations, emotions, feelings, and thoughts, through calm and focused awareness. Mindfulness involves the attempt to attend to the bare awareness of an experience, unmediated by thoughts, judgments, or concepts.<sup>45</sup> “Mindfulness is remembering to come back to the present moment” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 64).

Thus, the aspiration of Buddhist practice is *not* to transcend the world and reality; rather, it is to completely engage with the world and reality as they are. In order to do this, it is necessary to transcend discursive thought that keeps one from fully engaging with the world, in order to directly experience one’s “emptiness,” which reflects one’s non-duality with all things.<sup>46</sup>

Meditation is a special kind of dance in which we commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the practice of deconstructing the materialistic view of reality. The challenge is simultaneously to hold on and to let go; it is to see clearly what we are doing and at the same time to see through it. To do this, it’s important to cultivate a *feeling* for the Middle Way. This is the balance point. The Middle Way is not just halfway between two extremes – it’s not a 50-50 kind of thing. It’s more like saying [*holds the bell striker vertically and moves the lower end to the left*] existence is over here and non-existence [or emptiness, which is discussed

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<sup>45</sup> “The Buddhist ‘mindfulness practice’ (satipatthana), popularly known in the West as ‘meditation,’ is a way to recover the non-conceptual awareness. Its technique is simple and clear enough. You direct your ‘bare attention’ to the moment-by-moment arising and passing of perception, sensation, emotion, thought, and so on” (Bai, 2001, p. 91).

<sup>46</sup> “Emptiness,” as I use it here, describes an aspect of the Buddhist understanding of reality, which is discussed below.

below,] is over here [*moves the lower end to the right*]. The Middle Way is the hinge-point at the top where the two pivot, rather than the lower end of the striker just being halfway along its arc. It's actually the source from which the two emanate. (Amaro, 2003, p. 12)

## A Brief History of Buddhism

### The Buddha as a Historical Figure

The historical Buddha was born in either the fifth or sixth century Before the Common Era, sometime between 563 BCE and 450 BCE, and he lived for approximately 80 years (Skilton, 1994 and Goldstein, 2002). His given name was Siddhārtha Gautama, and he was the son of a political ruler, so he has thus often been referred to as a “prince.” At the time of his birth, a seer “predicted that the young boy was destined for either political or spiritual empire” (Skilton, 1994, p. 21), so his father sought to ensure the former by providing him with a life of comfort and luxury. However, Siddhārtha had other aspirations, and, after seeing “four sights” representing old age, disease, death, and spiritual wandering, at the age of twenty-nine, he left his family (including a wife and new-born son) and station in life to lead the life of a mendicant spiritual seeker, searching for “truth and liberation” (Skilton, 1994, p. 24, Goldstein, 2002, and Nhat Hanh, 1991).

He studied with several highly-regarded spiritual teachers and achieved success within the frameworks of spiritual practice outlined by those teachers, but he was not satisfied with his attainments (Skilton, 1994 and Nhat Hanh, 1991). After a period of extreme asceticism, he gave up asceticism in favour of the “Middle Way” between indulgence and deprivation (Skilton, 1994 and Nhat Hanh, 1991).<sup>47</sup> Practicing according

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<sup>47</sup> The “Middle Way,” as illustrated above in the words of Ajahn Amaro, also refers to Buddhism’s tendency to avoid conceptual attachment to any one side in a rational dichotomy, including permanence vs.

to this principle, he “eventually gained a new and profound insight into the nature of our condition, into the way that things really are” (Skilton, 1994, p. 23). This experience of transformational insight has been referred to as enlightenment, liberation, and awakening, and this experience of profound understanding is the origin of the name “Buddha.”

*Buddha* derives from the root word *budh*, which, in *Magadhi*, the language spoken by the historical Buddha, means “awaken.” Thus, “Buddha” means, simply, “awakened one” (de Silva, 1990, Nhat Hanh, 1991, and Goldstein, 2002).<sup>48</sup>

After his enlightenment, or awakening, the Buddha traveled around Northern India teaching the *Dharma*. In this context, “Dharma” means “‘the truth,’ ‘the way of things,’ ‘the natural laws of mind and body’” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 16). Sometimes it is used to denote the way or path to truth (similar to the word *Tao*) or “Path of Awakening.”<sup>49</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, “Dharma,” with an upper-case “D,” means the body of teachings of the Buddha, and “dharma,” with a lower-case “d,” means worldly phenomena. Above, I have been using the phrases “Buddhist theory” or “Buddhist teachings” or the word “Buddhism” to describe what I will now refer to as “the Dharma.”

### Language and Schools of Buddhism

Because of specialized, non-English terms used to describe Buddhist concepts in the Buddhist canon and related literature, it is necessary to discuss the use of terminology

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temporariness, birth vs. death, one vs. many, existence vs. nihilism, empiricism vs. rationalism, etc. While the “Middle Way” or “Middle Path” is further explored below in relation to the concept of “emptiness” and discussed again in Chapter 5, a detailed discussion of this concept is beyond the scope of this thesis; for now, suffice it to say that the Middle Way provides ample breeding ground for paradox and, as described above, suprarationality.

<sup>48</sup> In describing the Buddha’s moment of awakening, Joseph Goldstein says, “his mind opened to the deathless, the unconditioned freedom that is beyond birth and death. In that moment of liberation he became the Buddha, the Awakened One, awakened from the dreamlike state of ignorance” (2002, p. 16).

<sup>49</sup> In some circumstances, “dharma” is used to mean phenomena, as in the constituent parts or elements of relative reality or the experienced world (Nhat Hanh, 1998a).

and language choices. *Sanskrit* is the literary language of ancient India and the liturgical language of several religions, including some schools of religious Buddhism; *Pāli* “derives from the vernacular languages of Northern India at the time of the Buddha” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 6). *Pāli* is thought to be very similar to *Magadhi*, the language actually spoken by the historical Buddha (either identical to it, derived from it, or closely related to it).<sup>50</sup> The relatively conservative Theravādan school of Buddhism uses *Pāli* terminology to describe Buddhist concepts; moreover, for authority in relation to the Dharma (which it calls the Dhamma), it relies strictly on the *Pāli* canon, making *Pāli* the liturgical language of Theravādan Buddhism. By way of contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhists generally use Sanskrit terminology, and have a more extensive selection of canonical texts, including more recent texts, that they rely upon for authority in relation to the Dharma.

Most Westerners have been exposed to ideas and language from the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism (e.g., Zen), so certain Sanskrit Buddhist terms have entered the English language. Therefore, throughout this thesis, when necessary, I usually use specialized terms from Sanskrit, because those are the terms that most Westerners are most familiar with (e.g., karma, nirvāna, dharma, and sutra). However, much Buddhist literature uses or refers to the *Pāli* terms for the same concepts (e.g., kamma, nibbana, dhamma, and sutta), so when I am discussing the writing or ideas of someone who refers to *Pāli* terminology, I use *Pāli* terms in order to avoid confusion.

A detailed description of the similarities and differences between the Mahāyāna and Theravāda schools, or vehicles, of Buddhism is beyond the scope of this thesis, but,

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<sup>50</sup> “While the language is not identical with any the Buddha himself would have spoken, it belongs to the same broad linguistic family as those he might have used and originates from the same conceptual matrix” (Bodhi, 2005, p. 10).



where warranted in the discussion of certain concepts, some similarities and differences may be briefly addressed. Suffice it to say, for now, that Theravādan Buddhism is doctrinally conservative compared to Mahāyānan Buddhism, and Mahāyānan Buddhism has been more inclined, throughout its history, to accept new ideas, concepts, and practices (Nhat Hanh, 1998a).

### Socially-Engaged Buddhism

In recent times, as part of their spiritual practice, many Buddhist practitioners have become actively and intentionally engaged with political, social justice, environmental, and other problems in the real world, applying the Dharma to social action and activism. Examples of socially-engaged Buddhism range from the social activism of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (2006) to the deep ecology of Buddhist scholar and eco-philosopher Joanna Macy (1991a and 1991b) to the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction approach to wellness of Associate Professor of Medicine Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005a and 1990/2005b). Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh is perhaps the archetypal example of “engaged Buddhism” and is said to have coined the term (Seager, 1999 and Engaged Buddhism, 2006b). He became involved in peace activism during the Vietnam War as a response to the real suffering that he witnessed during that time. He and his followers “saw this work as part of their meditation and mindfulness practice, not apart from it. Since then, the term continues to apply to Buddhists who are seeking ways to apply the insights from meditation practice and dharma teachings to situations of social, political, and economic suffering and injustice” (Engaged Buddhism, 2006b, ¶1).

I started reflecting and writing on the possibility and practice of Engaged

Buddhism in the 1950s, and in 1964 I wrote the book *Engaged Buddhism*. In an

essay titled ‘The Basic Ideals of Buddhist Youth for Social Service,’ I suggested how to apply Buddhist ideals to improve the conditions of life in a time of war and social injustice. In a later book, *Actualized Buddhism*, I advocated a kind of Buddhism that could be practiced in all areas of life: economics, education, and art, among others. These writings document the birth of the Engaged Buddhism movement in Vietnam. Engaged Buddhism was a product of suffering and war – a lotus flower blooming in a sea of fire. (Nhat Hanh, 2003, p. 94)

“Socially-engaged Buddhism” is “usually used to refer to the application of the dharma to social issues in a more comprehensive fashion than religious charity or philanthropy, one that seeks to redirect the personal quest for transcendence to the collective transformation of society” (Seager, 1999, p. 201). For the purposes of this thesis, “socially-engaged Buddhism” refers to a practical attempt to integrate Buddhist spiritual practice with praxis and practical social activism. Socially-engaged Buddhism can be seen as a movement and also as an individual practice. Socially-engaged Buddhism (or engaged Buddhism, as it is usually called) represents an attempt to use the Dharma and Buddhist practice as a basis for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering as it manifests in the world in ways that include illness, violence, war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.

Defined this way, socially-engaged Buddhism is the logical and practical result of understanding the two elements of spiritual liberation as defined above. If spiritual liberation involves the presence of wholesome mind and heart states and the absence of unwholesome mind and heart states in the context of a profound understanding of no-self

and the interdependence of all phenomena, then these two aspects work together to make the former aspect insignificant if not considered in light of the latter aspect. In other words, given one's state of no-self or selflessness (i.e., one's interdependence with all other phenomena, including other people), the presence of wholesome mind and heart states and the absence of unwholesome mind and heart states *in the individual* is unimportant if others do not share the same conditions.

Furthermore, the Dharma asserts that one's mind and heart states both condition and are affected by one's environment, including the mind and heart states of others;<sup>51</sup> therefore, the state of one's mind and heart is profoundly related to the states of the minds and hearts of others in one's community. In short, understanding spiritual liberation in this way breaks down the distinction between self and others and unites one's self interest with the interests of others. "In the Buddhist understanding of reality, wisdom is characterized as understanding that one's own welfare is aligned with that of others and, indeed, of the whole world" (Sivaraksa, 1992, pp. 78-79).

As Richard Hughes Seager (1999) puts it, "socially engaged Buddhism requires that the two [cultivating awareness and expressing compassion] be thoroughly integrated" (p. 202).<sup>52</sup>

One principle at work in much of socially engaged Buddhism is the Mahayana concept of nondualism, the conviction that at the most fundamental level of existence male and female, rich and poor, employer and employee, ruler and ruled are merely relative distinctions that fall away before the universal Buddha mind or

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<sup>51</sup> This is further elucidated in the discussion of Buddhist psychology in Chapter 4.

<sup>52</sup> "The world becomes, in effect, the temple or dharma hall. Compassion and lovingkindness are not extended to the world by those who have renounced it, but are actualized within the world by learning through social action the fundamental truth of the interdependence of all beings" (Seager, 1999, p. 202).

Buddha nature. Attachment to distinctions such as gender, economic class, and race is a hindrance to an individual's experience of liberation. Social inequities resulting from such ultimately illusory distinctions are to be remedied through compassionate action. (Seager, 1999, p. 201)

Essentially, socially-engaged Buddhism is the manifestation of the *bodhisattva* ideal in the context of society and community experiencing conditions that lead to suffering. In the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, the bodhisattva is the spiritual ideal of a person aspiring to become enlightened and liberated but who forgoes his or her final enlightenment in order to assist others to become spiritually liberated. A bodhisattva manifests compassionate action in the world of suffering. “*Bodhisattvas* are those who, out of great compassion for the suffering of beings, aspire to become fully enlightened Buddhas” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 18).<sup>53</sup> According to Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003),

Mahāyāna Buddhists, as Bodhisattvas, take a vow to have concern for the welfare of all beings, not just themselves or their own group. This compassion for others causes them to be politically and socially actively involved in the world, rather than removed from their surroundings. (p. 29)

### A Buddhist Understanding of Reality

The Dharma's understanding of reality aligns well with conceptions of reality described in deep ecology, systems theory, and quantum physics. As Joanna Macy (1991a) puts it, these various bodies of thought exhibit a “mutual hermeneutic” allowing one to interpret and deepen one's understanding of each through the lenses provided by the others (p. xii).

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<sup>53</sup> “The Bodhisattva seeks personal salvation through wisdom, but that salvation is achieved for the sake of aiding all sentient beings, out of compassion for them” (Skilton, 1994, p. 110).

Of course, it is not difficult to argue that the constituent elements of the world are interrelated and interconnected. As Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967) so eloquently said,

It really boils down to this: that all life is inter-related. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the inter-related structure of reality. Did you ever stop to think you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to you by a Pacific islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a French-man. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning, and that's poured in your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured in your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you're desirous of having cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured in your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured, that is its inter-related quality. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the inter-related structure of all reality. (pp. 40-41)

This accurately depicts how our patterns of consumption connect us with others who produce and provide the things that we consume; moreover, our interconnection with others goes deeper than that and can be described in biological and chemical processes as well. In *Sacred Balance*, David Suzuki (1997) scientifically demonstrates

that air is the “universal glue” holding us all together in physical, interdependent relationship and that all “people over the age of twenty have taken at least 100 million breaths and have inhaled argon [an inert gas in the air we breath] atoms that were emitted in the first breath of every child born in the world the year before” (p. 37-38). Similarly, he demonstrates that each breath includes argon atoms inhaled and exhaled by Gandhi, and every other historical being. To Suzuki (1997), this demonstrates that air “is the matrix that holds everything together” (p. 38). This sense of our interconnection with all living things is profound; however, in the Dharma, our interdependence is understood as even more profound than this concrete interrelationship and connection with other living things; our interdependence is fundamentally ontological, and the quality of our interpenetration with all phenomena belies our existence as discrete, separate beings.

According to quantum physics, this interdependence operates even at the level of elementary particles.

From Newtonian physics we have inherited the idea that a physical entity is a logical unit that is either not further analyzable, in the case of an elementary particle, or is analyzable into fundamentally unanalyzable constituents or properties. But in quantum theory a physical entity is at the same time a dynamically independent object, yet a relationship between things that are not constituents of the object itself. And an elementary particle is not an independently existing unanalyzable entity. It is, in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward to other things. (Stapp, 1971, p. 1310)<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> By “not further analyzable,” Stapp refers to indivisibility in the sense that Newtonian mechanics conceives of elementary particles as incapable of being broken up into constituent parts. The word “atom,” the name first used for what were then thought to be elementary particles in this sense, is derived from the Greek word *átomos*, which can be translated as “indivisible.”

“At the atomic and elementary-particle level, the idea of independent entities dissolves; the most elementary things have meaning only in terms of their effects on other things” (Stapp, 1971, p. 1314).<sup>55</sup> In this way,

quantum research has overturned the mechanistic/reductionist way of seeing the world that holds that phenomena can be understood by identifying and understanding the parts. Instead a world is revealed in which we can move towards an understanding of the parts only by taking into account the dynamics of the whole. Paul Teller (1986) coins the term ‘relational holism’ to convey how particles, their non-relational properties notwithstanding, can have no coherent identity or meaning save in relationship to everything else. In a very real sense, there are no parts but merely ‘patterns in an inseparable web of relationships’ (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1992, p. 83). Enfolded into the part is the signature of the whole. (Selby, 1999, p. 128)

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999b) refers to an understanding of this profound, ontological interdependence as “vertical theology,” as opposed to the “horizontal theology” involved in understanding phenomenal interconnection (pp. 2-3). He describes vertical theology as the contemplation of “the noumenal (the level of true nature),” as opposed to the contemplation of the “phenomenal” (p. 6). “The ‘ground of being’ is the noumenal aspect of reality” (p. 7). Thich Nhat Hanh equates this noumenal aspect of reality to nirvāna and stresses that, although we “can talk about the phenomenal world, ... it is very difficult to talk about the noumenal world” (p. 8).

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<sup>55</sup> This relational interdependence of physical phenomena is also represented by quantum physicist David Bohm’s (1980/2002) notion of the “implicate order”, where what we conventionally think of as an “arrangement” of “*objects*” and “*events*” actually comprises a “*total order* [which] is contained, in some implicit sense, in each region of space and time... So we may be led to explore the notion that in some sense each region contains a total structure ‘enfolded’ within it” (p. 188).

We are not supposed to speak of nirvana, because it is the level of the noumenal where all notions, concepts, and words are inadequate to describe it... But in nirvana, which is the ground of being..., there is no birth, no death, no coming, no going, no being, no non-being. All these concepts must be transcended. (Nhat Hanh, 1999b, pp. 9-10)

Similarly, Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) draws a distinction between “interpenetration” and “interconnection.” To explain this distinction, Nakagawa (2000) presents a “multidimensional ontology” consisting of five dimensions (p. 31), which “constitute *the wholeness of reality*, a particular aspect of which each dimension reveals” (p. 34). *Dimension I* is the “*objective reality*” of phenomenal, empirical existence (p. 31), or reality as it is conventionally perceived. *Dimension II* is the “*social reality*,” in which “every objective being is a ‘meaning unit’ that is articulated, constructed, and maintained in an entire meaning structure produced by language” (p. 32). *Dimension III* is the “*cosmic reality*,” which aligns with a notion of interconnection (p. 32), or the descriptions provided by Martin Luther King, Jr. and David Suzuki above. *Dimension IV* is the “*infinite reality*,” described by Nakagawa as “the deepest dimension of reality” and “the ontological foundation of the cosmos” (p. 32).<sup>56</sup> This dimension aligns with the description of nirvāna presented above, as it “represent[s] the Absolute, or the Ultimate, beyond qualifications of any kind” (p. 33). Thus, both Nhat Hanh’s “noumenal aspect of reality” and Nakagawa’s infinite dimension represent attempts to describe the nature of

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<sup>56</sup> Like Nhat Hanh, Nakagawa (2000) refers to Toshihiko Izutsu’s use of the terms “horizontal” and “vertical” (p. 126) and uses these terms himself to distinguish Eastern philosophy, under the rubric of which he includes the Dharma, from Western holism. “While contemporary holistic education tends to celebrate a web-like horizontal interconnection of the universe, Eastern philosophy involves ideas of *multidimensional reality* or *vertical depth*” (p. 4).



nirvāna. Finally, *Dimension V* is the “*universal reality*,” which represents the “twofold movement of seeking and returning in contemplation” (p. 33).

The realization of the deepest, infinite reality is called *Enlightenment* or *Awakening*. After Awakening, the returning movement begins. In the returning path, the whole dimensions (the objective reality, the social reality, and the cosmic reality) reappear in such a way that the infinite reality manifests itself into them. In this way, they are radically transformed by the infinite reality. *Dimension V* signifies this transformed reality, which is called *the universal reality*.

(Nakagawa, 2000, p. 33)<sup>57</sup>

In this way, there is no difference between noumena and phenomena, conventional reality and ultimate reality, or nirvāna and samsāra. “And, in the final analysis, there is no dualistic division between Emptiness [conceptualized as the ultimate, or the deepest, dimension of reality] and Being (Form) [or the conventional, phenomenal dimension of reality], or *nirvana* and *samasara*” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 114).

#### Impermanence, Emptiness, No-Self, and Paticca Samuppāda

The fundamental metaphysical starting point of the Dharma is impermanence. This concept and some of its implications are introduced in Chapter 2 in the section entitled “The Buddhist Teaching of No-Self.” The foundational premise of the Dharma is the notion that all conditioned things (essentially all phenomena) are impermanent. This premise provides the basis for notions like no-self, emptiness, and *paticca samuppāda*.

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<sup>57</sup> Nakagawa characterizes this “twofold movement” as “a *radical reconstructivism through a radical deconstructivism*... the foremost expression of this understanding... [being represented by] the Mahayana Buddhist philosophy of Emptiness (*sunyata*) and Suchness (*tathata*)” (p. 5). “While in Emptiness absolute negation of all beings happens, in Suchness everything is reborn and affirmed again as it is. This affirmation is not a relative but an *absolute affirmation* through absolute negation... Suchness is another name for the universal reality” (pp. 219-220). As Izutsu puts it, “The empirical world as it is reflected in the consciousness of a sage is the metaphysical *sunyata* phenomenalized, appearing in the form of physical things. (pp. 365-366)” (as quoted in Nakagawa, 2000, p. 220). Emptiness is discussed further below.

Paticca samuppāda (*pratitya-samupāda* in Sanskrit) is a Pāli term that has been variously translated into English, *inter alia*, as “dependent arising” (Kalupahana, 1987, p. 26), “universal conditionality” (Skilton, 1994, p. 27), “Interdependent Co-Arising” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 225), “dependent co-arising” (Macy, 1991, p.1), “conditioned genesis” (Conze, Horner, Snellgrove, & Waley, 1964, p. 66), “conditioned co-production” (Conze, 1980, p. 25), and “dependent origination” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 53). As Goldstein (2002) puts it, “At the heart of [the Buddha’s] teaching is the principle of dependent origination: because of this, that arises; when this ceases, that also ceases” (p.53). In the Pāli Canon, it is stated as follows, “When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases” (Nānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 927). According to Damien Keown (2003b), it is “a fundamental Buddhist teaching on causation and the ontological status of phenomena. The doctrine teaches that all phenomena arise in dependence on causes and conditions and lack intrinsic being” (§1).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) relates the teaching of Interdependent Co-arising to his concept of “interbeing,” and describes it as an attempt to describe the fundamentally interpenetrating nature of all phenomena in reality (p. 225). He uses the metaphor of Indra’s Net to illustrate this interpenetration.

Indra’s Net is a vast, cosmic lattice that contains precious jewels wherever the threads cross. There are millions of jewels strung together to make the net, and each jewel has many faces. When you look at any facet of any one jewel, you can see all the other jewels reflected in it. In... Indra’s Net, the one is present in the all, and the all is present in the one. This wonderful image was appropriated by

Buddhist thinkers to illustrate the principle of interdependence and interpenetration. (Nhat Hanh, 2001a, pp. 76-77)<sup>58</sup>

Nhat Hanh (1998a) uses the example of a sheet of paper to illustrate this interpenetration in concrete terms.

When you look at this sheet of paper, you think it belongs to the realm of being.

There was a time it came into existence, a moment in the factory it became a sheet of paper. But before the sheet of paper was born, was it nothing? Can nothing become something? Before it was recognizable as a sheet of paper, it must have been something else – a tree, a branch, sunshine, clouds, the earth. In its former life, the sheet of paper was all these things. (p. 137)

In this way, one can see that all phenomena are transitory and dependent on causes and conditions that lead to their manifestation.

The doctrine of dependent origination expresses the interdependence of all things, meaning that beings or phenomena cannot exist on their own, but exist or occur because of their relationship with other beings and phenomena. In this view, everything in the world comes into existence in response to internal causes and external conditions; in other words, nothing can exist independent of other things or arise in isolation. (Paterson, 1996, p. 147)

This is the essence of *paticca samuppāda*: all phenomena are conditioned by all other phenomena and their interrelationship, and the causal relationships between phenomena are reciprocal rather than linear and unidirectional, as causation is conceived

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<sup>58</sup> In *Global Teacher, Global Learner*, Graham Pike and David Selby (1988) also describe Indra's Net to help describe the "Systemic/Holistic Paradigm" that they contrast with the "Mechanistic Paradigm" (p. 28). David Selby (1999) discusses it again in "Global Education: Towards a Quantum Model of Environmental Education" (p. 131).

in the now-obsolete Western mechanistic paradigm. In other words, every single phenomenon both impacts and is impacted by its environment, as it interpenetrates the other phenomenal components of its environment, and as they interpenetrate it. An understanding of *paticca samuppāda* dissolves the false impression that any single phenomenon is separate and distinct from its environment, and for humans it dissolves the false dichotomy of human-nature dualism. As Barbara Paterson (1996) puts it, “As human beings, we shape our environment, but we are also products of our environment” (p. 148).

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the phenomenal and ontological implications of *paticca samuppāda* came to be expressed in the concept of *sūnyatā*, which is Sanskrit for emptiness. Emptiness is a concept meant to bridge, as the Middle Path of Buddhism so often reconciles dichotomous conceptual tensions, the gap between eternalism and nihilism.<sup>59</sup> It aligns with the concept of no-self described in Chapter 2; emptiness means that we “are empty of a separate, independent self” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 146).

In *Old Path, White Clouds*, Nhat Hanh (1991) uses a bowl to illustrate the teaching of emptiness. From one perspective, the bowl is empty of “a permanent and unchanging self” because it is “subject to change and dissolution” (p. 438). However, from another perspective, the bowl is “full” of the “interwoven elements that have given rise to the bowl,” including the potter, the clay used to construct the bowl, the water used to shape the clay, the fire used to heat the kiln, the air that fed the fire, the trees that were chopped down to provide wood for the kiln’s fire, and the rain, sun, and earth that

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<sup>59</sup> “The two false views of permanence and illusion are too extreme. Dependent co-arising transcends both extremes and dwells in the middle” (Nhat Hanh, 1991, p. 442). “In steering a middle course between eternalism and nihilism, the Buddha remains suspended between ‘yes’ and ‘no,’ ‘self’ and ‘no-self,’ in silent emptiness” (Batchelor, 2000, p. 10). This bridging is completed by the relationship between the concepts of emptiness and suchness, discussed above.

enabled the trees to grow (p. 439). Each of these seemingly ontologically-separate phenomena are, in fact, “interpenetrating elements which give rise to this bowl” (p. 440).

Obviously, this analysis of interdependence could be extended *ad infinitum*; moreover, a similar analysis could be applied to any other phenomenon. Accordingly, this analysis shows that phenomena exist only “in interdependent relation with” all other phenomena (p. 440). Of course, individual phenomena have a phenomenal existence that is real; their existence is just dynamic, transitory, and dependent on causes and conditions, rather than permanent and discrete. In this way, emptiness describes the interdependent nature of all phenomena in a way that illustrates the operation of *paticca samuppāda* and its ontological implications.

David Loy (1988) points out that, despite the fact it is translated into English simply as “emptiness,” the Sanskrit word *sūnyatā* is more complex than it seems.

It comes from the root *śū*, which means ‘to swell’ in two senses: hollow or empty, and also full, like the womb of a pregnant woman. Both are implied in the Mahāyāna usage: the first denies any fixed self-nature to anything, the second implies that this is also fullness and limitless possibility, for lack of fixed characteristics allows the infinite diversity of impermanent phenomena. (p. 50)

This gives some insight into how emptiness (*sūnyatā*) relates to suchness (*tathatā*), which was described above as emptiness “phenomenalized, appearing in the form of physical things” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 220). In Mahāyāna Buddhism, both are different aspects of what Nakagawa (2000) calls “infinite reality” and “universal reality” (the former represents emptiness, and the latter includes both emptiness and suchness in its “twofold” aspect) and Thich Nhat Hanh (1999b) calls the “ground of being.” In other

words, emptiness and suchness together are the “true nature of the world... [in that it] is empty of all description and predication; and that even all the dharma-elements are empty of any self-existence because all ‘things’ are relative and conditioned by each other” (Loy, 1988, p. 51).

One can use Thich Nhat Hanh’s example of a sheet of paper, described above, to illustrate how “suchness” represents what Nakagawa calls the “returning path” of contemplation or a reconstruction of what emptiness has deconstructed. Although Nhat Hanh’s sheet of paper depends on causes and conditions for its phenomenal existence and, therefore, has no discrete existence independent of those causes and conditions or the things that it will cause and condition, the previous causes and conditions have resulted in the very real phenomenal manifestation of the sheet of paper *as such*. As Nakagawa (2000) points out, Dimension I, or the phenomenal, empirical dimension of reality, is as real as any of the other dimensions; it just reveals a single aspect of reality, as opposed to the whole of reality.

In Buddhist teaching, ‘emptiness’ refers to a basic openness and nonseparation that we experience when all small and fixed notions of our self are seen through or dissolved. We experience it when we see that our existence is transitory, that our body, heart, and mind arise out of the changing web of life, where nothing is disconnected or separate. The deepest experiences in meditation lead us to an intimate awareness of life’s essential openness and emptiness, of its everchanging and inpossessable nature, of its nature as an unstoppable process. (Kornfield, 1993, p. 51)

The ontological implications of this view of reality relate to the distinction between samsāra and nirvāna and the notions of ordinary and ultimate reality, introduced above. In short, nirvāna is reality viewed from the perspective of the fundamental interpenetration of all phenomena, or from the perspective of *paticca samuppāda*; conversely, samsāra is reality viewed from the perspective of phenomenal existence as it is ordinarily, or conventionally, understood (i.e., independent and discrete phenomena interacting with each other in accordance with mechanistic laws of physics). Thich Nhat Hanh (2001a) refers to nirvāna as the ultimate dimension or ultimate reality and samsāra as the historical dimension or relative reality.

In the historical dimension there are notions of birth and death, beginning and end, this and that, being and nonbeing. But in the ultimate dimension there is no birth and death, beginning and ending, being and nonbeing. The ultimate dimension cannot be described in words and notions that by their very nature serve to cut reality up into separate pieces. (p. 77-78)

Nhat Hanh (1998a) describes the difference between nirvāna, or ultimate reality, and samsāra, or relative reality, by using the analogy of waves and water. Waves are like phenomenal existence, representing the seemingly-separate nature of all phenomena; however, each wave is composed of water, which represents the “true nature” or “ground of being” of the waves, the ultimate reality in which all phenomena interpenetrate one another (p. 125). Furthermore, the distinction between nirvāna and samsāra is one of perception.

Liberation is the ability to go from the world of signs to the world of true nature.

We need the relative world of the wave, but we also need to touch the water, the

ground of our being, to have real peace and joy. We shouldn't allow relative truth to imprison us and keep us from touching absolute truth. Looking deeply into relative truth, we penetrate the absolute. Relative and absolute truths inter-embrace. Both truths, relative and absolute, have a value. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 125)<sup>60</sup>

### How the Dharma Addresses Ecological Suffering

There can be little doubt that the Earth is experiencing an ecological crisis. In the “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity,” “more than sixteen hundred senior scientists from seventy-one countries, including over half of all Nobel Prize winners” said,

Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about. (as quoted in Suzuki, 1997, p. 4)

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005a) characterizes this ecological crisis as an “auto-immune disease” on a planetary scale.

We could say that [human-caused global warming] is one symptom, and only one of many, of a kind of auto-immune disease of the earth, in that one aspect of

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<sup>60</sup> David Selby’s (1999) explanation of the wave/particle duality of quantum physics is comparable to the distinction between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. “We recognize, too, that we have both particle and wave aspects, the former giving us form, (permeable) boundaries and (some of) our identity, the latter giving us ‘unstructured potential’ with a ‘spreading out across the boundaries of space, time, choice, and identity’ (Zohar, 1994, p. 111)” (p. 129).



human activity is seriously undermining the overall dynamic balance of the body of the earth as a whole. (p. 5)

Moreover, this disease is caused by “the activity and the mind states of human beings” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 6).

Because individual life and environment are inseparable, the state of the environment is a reflection of the minds of the people who inhabit it.

Environmental degradation is thus a reflection of people’s ignorance of the true nature of life and the cosmos: the interrelatedness of all things. Actions based on ignorance of the interrelatedness of all phenomena result in a downward spiral of negativity. It gives rise to greed, which drives people to seek the fulfillment of their desires at the cost of others and to seek the destruction of a situation in which their own desires are frustrated. This greed goes beyond the individual level, creating economic disparities between people and countries on a global scale. The avarice of the industrialized nations has deprived people in developing countries of the conditions by which their basic needs can be met, and the greed of the human race is undermining the right of other living beings to exist.

Awareness of the fabric of relatedness, on the other hand, gives rise to the desire for mutually supportive coexistence with others and with the natural environment. (Paterson, 1996, p. 148)

“What is destroying our world is the persistent notion that we are independent of it, aloof from other species, and immune to what we do to them. Our survival, Naess says, requires shifting into more encompassing ideas of who we are” (Macy, 1991b, p. 13).

The historical Buddha often said that he taught only suffering and the end to suffering. Despite the simplicity of this statement, the Dharma has comprehensive application to the present ecological crisis, and that application is rooted in the teaching of *paticca samuppāda*. The “environment” is suffering, or experiencing an “unsatisfactory” state of affairs (i.e., *dukkha*, or the First Noble Truth), and part of the reason that it is suffering is because humans perceive themselves as being separate from their environment, entitled to act upon it as a constellation of phenomena with an ontological existence that is separate from that of humanity. Through the lens of *paticca samuppāda*, we see that this is not true, and concern for the “environment” arises naturally. As the Venerable Sunyana Graef, Sensei (1990), puts it, “Once we discover the unreality of the ego-I, we no longer relate to the world from an individual, self-centred perspective, but rather from a universal perspective. This is the *weltanschauung* of a true ecologist” (p. 46).

The Buddhist does not believe that the trees, the water, the stars, and the great wide earth possess a divinity obtained through God’s process of creation. Rather, he or she is convinced that the essence of the universe is none other than divine perfection itself, in a word, Buddha. This understanding, grounded in an awareness of the interdependent relationship of all existence, spontaneously gives rise to feelings of profound intimacy, universal compassion, and responsibility for the natural world. (Graef, 1990, p. 47)

Just as Thich Nhat Hanh used water and waves as a metaphor for *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*, the Venerable Sunyana Graef (1990) uses a similar analogy to illustrate “the foundations of ecology” in Zen Buddhism.

When a massive oil spill threatens the ocean could a single wave stand aloof, acting as if it alone were unpolluted, or work only to cleanse itself? No, the wave and the ocean work as one, for in reality, they are one. What affects the ocean, affects the wave. Just so, what affects the universe, affects each of us, since we and the universe are not two. Therefore, in a person of wisdom, compassionate concern for the world will instinctively arise. The expression of this universal compassion is ecology. (p. 50)

#### Conclusion: Implications for Teaching and Learning

The Dharma has profound and wide-reaching implications for teaching and learning. In order to have the knowledge, capacity, and inclination to act in ways that are consistent with their profound interdependence with all people and all things, students need to learn knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to this interrelationship and which facilitate a beneficial and wholesome relationship with it. Moreover, because of their interconnection with all things and the causal relationship between their actions (or inaction) and the condition of all things (and the condition of all things and their own personal circumstances), students need to learn how to engage with the world in beneficial and wholesome ways. Students need an educational approach that will encourage them “to do something about the suffering that they see in the world” (McLeod, 2003, p. 52). Students need to be taught “how to shape the future through their actions in the present moment” in ways that can positively impact and transform the world that they experience such a profound interdependence with (McLeod, 2003, p. 52).

Such an approach to education aspires to “create a culture of bodhisattvas who see the relationship between their well-being as individuals and their character and actions as

these things relate to the well-being of the planet” and other people (McLeod, 2003, p. 52). Moreover, for any educational approach to be successful in creating this “culture of bodhisattvas,” it will need to go beyond strictly rational and empirical approaches (rooted in the “footnotes to Plato” of the Western *Weltanschauung*) to developing knowledge, meaning, and understanding; to do this, it needs to embody and utilize suprarational and contemplative approaches to teaching and learning, such as mindfulness, in order to foster and facilitate in students the development of understanding, insight into, and awareness of the truths represented by the Dharma.

## CHAPTER 4: BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY: CULTIVATING WHOLESOME AND SKILLFUL MIND AND HEART STATES

The tradition of Buddhism is deeply rooted in what we in the West have come to call “psychology.” Psychology can be defined as “‘the science of mind and behavior,’ and this is a subject to which Buddhist thought can have a significant contribution” (Olendzi, 2003, p. 9).<sup>61</sup>

The broad outline of early Buddhist theoretical psychology was remarkably similar to how we might frame the issue today: an organism, comprised of both physical and mental factors and processes, lives in a dynamic equilibrium with its environment, both shaping and being shaped by that environment as a response to various internal and external sets of conditions. The psychophysical organism has the ability to perceive or ‘know’ its environment to various levels of accuracy, through mediating systems of sensory representation, as well as the capacity to respond and act with varying amounts of autonomy. (Olendzki, 2003, p. 11)

At its heart, Buddhism is foundationally concerned with the cessation or abandoning of *dukkha* (a Pāli word discussed in Chapter 1 and commonly translated as “suffering” or “unsatisfactoriness”), and the embracing and cultivation of loving-friendliness, generosity, and wisdom as primary motivations for thought and behaviour. “Buddhism is fundamentally concerned with identifying the inner causes of human suffering, the possibility of freedom from suffering, and the means to realize such freedom” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 690). According to the Dharma, the identification of these things has the potential to lead to liberation from *dukkha* and the experience of

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<sup>61</sup> “Thus, [Buddhism] can be relevant to philosophical and psychological theory and practice because of its intensive exploration of the mind and its psychological methods to cultivate sustained well-being” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 690).

peace, joy, and happiness. The Dharma is fundamentally concerned with the way that the present condition of the mind relates to previous causes and conditions and how future mind and heart states can be influenced by the individual through his or her thoughts, speech, and actions in the present. The Four Noble Truths, the foundational teaching of Buddhism, articulate the basic insight of the Dharma that unwholesome and unskillful mind and heart states lead to dukkha, while wholesome and skillful thought, speech, and action lead to mind and heart states that have the potential to liberate one from dukkha.

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on two “therapeutic” aspects of Buddhist psychology. The first is the practice of reconciling one’s perceptions and aspirations with the nature of reality, which is characterized by impermanence and therefore a profound interdependence with all phenomena, and the second involves the cultivation and fostering of wholesome or skillful states of mind and the avoidance and overcoming of unwholesome or unskillful states of mind. The former involves seeing things as they are by recognizing and accepting the impermanent and transitory nature of all experience and consciously and diligently working to make one’s perceptions compatible with reality. The latter involves an aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path called “right effort;” right effort is described by the Buddha in the *Saccavibhanga Sutta* as follows.

‘And what, friends, is right effort? Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives.<sup>62</sup> He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil, unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and

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<sup>62</sup> “Bhikkhu” means Buddhist monk. In this passage, the Buddha refers to right effort in the context of a monk’s actions, because this sutta, or discourse, was presented to a group of monks.

strives. He awakens zeal for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, [252]<sup>63</sup> and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called right effort.’ (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100)

Interestingly, the word that the Buddha used to describe what we think of as meditation practice – *bhāvanā* – means “cultivation,” not meditation. “It is significant that the Pāli word for Meditation, *bhavana*, etymologically means ‘development’ or ‘cultivation’” (de Silva, 1990, Personal Development and Meditation ¶1). According to the Dharma, one can be trained to develop and strengthen both of the aspects of Buddhist practice described above; therefore, these “psychological skills” can be learned and taught. “Thus the skills gained through mindful awareness of experience naturally flow into the skillful execution of behavior. Well-being, itself, it turns out, is a skill that can be learned” (Olendzki, 2003, p. 26). Moreover, this understanding of the mind provides the foundation for a model of teaching and learning that has the potential to facilitate in students the development and cultivation of wholesome mind and heart states and the prevention and abandonment of unwholesome mind and heart states. Therefore, educational practice has the potential to facilitate the cultivation of psychological well-being and the liberation from suffering.

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<sup>63</sup> The number in brackets here - 252 (as do all numbers in brackets embedded in quotations from the Pāli Canon) - refers to the page number of the Pāli Text Society (PTS) edition of the doctrinal text, in this case, the Majjhima Nikāya (i.e., at that point in the text in the PTS edition, a new page starts). Such numbers appear in the text from which this quote is taken (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995).

## The Four Noble Truths

The central formulation of the Dharma is the Four Noble Truths. In the Buddha's words, the Four Noble Truths are, ““This is suffering. This is the origin of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering”” (Bodhi, 2005, p. 66). According to Ken McLeod (2001), the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism “seem a bit enigmatic” (p. 23). However, as he also says,

They are, in fact, based upon a simple problem-solving model, a model that dates far back in Indian philosophy and medicine.

- What is the problem?
- What is the root of the problem?
- Is there a solution?
- How do you put the solution into effect? (p. 23)

### The First Noble Truth

In his first discourse, the Buddha described the First Noble Truth in this way, ‘Now this, monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates [form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness] subject to clinging are suffering.’ (Bodhi, 2005, p. 76)

The First Noble Truth of suffering, or *dukkha*, refers to the fact that it is part of the human condition to experience unsatisfactoriness or suffering. “The First Noble Truth is the simple fact that we experience dissatisfaction, or discontent, or suffering, or



sorrow” (Sumedho, 1995, p. 16). “Suffering is the central problem of human experience” (McLeod, 2001, p. 24). Therefore, it is important to understand it. As Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) puts it, “We have to recognize and acknowledge the presence of this suffering and touch it” (p. 9). The First Noble Truth of dukkha, suffering, or unsatisfactoriness has profound psychological implications. As the Second Noble Truth articulates, suffering has an origin, but it also leads, itself, to further unwholesome and unskillful mind and heart states, speech, and behaviour. One might say that suffering is the opposite of happiness and well-being. It is the fundamental problem that the Buddha sought to address with his teachings, and the Four Noble Truths articulate the therapeutic platform that the Buddha proposed to address suffering.

#### The Second Noble Truth

...for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so...

- Hamlet in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act 2, Scene 2 (Shakespeare, 1999, p. 161).

In his first discourse, the Buddha said this about the Second Noble Truth, ‘Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving that leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.’ (Bodhi, 2005, p. 76)

The Second Noble Truth – the origin of suffering – describes how suffering arises. According to the Buddha, suffering arises from desire and craving or, as Ken McLeod (2001) puts it, “emotional reactivity” (p. 25). It is crucial to understand that suffering “is an arising condition” (Sumedho, 1995, p. 18). In other words, suffering is

conditional, not absolute; it arises as a result of causes and conditions. Suffering arises when one doesn't get what one wants or when one wishes for things to be other than as they are. For instance, because all conditioned things are impermanent and transitory, things change; therefore, suffering arises when one wants things not to change. If one experiences a pleasant state of affairs, one wants it to last, and when that state inevitably changes, one experiences suffering as a result of attachment or clinging to the now-changed and no-longer-existing pleasant state of affairs. Sometimes, the thing that one loses as a result of impermanence is relatively unimportant, as is the case when one's milk spoils; however, at other times, the thing that one loses is profound, as is the case with one's own death or the loss of a loved one.

A fundamental insight of Buddhism is the recognition of the fluctuating, impermanent nature of all phenomena that arise in dependence on preceding causes and contributing conditions (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995). Mistakenly grasping objective things and events as true sources of happiness produces a wide range of psychological problems, at the root of which is the reification of oneself as an immutable, unitary, independent ego (Ricard, 2006). (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 691)

One craves things that one likes (e.g., fresh milk and life), and one feels aversion for things that one doesn't like (e.g., spoiled milk and death). Aversion is essentially craving for things to be different; when one is averse to an experience, like physical pain, one wants to be free of that experience (e.g., pain free). Essentially, we suffer, because we want things to be different from the way that they are; our expectations and desires are not compatible with the way things are. This is what Ken McLeod means by

“emotional reactivity;” we experience mind and heart states as a result of our reactions to things that happen, and these mind and heart states add to our suffering. As Mark Twain (2007) once said, “I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.” Often, our expectations and aspirations are not attuned to reality, because we are ignorant about the way things are, and we suffer from delusions.

A central delusion that causes craving, and therefore dukkha, is the delusion of a permanent, everlasting self, separate and discrete from other phenomena. “We also create ‘things’ and ‘persons’ out of the flux of phenomena by creating certain artificial and arbitrary boundaries between ‘this’ and ‘that’ and between ‘self’ and ‘other.’ That is to say, we construct the idea of self from a milieu that is inherently without self” (Olendzki, 2003, p. 19).<sup>64</sup>

Once an object is perceived, there is initial application of thought to it, followed by papanca--which in this context is best taken to mean a tendency to proliferation of ideas. As a result, the person is no longer the perceiver who is in control, but one who is assailed by concepts generated by this prolific tendency. He is overwhelmed by concepts and linguistic conventions. One’s perception is, in this way, open to distortion and elaboration due to the spontaneous proliferation of thoughts. This proliferation is said to be linked to tanha (craving), mana (conceit) and ditthi (dogma, or rigidly held views) (Maha Niddesa, I, 19161917). They are all bound up with the notions of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ This marks the intrusion of the ego into the field of sense perception. In Buddhist psychology, there is no self (atta; Sanskrit atman), but the delusion of self affects all one’s behaviors (Sutta Nipata, 1913).

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<sup>64</sup> This delusion and its relationship to the Buddhist concept of no-self is discussed in Chapter 2.

One of the aims of personal development is to enable oneself to see reality as it is, without the essential distortions arising from the various factors that characterize the unenlightened person's functioning. A major aspect of reaching the state of arahant [or enlightened practitioner] is indeed the freeing of one's perceptions from these distorting influences. When one reaches a state of perfection, one's perceptions become free of such distortions, and allow a direct appraisal of the objects. (de Silva, 1990, Perception and Cognition ¶5-6)

Such a direct appraisal of objects and experience reveals that nothing is permanent. On an ontological level, we are composed of "five interdependent categories of phenomena called aggregates" (Olendzki, 2003, p. 20).

The aggregates are: a physical or *material* dimension to all experience that supports, nourishes, and molds the mental dimensions; the episode of awareness or *consciousness* through which each moment's experience manifests and knowing takes place; a *perception* or cognitive content by means of which we discern the qualities and features of any experiential object; a *feeling* or affect tone that is either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; and a more complex function the Buddhists call *formations*, which have to do with the manifestation of various conative patterns in the construction process: patterns of intention and action, and of the dispositions that are shaped by these over time. (Olendzki, 2003, p. 20)

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is nothing permanent, discrete, and independent in any of the five aggregates or their various combinations; therefore, being composed of a constantly changing combination of the five aggregates at any time, an individual is

ontologically impermanent.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, on an experiential level, “our experience is constantly changing. We experience ourselves and our world as a parade of phenomena arising and passing away, one after another, in a seemingly perpetual flow” (Olendzki, 2003, p. 18). Contemplative awareness of this nature of experience gives one insight into the true nature of reality and being. From this fertile soil springs the Third Noble Truth.

### The Third Noble Truth

In his first discourse, the Buddha described the Third Noble Truth as follows,

‘Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonattachment.’ (Bodhi, 2005, p. 76)

Because the Four Noble Truths concern themselves with suffering, many people assume that Buddhism is essentially pessimistic. However, the Third Noble Truth promises that there can be a cessation of suffering. The Buddha often said, “I teach one thing and one thing only, suffering and the end of suffering” (McLeod, 2001, p. 23). “The Buddha did not deny the existence of suffering, but he also did not deny the existence of joy and happiness... The Third Truth is that healing is possible” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 11).

The cessation of suffering is liberation or freedom from the craving, clinging, and aversion that cause suffering. “When we have knowledge of cessation, we begin to endure through some of these different desires, rather than just reacting habitually to them or impulsively following them. We are less attached to the desires, less invested in satisfying them. We let them cease naturally” (Sumedho, 1995, p. 20). “The goal of

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<sup>65</sup> At any moment in time, an individual is merely composed of some combination of the five aggregates, but that combination, or state of being, is constantly changing. This is compared to David Hume’s (1739/1978) “bundle theory” in Chapter 2.

Buddhist practice is the realization of a state of well-being that is not contingent on the presence of pleasurable stimuli, either external or internal (Wallace, 1999)” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 691). Put simply, the Third Noble Truth is being happy with things as they are.

#### The Fourth Noble Truth

In his first discourse, the Buddha said,

‘Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.’ (Bodhi, 2005, p. 76)

The Fourth Noble Truth describes the Noble Eightfold Path – a set of skills that one can cultivate in order to transform dukkha into mental or psychological well-being. In fact, the Pāli word translated as “right” in the above formulation – *sammā* – can also be translated as “skillful.”

The word *right* (*sammā*) used to qualify each factor of the path does not imply moral judgments concerning sin and guilt, or arbitrary standards imposed externally. The path is neither hierarchical nor prescriptive, as the Buddha does not dictate what is right or wrong. Instead, he speaks of skillful (wholesome) or unskillful (unwholesome) actions, and explains that the path merely serves as a guideline or ‘raft’ for helping people take personal responsibility (Majjhima

Nikaya, 1.260, Treasure of the Dhamma, 1994, p. 69). (Khong, 2003, p. 63-64)<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> “The Pali word for ‘Right’ is *samma* and the Sanskrit word is *samyak*. It is an adverb meaning ‘in the right way,’ ‘straight,’ or ‘upright, not bent or crooked” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 11). Bhante Henepola Gunaratana translates the word as “skillful” (2001, p. 11).

The Noble Eightfold Path will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5; suffice it to say here that the Noble Eightfold Path has three aspects. Each of the eight steps of the Noble Eightfold Path can be categorized as morality, concentration, or wisdom (Gunaratana, 2001). The Noble Eightfold Path works like a “spiral.” “Morality, concentration, and wisdom reinforce and deepen each other. Each of the eight steps on the path deepens and reinforces the others” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 12).

#### Causation and Psychology: Skillful States vs. Unskillful States

“The basis of Buddhist morality is that acting in unskillful ways leads to unhappy results, and acting in skillful ways leads to happy results. This simple cause and effect is an aspect of what Buddhists call kamma (or karma)” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 27).

The third reflection that turns our minds towards the Dharma is the understanding that everything we do has an effect – *all of our actions have consequences*. In the Buddha’s teaching this is called the law of karma, the understanding that we are the heirs of our own actions. It is referred to as ‘the light of the world,’ because it illuminates how our lives unfold and why many things are the way they are.

Understanding karma is the key to understanding happiness.

Put simply, actions bring results. (Goldstein, 2002, p. 36)

In “Buddhist Psychology,” Andrew Olendzki (2003) describes this process in detail,

How we construct any moment’s experience, how we see and hear and think and react to anything in the environment, is going to be conditioned by a very complex network of causal influences. Some of these conditions are going to come from the past: how we were raised, what language we have learned, what

mistakes we have made, and so forth. All of these details are combining to influence who we are in the present moment. Some of the conditioning factors are going to be embedded in present circumstances: the mood that we are in, the temperature of the room, the arising of a certain object of experience rather than another. Every situation is unique, and so much of what makes up the fabric of our lives consists of responses to changing circumstances in the environment. And much of how we construct reality is also going to have some influence on the future: the attitudes and assumptions we bring to this moment effect [*sic*] the unfolding of phenomena for ourselves and others in the next moment, and the decisions and actions we take influence the causal chain of events leading to how the future will unfold for us. Not only will each successive moment of the mind be influenced by the immediately preceding moment, but sometimes apparently minor elements of present experience can plant seeds that come to fruition a long time from now. So the construction process that is happening at any given moment has causal influences from the past, from the present, and it influences the future as well. (pp. 17-18)

Volitional thoughts are a form of action, and they lead to results; in particular, they cause and condition thoughts, emotions, motivations, and intentions cut from the same cloth.<sup>67</sup> The Dharma defines the three roots of unwholesome or unskillful mind and heart states – or *akusalamūla* – as greed, hatred, and delusion (the last of which is

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<sup>67</sup> This helps to account for the delusional construction of discrete identity or selfhood. Since our choices in the present are influenced by the conditions created by previous behaviour, there arises an appearance of continuity to the pattern of our human personality. However, when one is able to perceive the nature of causation in the context of human behaviour without distortion, “A process model of human personality and behavior emerges that allows for both a level of free will and a level of determinism, and which construes identity as a constantly changing pattern of activities and strategies rather than as a substantive entity” (Olendzki, 2003, p. 22).



sometimes referred to as “ignorance”). Conversely, the three roots of wholesome or skillful mind and heart states – kusalamūla – are non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, or, stated in positive terms, generosity, love, and wisdom.<sup>68</sup> The three roots of wholesome or skillful mind and heart states are often stated negatively, because “happiness consists of what is not experienced. The third truth teaches us that happiness is wiping out all negative states of mind – all desire, all hatred, all ignorance” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 47).

According to Thich Nhat Hanh (2001a), drawing from the Yogachara, or Yogācāra, School of Buddhism, there is a store consciousness (or storehouse consciousness) that stores “seeds” (*bijas*) of our experiences and of potential mind and heart states. “Our mind is a field in which every kind of seed is sown – seeds of compassion, joy, and hope, seeds of sorrow, fear, and difficulties. Every day, our thoughts, words, and deeds plant new seeds in the field of our consciousness, and what these seeds generate becomes the substance of our life” (p. 21). “Every time we water one of [the seeds buried deep in our consciousness] or allow it to be watered by someone else, that seed will manifest and become a mental formation [a translation of *samskāra*, meaning thoughts, emotions, volitions, and intentions that result from causes and

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<sup>68</sup> “Buddhism identifies three factors that lead to unwholesome, or undesirable, behaviors. These are: raga (passion or lust); dosa (hatred or malice); and moha (delusion, or false belief) (e.g., Anguttara Nikaya, I, II, 1922-1938). All unwholesome action is seen as deriving from a set of fundamental roots. In fact, the texts explicitly refer to these as ‘roots’ (mula). They are called akusalamulas--for example, unwholesome or unprofitable roots” (de Silva, 1990, Motivation ¶3).

“Motives for good, or wholesome, action are usually expressed in negative terms. The most consistent account is the one which gives araga (non-passion, or absence of passion), adosa (non-hatred or absence of hatred) and amoha (non-delusion, or absence of delusion) as the roots of good action--the opposites of the roots of unwholesome behaviours (Anguttara Nikaya, I). Occasionally, they are described in clearly positive terms--as caga (renunciation), metta (loving kindness) and panna (wisdom, understanding) (Anguttara Nikaya, III). It is stated that one must strive to develop these in order to combat their opposites” (de Silva, 1990, Motivation ¶5).

conditions]. We have to be careful about which seeds we and others water” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 181).

There are both wholesome and unwholesome seeds in our mind-field, sown by ourselves and our parents, *schooling*, ancestors, and society. If you plant wheat, wheat will grow. If you act in a wholesome way, you will be happy. If you act in an unwholesome way, you will water seeds of craving, anger, and violence in yourself and others. The practice of mindfulness helps us identify all the seeds in our consciousness and with that knowledge we can choose to water only the ones that are the most beneficial. As we cultivate the seeds of joy and transform seeds of suffering in ourselves, understanding, love, and compassion will flower. (Nhat Hanh, 2001a, p. 21, emphasis mine)

The gardening or agricultural metaphor implicit in the notion that experienced mind and heart states come from “seeds” makes the relevance of the meaning of *bhāvāna* – cultivation – clear. We have the ability to cultivate skillful mind and heart states and to abandon unskillful mind and heart states, or as Thich Nhat Hanh puts it, transform them into skillful ones. By doing so, we create conditions favourable for the development of happiness and psychological well-being. “Skillful actions are those that create the causes of happiness, such as actions motivated by loving-friendliness and compassion. Any action that comes from a mind not currently filled with greed, hatred, or delusion brings happiness to the doer and the receiver. Such an action is, therefore, skillful and right” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 28).

The notion of “habit energy” comes from the Dharma’s fundamental understanding of causation (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 61). The more one experiences

particular mind and heart states, the more likely one will be to experience them in the future. “When a seed manifests in our mind consciousness [experiential consciousness], it returns to the storehouse stronger. The quality of our life depends on the quality of the seeds in our store consciousness” (Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 25).

We get in the habit of thinking of ourselves as a particular person with particular views, and we become accustomed to regarding the world in certain ways that have been learned and remembered. All of our subsequent experience unfolds within an often very narrow habitual range that has been defined by these views or beliefs. (Olendzki, 2003, p. 19)

This is one aspect of the Buddhist understanding of causation or karma; the more we experience particular mind and heart states, the more they are likely to manifest. Put simply, our mind and heart states in the past have caused and conditioned our mind and heart states in the present, and our mind and heart states in the present cause and condition our future mind and heart states. “The volitional choices that we make in any instance will be heavily influenced by the dispositions remaining from previous actions, and will further mold our dispositions for the future” (Olendzki, 2003, p. 22). This has particular relevance for teaching and learning, since the pedagogical environments that teachers help to create have the potential to facilitate the cultivation of particular mind and heart states. Since teachers coordinate teaching and learning environments, they have the ability to create environments that cultivate skillful mind and heart states or unskillful mind and heart states.

### Liberation from Suffering

Padmal de Silva (1990) summarizes the benefits of Buddhist meditation practice as follows,

The practical implications of the claims made in Buddhism for meditation are quite clear. The meditative experiences of both types [samatha, or concentration meditation, and vipassanā, or insight meditation], when properly carried out and developed, are claimed to lead to greater ability to concentrate, greater freedom from distraction, greater tolerance of change and turmoil around oneself, and sharper awareness and greater alertness about one's own responses, both physical and mental. They would also lead, more generally, to greater calmness or tranquility. While the ultimate goal of perfection will require a long series of regular training periods of systematic meditation coupled with major restraint in one's conduct, the more mundane benefits of meditation should be available to all serious and persisting practitioners.

From an applied perspective, Buddhist meditation techniques may be seen as an instrument for achieving certain psychological benefits. Primarily, meditation would have a role as a stress-reduction strategy, comparable to the more modern techniques of relaxation. There is a substantial literature in present day clinical psychology and psychiatry which shows that meditation can produce beneficial effects in this way (Carrington, 1984, 1987; Kwee, 1990; Shapiro, 1982; West, 1987). Studies of the physiological changes that accompany meditation have shown several changes to occur which, together, indicate a state of calmness or relaxation (Woolfolk, 1975). These include: reduction in oxygen

consumption, lowered heart rate, decreased breathing rate and blood pressure, reduction in serum lactic acid levels, and increased skin resistance and changes in blood flow. These peripheral changes are generally compatible with decreased arousal in the sympathetic nervous system. There are also certain central changes, as shown by brain wave patterns. The amalgam of these physiological changes related to meditation has been called ‘the relaxation response’ by some authors (Benson, 1975). (Benefits of Meditation ¶1-2)

In “Mental Balance and Well-Being: Building Bridges Between Buddhism and Western Psychology,” B. Alan Wallace and Shauna L. Shapiro (2006) outline a heuristic model of mental or psychological well-being that hinges on what they call “mental balance.”

Although mental suffering is often catalyzed by environmental and social influences and it presumably always has neural correlates (Ryff & Singer, 1998), such suffering can often be traced to subjectively experienced mental imbalances. Buddhism suggests that many of them can be remedied through skillful, sustained mental training (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000). (p. 693)

Although they created their model to catalyze “mutual enrichment” of theory and practice between Western psychology and Buddhism, it is rooted in the Dharma (p. 699). They describe four aspects of mental balance: conative balance, attentional balance, cognitive balance, and affective balance. “The four components of the model were chosen because we believe they encapsulate the major processes involved in training the mind to achieve exceptional levels of health and well-being” (p. 693).

### Conative Balance

This aspect of the model refers to creating balance in terms of intention and volition, or *conation*. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) define “conative balance” as “a reality-based range of desires and aspirations oriented toward one’s own and others’ happiness” (p. 694). They conceptualize the terms “wholesome” and “unwholesome,” discussed above, as referring to “those forms of physical, verbal, and mental behavior that are, respectively, conducive to and detrimental to one’s own and others’ well-being” (p. 694). They explicitly articulate the connection between one’s own well-being and that of others, because, according to them, “It is crucial to recognize that individual psychological flourishing is not something that can be cultivated while ignoring the well-being of others. People do not exist independently from others, so their well-being cannot arise independently from others either” (p. 694).

The result of such conative balance is a decrease in interest in achieving an excess of such things as sensual pleasures, material acquisitions, and social status and a growing commitment to leading a meaningful and deeply satisfying life, qualified by a growing sense of well-being, understanding, and virtue. (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 695)

### Attentional Balance

This aspect of the model refers to developing sustained, voluntary attention, because such attentional balance “is a crucial feature of mental health and optimal performance in any kind of meaningful activity” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 695). To achieve attentional balance and overcome imbalances such as attentional deficit, hyperactivity, and dysfunction, one can cultivate *mindfulness*, defined by the authors as

“sustained, voluntary attention continuously focused on a familiar object, without forgetfulness or distraction (Asanga, 2001, p. 9; Buddhaghosa, 1979, p. 524; Gethin, 2001, pp. 36-44)”<sup>69</sup> and *meta-attention*, defined by the authors as “the ability to monitor the state of the mind, swiftly recognizing whether one’s attention has succumbed to either excitation or laxity (Ñanamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 975)” (p. 695).

### Cognitive Balance

This aspect of the model refers to “engaging in the world of experience without imposing conceptual assumptions and ideas on events and thereby misapprehending or distorting them. It therefore involves being calmly and clearly present with experience as it arises moment by moment” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 696). Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) tells the Buddhist story of a man who, because of his inability to see reality in such an undistorted fashion, sees a rope on the ground in the dark and thinks that it is a snake. This misperception causes the man unnecessary suffering that could have been avoided with cognitive balance.

In similar ways, people may mistake the emotions, attitudes, and intentions of other people because of a failure of clear attention, compounded by unconscious projections of their own hopes and fears.

Overcoming such cognitive imbalances is a central theme in Buddhist practice, where one of the primary interventions is the application of discerning mindfulness to whatever arises from moment to moment. The faculty of mindfulness, as previously defined, is initially cultivated as a means to overcome

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<sup>69</sup> I define “mindfulness,” for the purposes of this thesis, in Chapter 3 and explore it in further depth in Chapter 5.

attentional imbalances, and it is then applied to daily experience in order to achieve cognitive balance (Gunaratana, 1991). (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 697)

### Affective Balance

Wallace and Shapiro (2006) define “affective balance” as “a freedom from excessive emotional vacillation, emotional apathy, and inappropriate emotions” (p. 698). In short, affective balance describes the ability, as much as possible, to cultivate wholesome and skillful emotions that lead to well-being and to abandon unwholesome and unskillful emotions that lead to ill-health.<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusion: Implications for Teaching and Learning

Teaching is one of the most important jobs that one can do. Teachers have the opportunity to impact their students in profound ways, for good or ill. Through their interactions with students and their approach to teaching, they can cultivate thoughts, emotions, and intentions rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, like fear, anger, competition, and social apathy, or they can cultivate in themselves and their students thoughts, emotions, and intentions rooted in generosity, love, and wisdom, like happiness, peace, joy, compassion, kindness, cooperation, and social action. Buddhist insights into psychology, and the practical ethical framework that springs from those insights, hold much promise for informing the practice of classroom teachers and providing a foundation for their approach to teaching children the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to be generous, loving, wise, compassionate, joyful, and peaceful citizens, skillfully working to transform their own suffering and the suffering of others.

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<sup>70</sup> Wallace and Shapiro discuss how the four *brahmaviharas* can be used to “counter affective imbalance,” and this practice is discussed in Chapter 5.



## CHAPTER 5: BUDDHIST ETHICS AND PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING “I-THOU” IN ENCOUNTERS WITH REALITY

### Introductory Note

I wrote this chapter in an aphoristic style reminiscent of Nietzsche (1886/2002) in *Beyond Good and Evil*. There are two reasons for this.

First, I want to put the onus on the reader to create his or her own meaning from the text as I put meaning into it, thereby drawing the reader into an active process of creating knowledge from the ground up rather than receiving information from the text. Not only is this possible, but, looked at from a certain perspective (which will be presented in Chapter 6), this is the only way that authentic knowledge can be generated by a reader, as opposed to a situation where a reader simply and uncritically absorbs information transmitted by a text.<sup>71</sup> One can experience the generation of authentic, personal knowledge reading difficult and challenging texts, like *Beyond Good and Evil* and Buber’s (1970/1996) *I and Thou*, which “express” (or indicate) ineffable notions and are not “interpretable” strictly on the basis of the words printed on the page (one can also experience the generation of such authentic, personal knowledge by critically reading or deconstructing less sophisticated and more straightforward texts). Below, as in such texts, I have purposefully created liminal spaces, from which part of the meaning of the text is meant to originate. As with the essays in Derrida’s (1967/1978) *Writing and Difference*,

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<sup>71</sup> I use the word “text” here in a broad way, which includes not only written passages, books, and articles, but also social situations and interactions. Thus, any interaction between teacher and student can be seen as a “text.”

the passages here “are less ‘bound’ than ‘basted’ [sewn on the outside in a way that does not bind the textile tightly] together” (p. xiii).

Second, this style is meant to illustrate the possibility of the kind of dialogical relationship (in this case, between writer and reader) that Chapter 6 will describe and Chapter 7 will advocate. To summarize the essence of that dialogical relationship, real learning happens in the spaces between teachers and learners (and writers and readers); Chapter 6 will elaborate upon this claim, which is based upon the ideas of Martin Buber (1970/1996, Hodes, 1972, and Murphy, 1988) and Paulo Freire (1970/1997). Essentially, Freire (1970/1997) argues that real learning (i.e., learning that transcends ideology and hegemony and upon which emancipation can be founded) occurs through a dialogical process of problem posing, where meaning is made in a space that Buber calls the “sphere of ‘between’” (Hodes, 1972, p. 72) or the “narrow ridge” (Hodes, 1972, p. 70).

The subtitles used in this chapter pay homage and “refer” to Nietzsche’s (1886/2002) use of numbered subtitles in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The sections relating to factors of the Noble Eightfold Path correspond to natural numbers (i.e., 1-8), so the chapter starts with negative integers to discuss the “problem” posed by duality (i.e., existential separation) that the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path address. The section which discusses non-duality is headed with the number 0 (which represents an absence of value), because it seems appropriate to connect the absence of relative value to a notion representing the interpenetration of all things. This progression, on a positive vector, towards zero from a negative value, followed by a progression, still on a positive vector, into higher positive values, reflects what Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) calls the “twofold movement of seeking and returning in contemplation,” (p. 33) discussed in Chapter 3 and

reflected poetically by the first aphorism of the present chapter (which begins the Prelude).

Interestingly, Toshihiko Izutsu calls the dimension where “Consciousness” corresponds identically with “Non-Being” (i.e., an absolutely subjective perspective characterized by an awareness of emptiness or non-duality) “the ultimate *Zero Point* of Consciousness and Existence” (as quoted in Nakagawa, 2000, p. 27, emphasis mine) which corresponds nicely with the numbering arrangement I utilize here. The section discussing the spiral-like and interconnected nature of the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path is headed with the symbol for infinity; this illustrates that it is the path that matters, not the destination. As Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005a) says, “Meditation is a way of being, not a technique” (p. 58).

This chapter is mostly composed of the words of others, with many long quotations, and there are two reasons for this. First, this chapter is meant to be a “mosaic” of different voices in order to create the liminal spaces where the reader can find meaning. Second, the Noble Eightfold Path is part of a 2,500-year-old tradition, not something that I have conceptualized on my own; I do articulate some insights related to Buddhist practice (including a description of the notion of “mindful, communicative kindness”), and my voice is one of the voices included in the mosaic. Since I am appealing to the authority of a very vibrant, living tradition of practice, being original seems trivial, and I quote others extensively. Some “mystery” adheres to the liminality and transitions between quotes, and I purposely designed this mystery to invite the reader into those spaces in order to make real meaning (thus solving the mystery).

After all, the Dharma can’t be understood using mere words.

A special transmission outside the scriptures;  
 No dependence upon words and letters;  
 Direct pointing at the soul of man;  
 Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood. (Barrett,  
 1996, p. 61)

### Prelude

“Before you study Zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers; while you are studying Zen, mountains are no longer mountains and rivers are no longer rivers; but once you have had enlightenment, mountains are once again mountains and rivers again rivers” (Capra, 1977, pp. 110-111).

All of life can be interpreted as an encounter with the Other.<sup>72</sup> Whether speaking respectfully to a cherished friend, shouting in a fit of road rage, breathing oxygen-rich air into one's lungs, or driving a car emitting toxins into the fragile atmosphere, we live our lives in constant encounter with that which is “not I, not me, not mine”<sup>73</sup> – the Other. Where one draws the line between Self and Other (i.e., how one understands what *is* “not I, not me, not mine”), how one understands the solidity of that line, and how one negotiates the relationship between these two seemingly ontologically separate poles is a matter of ethics and practice. This negotiation is a matter of praxis, in the sense that it involves both reflection and action informed by that reflection.

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<sup>72</sup> According to Martin Buber (1970/1996), “All actual life is encounter” (p. 62).

<sup>73</sup> “Not I, not me, not mine” is an example of an articulation of the Buddhist concept of no-self. “Nothing is to be clung to as I, me, or mine” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 53).

## Part I The Problem of Separation and Alienation

-6

What we call the Western tradition is formed by two major influences, Hebraic and Greek, and both of these influences are profoundly dualistic in spirit. That is, they divide reality into two parts and set one part off against the other. The Hebrew makes this division on religious and moral grounds: God absolutely transcends the world, is absolutely separate from it; hence there follow the dualisms of God and creature, the Law and the erring members, spirit and flesh. The Greek, on the other hand, divides reality along intellectual lines. Plato, who virtually founded Western philosophy – Whitehead has remarked that 2500 years of Western philosophy is but a series of footnotes to Plato – absolutely cleaves reality into the world of the intellect and the world of the senses. (Barrett, 1996, p. ix)

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Consider the binary oppositions that Derrida (1967/1973, 1967/1976, and 1967/1978) observed in Western reason: “signifier/signified, sensible/intelligible, speech/writing, speech (*parole*)/language (*langue*), diachrony/synchrony, space/time, passivity/activity... matter/spirit, subject/object, veil/truth, body/soul, text/meaning, interior/exterior, relationship/presence, appearance/essence, etc.” (Sarup, 1989, p. 41).

Add to these others such as order/chaos, law/anarchy, light/dark, masculine/feminine, logical/hysterical, individual/community, empirical/rational, hard-working/lazy, free-will/determinism, conservative/liberal, civilized/primitive, and right/wrong.<sup>74</sup>

Everywhere the Western eye looks, it sees through the dualistic lens of dichotomy, separation, and exclusion (as well as judgment, which allows for the privileging and elevation of one pole over another). One could say that, beyond cleaving, Whitehead's (1929/1969) "footnotes to Plato" (p. 53) have torn reality asunder, and along more lines than the distinction between the intellect and the senses. When one reads existentialist writers, it becomes apparent that this division even invades the individual's psyche, where consciousness presides "in a divided arena" (Donovan, 1990, p. 117).

-4

Like Hegel and Heidegger, Sartre saw the self as existing in two dimensions: the *pour-soi* (for-itself) is the transcending, creative, future-oriented self; the *en-soi* (in-itself) is the reified contingent object self that is immanent and ultimately inauthentic. Like Heidegger, Sartre saw the level of the *en-soi* as that of 'being' and the *pour-soi* as 'non-being' or 'nothingness.'

Sartre elaborated that the *pour-soi* is reflective consciousness capable of withdrawing from everyday immanence, capable of forming projects. In this capacity it transcends the fixed self which remains mired in immanence with no

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<sup>74</sup> Bryce C. Tingle (1992) quotes J. M. Balkin and adds to the list on his own with rule/exception, normal/abnormal, self-supporting/parasitic, present/absent, immediately perceived/inferred, central/peripheral, true/false, natural/artificial, original/secondary, proceeds/follows, permanent/temporary, and concrete/abstract (p. 1328).

possibility of change or growth. Like Hegel, Sartre saw the en-soi as an object that was constituted under the reflective eye of the pour-soi or by other consciousnesses. A fixed identity is therefore a reified entity that allows for no authentic change....

On one level, Sartre sees the Other as a kind of hypostasized public opinion: it projects a powerful 'gaze' that can fix one in an inauthentic pose, that does not allow one to exist as an authentic, independent, separate consciousness. The gaze or opinion of the Other can thus be internalized; it can help to shape the en-soi.

Conversely for the subject-self, for pour-soi, the Other can appear as an object. Thus the same relationship that exists between pour-soi and en-soi can describe the relationship between the self and others, or the Other. In particular, Sartre sees the self-other relationship as being played out along the lines of Hegel's master-slave. In order to constitute itself as a subject, pour-soi must cast the Other as object. (Donovan, 1990, pp. 119-120)

-3

This process of *objectifying* the Other leads to one coming to "see the Other as having all the negative qualities that one wishes not to have oneself" (Donovan, 1990, p. 121). Objectification is when the Self defines itself by negation, casting the Other as the opposite, devalued, or marginalized end of one of Derrida's (1967/1973, 1967/1976, and 1967/1978) binary oppositions in order to elevate one's own position.

Oppression and exploitation involve the devaluation and objectification of some Other (or group of others). Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1968) looks at the patriarchal oppression of women through the lens of Sartre's pour-soi/en-soi dichotomy: "[Woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (p. xvi). "Woman through male eyes is sex object, that by which man knows himself at once as man and subject" (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 538). It goes beyond patriarchy, though. For instance, "Indian through white eyes is race object, that by which colonizer knows himself as civilized and subject" (McLeod, 1991, p. 14).<sup>75</sup>

Thus it is that no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself. If three travelers chance to occupy the same compartment, that is enough to make vaguely hostile 'others' out of all the rest of the passengers on the train. In small-town eyes, all persons not belonging to the village are 'strangers' and suspect; to the native of a country all who inhabit other countries are 'foreigners'; Jews are 'different' for the anti-Semite, Negroes are 'inferior' for American racists, aborigines are 'natives' for colonists, proletarians are the 'lower class' for the privileged. (Beauvoir, 1949/1968, p. xvii)

"Ancient Greek philosophy showed that alterity, otherness, is the same thing as negation, therefore Evil... And yet Evil is necessary to Good, matter to idea, and darkness to light" (Beauvoir, 1949/1968, p. 79-80).

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<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, and particularly illuminating in light of the present ecological crisis, the environment through human eyes is resource object, that by which humans know themselves as humans and subject.



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All encounters with the Other necessitate a perception of the Self-Other relationship. When that perception is based on objectification – leading to a subject-object dichotomy – suffering results, often in the form of oppression or exploitation, but always in the form of a sense of separation from the Other. Objectification leads to an encounter defined by alienation and disconnection and is thus the opposite of communion. Thus, objectification is a form of delusion and ignorance.

When one says,

‘I see the tree’ ... in such a way that it no longer relates a relation between a human and a tree You but the perception of the tree object by the human consciousness, it has erected the crucial barrier between subject and object; the basic word I-It, the word of separation, has been spoken. (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 74-75)

Paulo Freire’s (1970/1997) notion of *conscientização*, or conscientization, defined by him as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality”, allows one to imagine social life without oppressive subject-object dichotomies (p. 17). He aspires to the possibility of people “enter[ing] the historical process as responsible Subjects ... in the search for self-affirmation” through *conscientização* (p. 18). Being a Subject involves “know[ing] and act[ing], in contrast to *objects*, which are known and acted upon” (p. 18). Although this

conception of praxis underscores the pivotal importance of avoiding objectification, it continues to allow for the dualism of the binary opposite subject/object.

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words that he can speak.

The basic words are not single words but word pairs.

One basic word is the word pair I-You.

The other basic word pair is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It.

Thus the I of man is also twofold.

For the I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It....

The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being.

The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being. (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 53-54)<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Martin Buber (1970/1996) wrote, in German, using "Ich and Du," which has been translated as both "I and Thou" and "I and You." His book *Ich and Du* is known most commonly as *I and Thou*, but, in the translation that I have worked from, for reasons beyond the scope of this thesis, Walter Kaufmann translates "Du" as "You" (p. 14). When quoting from that source, I use "I-You" as it appears in the text; however, when referring to the concept of the word pair, I use "I-Thou/I-You."

## Part II Communal Connection Rooted in the Perspective of Relation

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“The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation” (Buber, 1970/1996, p. 56).

To perceive always means to perceive *something*. We believe that the object of our perception is outside of the subject, but that is not correct. When we perceive the moon, the moon is us. When we smile to our friend, our friend is also us, because she is the object of our perception.

When we perceive a mountain, the mountain is the object of our perception. When we perceive the moon, the moon is the object of our perception. When we say, ‘I can see my consciousness in the flower,’ it means we can see the cloud, the sunshine, the earth, and the minerals in it. But how can we see our consciousness in a flower? The flower *is* our consciousness. It is the object of our perception. It is our perception. To perceive means to perceive something. Perception means the coming into existence of the perceiver and the perceived. The flower that we are looking at is part of our consciousness. The idea that our consciousness is outside of the flower has to be removed. It is impossible to have a subject without an object. It is impossible to remove one and retain the other. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 53)

The doctrine of immersion demands and promises penetration into the thinking One, ‘that by which this world is thought,’ the pure subject. But in lived actuality no one thinks without something being thought; rather is that which thinks as dependent on that which is thought as vice versa. A subject that annuls the object to rise above it annuls its own actuality. (Buber, 1970/1996, p. 137)

In the conditioned realm, there is birth and death, before, after, inner, outer, small, and large. In the world of the unconditioned, we are no longer subject to birth and death, coming or going, before or after. The conditioned realm belongs to the historical dimension. It is the wave. The unconditioned realm belongs to the ultimate dimension. It is the water. These two realms are not separate....

Contemplation on interdependence is a deep looking into all dharmas in order to pierce through to their real nature, in order to see them as part of the great body of reality and in order to see that the great body of reality is indivisible. It cannot be cut into pieces with separate existences of their own. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 80)

I contemplate a tree.

I can accept it as a picture: a rigid pillar in a flood of light, or splashes of green traversed by the gentleness of the blue silver ground.

I can feel it as movement: the flowing veins around the sturdy, striving core, the sucking of the roots, the breathing of the leaves, the infinite commerce with earth and air – and the growing itself in its darkness.

I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance, with an eye to its construction and its way of life.

I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I can recognize it only as an expression of the law – those laws according to which a constant opposition of forces is continuously adjusted, or those laws according to which the elements mix and separate.

I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and externalize it.

Throughout all of this the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span, its kind and condition.

But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It....

One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity.

Does the tree have consciousness, similar to our own? I have no experience of that. But thinking that you have brought this off in your own case, must you again divide the indivisible? What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself. (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 57-59)

When we have an experience, for example, of seeing a tree, all that takes place at the time is the perceiving of something. We do not know whether this perception belongs to us, nor do we recognize the object which is perceived to be outside ourselves. The cognition of an external object already presupposes the distinction

of outside and inside, subject and object, the perceiving and the perceived. When this separation takes place, and is recognized as such, and clung to, the primary nature of the experience is forgotten, and from this an endless series of entanglements, intellectual and emotional, takes its rise. (Barrett, 1996, p. 219)

“To practice [Buddhism] is to go beyond ideas, so you can arrive at the suchness of things” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 55).

The greatest relief is when we break through the barriers of sign and touch the world of signlessness, nirvana. Where should we look to find the world of no signs? Right here in the world of signs. If we throw away the water, there is no way for us to touch the suchness of water. We touch the water when we break through the signs of the water and see its true nature of interbeing. There are three phases – water, not water, true water. True water is the suchness of water. Its ground of being is free from birth and death. When we can touch that, we will not be afraid of anything. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 149)<sup>77</sup>

“In contemplation we do not just reflect on something; we merge with the object of contemplation. In timeless learning, we find the barrier between ourselves and the world disappearing as distinctions such as inner and outer drop away” (Miller, 2006, pp. 10-11). “The mind is empty *and* luminous, meaning unobstructed. It is nonthought, nonconcept, the state of unity” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 30). “When we contemplate

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<sup>77</sup> “Interbeing” is discussed in relation to impermanence, *paticca samuppāda*, emptiness, and no-self in Chapter 3. These concepts all relate to suchness. “To dwell in emptiness means living with the ambiguous and non-dualistic nature of life” (Batchelor, 2000, p. 10).

something, the boundary between ourselves and whatever we are contemplating disappears” (Miller, 2006, p. 76).

“The purpose of relation is the relation itself – touching the You. For as soon as we touch a You, we are touched by a breath of eternal life” (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 112-113). “The term ‘self’ signifies a relation rather than an entity” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 32).

“No matter how you struggle, Nirvana is to be sought in the midst of Samsara (birth-and-death)” (Barrett, 1996, p. 15). “Salvation must be sought in the finite itself, there is nothing infinite apart from finite things; if you seek something transcendental, that will cut you off from this world of relativity, which is the same thing as annihilation of yourself” (Barrett, 1996, p. 14).

To be free from oppression and exploitation – to approach freedom from suffering for Self *and* Other – encounters with the Other must be taken from a perspective of non-duality, or “I-Thou/I-You,” and this perspective has ethical implications. Praxis is the “integration of action and reflection” (Rohmann, 1999, p. 148). Encounters with the Other call for profound praxis.

“The human being to whom I say You I do not experience. But I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word [I-You]” (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 59-60).

The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You.

All actual life is encounter. (Buber, 1970/1996, p. 62)

According to the logic of “no-self,” the Other infuses everything; all of reality, properly conceived, is the Other, including elements usually conceived of as Self.<sup>78</sup>

Then the Blessed One looked back and addressed the venerable Rāhula thus: ‘Rāhula, any kind of material form [feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness] whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form [feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness] should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 527)

The Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path is an agenda for profound praxis, one that seeks to take the “Middle Way,” rather than to elevate various poles of the binary oppositions that characterize Western reason.<sup>79</sup> The Middle Way of the Noble Eightfold Path aspires to freedom from the binary opposite subject/object; it is the path of non-duality.<sup>80</sup> “‘And what, friends, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of

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<sup>78</sup> The teaching of “no-self” is introduced in Chapter 2 and related to *paticca samuppāda* in Chapter 3.

<sup>79</sup> The “Middle Way” or “Middle Path” is introduced and discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, this perspective is mirrored in contemporary scientific approaches which are discussed in Chapters 2 & 3, including systems theory and quantum theory. A “basic precept of quantum theory is the impossibility of any sharp separation between the observed system [, a scientific term for the object,] and the agencies of measurement [, a scientific term for the subject]” (Stapp, 1971, p. 1308). “The uncertainty principle [, the impossibility of designing an experiment enabling us to see both the wave and particle



suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration”” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, pp. 1099-1100).

### Part III The Noble Eightfold Path

#### 1

““And what, friends, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering – this is called right view”” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100).<sup>81</sup>

Satori [a name for enlightenment from the Zen tradition] may be defined as an intuitive looking into the nature of things in contradistinction to the analytical or logical understanding of it. Practically, it means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically-trained mind. Or we may say that with satori our entire surroundings are viewed from quite an unexpected angle of perception. Whatever this is, the world for those who have gained a satori is no longer the old world as it used to be; even with all its flowing streams and burning fires, it is never the same one again. (Barrett, 1996, p. 84)

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aspects of sub-atomic entities at one and the same time], it should be added, inevitably breaks down the mechanistic gulf between observer and observed, subject and object. What we see is ourselves in terms of our experimental/research decisions and prioritizations; our aspiration cannot realistically be detached objectivity but rather a dynamic intersubjectivity” (Selby, 1999, p. 129).

<sup>81</sup> Right View is sometimes translated as “Right Understanding.”

“What is it that is eternal: the primal phenomenon, present in the here and now, of what we call revelation? It is man’s emerging from the moment of the supreme encounter, being no longer the same as he was when entering into it” (Buber, 1970/1996, p. 157).

Our happiness and the happiness of those who surround us depend upon our degree of Right View. Touching reality deeply – knowing what is going on inside and outside of ourselves – is the way to liberate ourselves from the suffering that is caused by wrong perceptions. Right View is not an ideology, a system, or even a path. It is the insight we have into the reality of life, a living insight that fills us with understanding, peace, and love. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 54)

Right View, or Right Understanding, is the non-dualistic perception and attitude on which Buddhist practice is founded. Buddhist practice and ethics spring from an understanding of the profound interdependence of phenomena.<sup>82</sup> When one is able to see reality clearly, without getting caught in dualistic thinking that can lead to misperceptions, one can understand the relevance of the Four Noble Truths and “distinguish wholesome roots (*kushala mula*) from unwholesome roots (*akushala mula*)” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 51).<sup>83</sup> “Thus morality – defined as actions in accordance with

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<sup>82</sup> This interdependence follows from impermanence and is represented by concepts like *interbeing*, *emptiness*, *no-self*, and *paticca samuppāda*, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>83</sup> The Four Noble Truths and the concept of wholesome and unwholesome roots are discussed in Chapter 4.

reality – is the foundation of all spiritual progress. Without this nothing of the path will work to reduce suffering” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 29).

## 2

“And what, friends, is right intention? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, and intention of non-cruelty – this is called right intention” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100).<sup>84</sup>

Right Intention, or Right Thinking, follows from Right View. When one sees reality clearly, one sees the profound presence of the Other in all phenomena and one’s interdependence and interbeing with the Other; therefore, one aspires to act in wholesome and skillful ways, for the benefit of both Self and Other.<sup>85</sup> Right View involves understanding how skillful intentions and acts cause and produce wholesome circumstances and mind and heart states, and Right Intention involves aligning one’s thoughts and intentions with that understanding in order to develop the capacity to put that understanding into practice.<sup>86</sup> One’s intentions become aligned with the word pair I-Thou/I-You.

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<sup>84</sup> Right Intention is sometimes translated as “Right Thinking.”

<sup>85</sup> This is described during the discussion of Wallace and Shapiro’s concept of “conative balance” in Chapter 4.

<sup>86</sup> “When we begin to understand things rightly – through mindfulness of the key points of the first step in the path – our mind naturally flows into skillful thinking. Here thinking refers not only to thoughts but to any intentional mind state” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 57).

Right Thinking is thinking that is in accord with Right View. It is a map that can help us find our way. But when we arrive at our destination, we need to put down the map and enter reality fully. ‘Think non-thinking’ is a well-known statement in Zen. When you practice Right View and Right Thinking, you dwell deeply in the present moment, where you can touch seeds of joy, peace, and liberation, heal and transform your suffering, and be truly present for many others. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 63)

One way to cultivate Right Intention is to practice the four *Brahmavihāras*.<sup>87</sup>

“The Brahmaviharas are four elements of true love. They are called immeasurable, because if you practice them, they will grow in you every day until they embrace the whole world. You will become happier, and everyone around you will become happier, also” (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, p. 1) The Four Brahmavihāras are lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.<sup>88</sup>

May all beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering.

May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.

May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice. (Chödrön, 2001, p. 129)

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<sup>87</sup> The four Brahmavihāras are also referred to as the “four divine abidings” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 181), the “four limitless qualities” (Chödrön, 2001, p. 37), the “divine, or heavenly abodes” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 287), and the “four immeasurable minds” (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, p. 1).

<sup>88</sup> These are translations, respectively, of metta (Pāli)/maitrī (Sanskrit), karuṇā, muditā, and upekkha (Pāli)/upeksha (Sanskrit). Metta, or Maitrī, has alternately been translated as love (Nhat Hanh, 1998b), loving-friendliness (Gunaratana, 2001), and lovingkindness (Goldstein, 2002 and Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 287).

“The first aspect of true love is maitri, the intention and capacity to offer joy and happiness” (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, p. 4).

Loving-friendliness, or metta, is a natural capacity. It is a warm wash of fellow-feeling, a sense of interconnectedness with all beings. Because we wish for peace, happiness, and joy for ourselves, we know that all beings must wish for these qualities. Loving-friendliness radiates to the whole world the wish that all beings enjoy a comfortable life with harmony, mutual appreciation, and appropriate abundance. (Gunaratana, 2001, pp. 65-66)

May I be safe from inner and outer harm. May I be happy with things as they are. May I be healthy and strong (and may my body serve me well). May I know ease of well-being (and take care of myself joyfully)... May all beings be safe from inner and outer harm. May all beings be happy with things as they are. May all beings be healthy and strong (and may their bodies serve them well). May all beings know ease of well-being (and take care of themselves joyfully).<sup>89</sup>

“Lovingkindness (*metta* in Pali) is a quality of mind that is developed and expressed on the relative level of separate individuals, one being to another. And yet its highest manifestation comes from understanding of emptiness, that there is no one ultimately there to be separate” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 107).

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<sup>89</sup> This is the specific formulation of a recitation designed to cultivate lovingkindness that I learned from Adrienne Ross and Joanne Broach on May 9, 2003 at a Metta Meditation Retreat. It involves cultivating lovingkindness first for oneself, then for a continuum of others, including teachers, loved ones, people for whom one has neutral feelings, enemies, and then all beings. There are many different variations of how to recite lovingkindness.

“The second aspect of true love is karuna, the intention and capacity to relieve and transform the suffering and lighten sorrows” (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, p. 5). “Compassion is a melting of the heart at the thought of another’s suffering” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 74).

When I was a novice, I could not understand why, if the world is filled with suffering, the Buddha has such a beautiful smile. Why isn’t he disturbed by all the suffering? Later I discovered that the Buddha has enough understanding, calm, and strength; that is why the suffering does not overwhelm him. He is able to smile to suffering because he knows how to take care of it and to help transform it. We need to be aware of the suffering, but retain our clarity, calmness, and strength so we can help transform the situation. The ocean of tears cannot drown us if karuna is there. That is why the Buddha’s smile is possible. (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, pp. 6-7)

The third element of true love is mudita, joy. True love always brings joy to ourselves and to the one we love... Some commentators have said that mudita means ‘sympathetic joy’ or ‘altruistic joy,’ the happiness we feel when others are happy. But that is too limited. It discriminates between self and others. A deeper definition of mudita is a joy that is filled with peace and contentment. We rejoice when we see others happy, but we rejoice in our own well-being as well. How can we feel joy for another person when we do not feel joy for ourselves? Joy is for everyone. (Nhat Hahn, 1998b, p 7)

“Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness is never decreased by being shared” (Gautama, 2007).

“The key is to be here, fully connected with the moment, paying attention to the details of ordinary life. By taking care of ordinary things – our pots and pans, our clothing, our teeth – we rejoice in them” (Chödrön, 2001, p. 62).

The fourth element of true love is upeksha, which means equanimity, nonattachment, nondiscrimination, evenmindedness, or letting go... Upeksha has the mark called *samatajñāna*, ‘the wisdom of equality,’ the ability to see everyone as equal, not discriminating between ourselves and others... We have to put ourselves ‘into the other person’s skin’ and become one with him if we want to understand and truly love him. When that happens, there is no ‘self’ and no ‘other.’ (Nhat Hanh, 1998b, p. 8)

The four boundless states that we call the brahma-viharas or divine abodes culminate with equanimity. In Pali equanimity is called upekkha, which means ‘balance,’ and its characteristic is to arrest the mind before it falls into extremes. Equanimity is a spacious stillness of the mind, a radiant calm that allows us to be present fully with all the different changing experiences that constitute the world and our lives. (Salzberg, 1995/2002, pp. 138-139)

The Second Noble Truth – the origin of suffering – was described in Chapter 4 as “emotional reactivity.” We suffer, because we want things to be other than as they are. The practice of equanimity involves reducing emotional reactivity and, thus, reducing suffering.

Fortunately, as the Buddha revealed, rather than being lost in these conditioned reactions, we can learn to be balanced in response to them.... The Buddha taught that we can feel pleasure fully, yet without craving or clinging, without defining it as our ultimate happiness. We can feel pain fully without condemning or hating it. And we can experience neutral events by being fully present, so that they are not just fill-in times until something more exciting comes along. This nonreactivity is the state of equanimity, and it leads us into freedom in each moment. (Salzberg, 1995/2002, p. 144)

### 3

““And what friends is right speech? Abstaining from false speech, abstaining from malicious speech, abstaining from harsh speech, and abstaining from idle chatter – this is called right speech”” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100).

“Right Speech is based on Right Thinking. Speech is the way for our thinking to express itself aloud” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 85).



“The test is to stop and ask ourselves before we speak: ‘Is it true? Is it kind? Is it beneficial? Does it harm anyone? Is this the right time to say something?’” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 102).

The most important resolution you can make is to think before you speak. People say, ‘watch your tongue!’ But it’s more important to watch your mind. The tongue does not wag by itself. The mind controls it. Before you open your mouth, check your mind to see whether your motivation is wholesome. You will come to regret any speech motivated by greed, hatred, or delusion. (Gunaratana, 2001, pp. 102-102)

There is a receptive, as well as an expressive, component to Right Speech. Perhaps Right Speech can be better described as *Right Dialogue*. “Deep listening is at the foundation of Right Speech. If we cannot listen mindfully, we cannot practice Right Speech... Compassionate listening brings about healing. When someone listens to us this way, we feel some relief right away” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 86). “‘I am listening to him not only because I want to know what is inside him or to give him advice. I am listening to him just because I want to relieve his suffering.’ That is called compassionate listening” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 88). Without listening, there can be no understanding, and true love is based on understanding; therefore, love is based on true listening. “Deep listening nourishes both speaker and listener” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 87).

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 87)<sup>90</sup>*

When speech is paired with listening to understand, you have communication – an opportunity for communion. Together, these form the basis of true community. In fact, the words “communicate,” “communion,” and “community” are all etymologically related to “common,” which implies sharing and unification. True communication, communion, and community can thus be seen as antidotes to the ignorance that stems from the creation of delusory self-other dichotomies and their resulting patterns of objectification, separation, and alienation. Carefully practised, Right Speech, or Right Dialogue, can be integration in action.

Compassionate people, as good communicators, are sparing with their words and deliberate with their speech. They learn to be watchful of others and make sure

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<sup>90</sup> This is the Fourth Mindfulness Training, a re-articulation of the fourth of Buddhism’s five precepts. The other four Mindfulness Trainings, as well as more traditional articulation of the five precepts, is reproduced below.

they offer their words at the right time ‘when we are completely calm and the other person is attentive, at ease, and ready to listen’ (Khema, 1999, 49). They learn to lovingly offer words with the right motivation, which is kindness. They also learn to be very watchful of themselves, to check again and again for their own motivations. (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 34)

Carefully practised, Right Dialogue becomes *mindful, communicative kindness*. Mindful, communicative kindness is when both speaker and listener work together in mutual awareness to deliberately share meaning with one another in ways which support truth and wisdom, unclouded by ignorance, in order to reduce suffering, for speaker, listener, and others, from a perspective of profound respect for, and a sense of communion with, one another and all phenomena. Mindful, communicative kindness incorporates an understanding of the profound interdependence of phenomena, and it derives from a wholehearted aspiration to connect with others and cultivate wholesome mind and heart states in oneself and others, as well as beneficial circumstances in the world.

#### 4

“‘And what friends is right action? Abstaining from killing living things, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from misconduct of sensual pleasures – this is called right action’” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100).

### The First Mindfulness Training

*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. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 82)<sup>91</sup>*

### The Second Mindfulness Training

*Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I will practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 83)*

### The Third Mindfulness Training

*Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in*

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<sup>91</sup> As mentioned above, the “Five Mindfulness Trainings” are re-articulations of the five precepts of Buddhist conduct. These five precepts are traditionally expressed as “abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from speaking falsely, abstaining from sexual misconduct, and abstaining from misusing alcohol or other intoxicants” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 109).

*sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, pp. 84-85)*

#### The Fifth Mindfulness Training

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society. (Nhat Hanh, 1992, p. 89)*

We practice Skillful Action not because we want to avoid breaking the Buddha's rules or because we fear that someone will punish us if we do. We avoid cruel and

hurtful behaviour because we see the consequences of such actions – that they lead to profound unhappiness for us and for everyone around us, now and in the future. We practice Skillful Action because we want our lives to be helpful and harmonious, not destructive and contentious, and because we want a calm and happy mind, untroubled by regret or remorse. (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 111)

“The Buddha said, ‘All wholesome words, deeds, and thoughts have mindfulness at their root.’ In other words, Skillful Action grows naturally out of mindfulness” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 127). When one has a perspective that takes into account the profound interdependence of all phenomena, including oneself and other people, and one cultivates awareness of one’s circumstances and acts deliberately with awareness of the likely consequences of one’s actions, one will naturally act in ways that benefit both self and others.

## 5

“‘And what friends is right livelihood? Here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood – this is called right livelihood’” (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100).

“The way you support yourself can be an expression of your deepest self, or it can a source of suffering for you and others” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 113). The key to Right Livelihood is that performing it allows one, through one’s efforts at work, to make the

world a better place and to avoid causing or contributing to suffering. “Any job can be Skillful Livelihood so long as it does not cause harm to the person doing the job or to someone else” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 133). “Bringing awareness to every moment, we try to have a vocation that is beneficial to humans, animals, plants, and the earth, or at least minimally harmful” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 113).

Right Livelihood is not strictly an individual practice. Due to the nature of our interdependence and connection with those that we serve in our work and depend on to provide us with the things that we need and use, our consumption habits create conditions that influence the livelihood practices of others. In other words, because others work to provide us with the things that we buy and use, our consumption impacts the work and vocation of others.

Suppose that I am a schoolteacher and I believe that nurturing love and understanding in children is a beautiful occupation. I would object if someone were to ask me to stop teaching and become, for example, a butcher. But when I meditate on the interrelatedness of things, I see that the butcher is not the only person responsible for killing animals. We may think that the butcher’s livelihood is wrong and ours is right, but if we didn’t eat meat, he would not have to kill.

Right Livelihood is a collective matter. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 115)

In assessing whether work is Right Livelihood, one must consider not only whether the actions that one performs in carrying out one’s duties are consistent with

Right Action, but also whether “factors related to the job make it difficult for the mind to settle down” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 148). This means considering whether one’s job causes suffering for oneself or acts as an obstacle to one’s efforts to cultivate wholeness and well-being. This is particularly important to consider in the case of teachers and students. Schooling brings institutional pressures to bear on teachers and students, some necessary and timeless,<sup>92</sup> and others of historical particularity that are culturally arbitrary and of questionable value.<sup>93</sup> Many of these cause or contribute to suffering on the part of teachers, students, and their families. Applying the principles of Right Livelihood to teaching and learning involves scrutinising the pressures that exist in schools and acting in ways that minimize the potential that they have for harm.<sup>94</sup>

## 6

‘And what, friends, is right effort? Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil, unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and

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<sup>92</sup> For teachers, these may include keeping up-to-date on relevant research and effective teaching practice, choosing or creating appropriate learning materials for students, preparing and planning lessons, managing the classroom environment and student behaviour, marking student work, evaluating student progress, communicating with parents, and writing report cards.

<sup>93</sup> These will vary from time-to-time and place-to-place, but, in British Columbia and elsewhere, currently include class composition (i.e., a wide range of student ability, need, and behaviour), large class sizes, and a governmental and institutional emphasis on high-stakes testing, standardized assessment, data collection, “accountability,” and instrumental approaches to teaching and learning. These factors create stress for teachers and students alike. For instance, in a recent case study of conditions at a B.C. elementary school, Carol Anne de Balinhard (2003) concludes, “Teachers feel pressured by the amount of paperwork, number of meetings, and increasing focus on accountability. There is a perception among many teachers that the focus on accountability and the threat of Ministry audits is not about improving student learning, but rather reflects a mistrustful and punitive attitude towards educators” (Summary and conclusions ¶3).

<sup>94</sup> This is explored further in Chapter 7.



strives. He awakens zeal for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, [252] and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called right effort.’ (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1100)<sup>95</sup>

## 7

‘And what friends is right mindfulness? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. This is called right mindfulness.’ (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, pp. 1100-1101).

“Right Mindfulness (*samyak smṛiti*) is at the heart of the Buddha’s teaching”  
(Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 64). “Mindfulness... can be thought of as an openhearted,

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<sup>95</sup> Right Effort, sometimes translated as “Right Diligence,” is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 24).<sup>96</sup> “Another word for mindfulness is wholeheartedness. When we do something we enter into it completely” (Miller, 2006, p. 77).

Mindfulness provides a foundation for wisdom and ethical action; over time, awareness of how things actually are *in this moment* develops wisdom, and awareness of present circumstances allows one to take considered, deliberate action that, compared with the other choices available, has the greatest chance of leading to beneficial consequences. As Ajahn Sona, the Abbot of Birken Forest Monastery, put it during a discussion that I had with him on August 24, 2006, mindfulness “is a sentry” that allows one to see where and how to apply the other practices of the Noble Eightfold Path, particularly Right Effort. Mindfulness “gets us off automatic pilot and helps us take charge of our thoughts, words, and deeds” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 194).

Mindfulness is the consideration (of the nature of the present moment and, therefore, of the likely outcomes of our present actions) that allows our actions to be *considerate*; mindfulness provides the platform of reflective awareness that allows for profoundly efficacious praxis.

“The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of the mind, and mindfulness of mental objects” (Gunaratana,

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<sup>96</sup> Mindfulness is defined for the purposes of this thesis, in Chapter 3, as “the moment-to-moment non-judgmental scrutiny of present physical and mental experience, including intentions, perceptions, sensations, emotions, feelings, and thoughts, through calm and focused awareness.” Bhante Henepola Gunaratana (2001) says, “Mindfulness is paying attention from moment to moment to what is” (p. 193).

2001, p. 221).<sup>97</sup> Being mindful of these four aspects of reality by applying (and sustaining) bare attention to them as they change, like water passing by in a flowing stream, allows one to experience presence, as opposed to being preoccupied with the past or anticipating the future.

When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, we can see and listen deeply, and the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy. Understanding is the very foundation of love. When you understand someone, you cannot help but love him or her....

When we practice Right Mindfulness, we touch the healing and refreshing elements of life and begin to transform our own suffering and the suffering of the world. (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, pp. 66-67)

For me, mindfulness practice is really a love affair, a love affair with what is most fundamental in life, a love affair with what is so, with what we might call truth, which for me includes beauty, the unknown, and the possible, how things actually are, all imbedded here, in this very moment – for it is all already here – and at the same time, everywhere, because ... for us there simply is no other time. (Kabat-Zinn, 2005a, p. 26)

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<sup>97</sup> “Mental objects,” or “objects of our mind,” refer to “phenomena” or dharms (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 76).

The clarity and presence of mindfulness opens our minds and hearts to insights into the true nature of things. Properly practised and developed,<sup>98</sup> it allows us unmediated access to our actual experiences and thus our interaction with and relationship to reality (at first, in the form of momentary, transitory glimpses).<sup>99</sup> Mindfulness allows one to see through the ignorance of identifying with the delusory projections of “I, me, and mine” to understand the profound emptiness of the “self,” impermanent and interdependent as it is with all things (the wisdom of no-self).<sup>100</sup> Mindfulness is the gateway to wisdom and the opening of the word pair I-Thou/I-You.

Because we unknowingly perceive ourselves and the world around us through thought patterns that are limited, habitual, and conditioned by delusions, our perceptions and subsequent mental conceptualization of reality is scattered and confused. Mindfulness teaches us to suspend temporarily all concepts, images, value judgments, mental comments, opinions, and interpretations. A mindful mind is precise, penetrating, balanced, and uncluttered. It is like a mirror that reflects without distortion whatever stands before it. (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 193)

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<sup>98</sup> It is important to realize that mindfulness is a quality that can be improved (and sustained for longer periods with more success) with practice and cultivation. It is not a “silver bullet” that can be accessed immediately and sustained effortlessly without development and training.

<sup>99</sup> During a Dhamma talk on August 24, 2006, Ajahn Sona said that “meditation is awakening from cultural hypnosis.” The relationship and synergy between mindfulness and *conscientização* is explored further in Chapter 7.

<sup>100</sup> “Mindfulness of the present moment gives us insight into these changes [that occur in the five aggregates of the body, feelings, perceptions, consciousness, and mental objects] – into the pervasive impermanence of all that exists” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 195). “Insight into impermanence and dissatisfaction helps us to see that reality is not something ‘out there,’ separate from us” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 196).

‘The truth (*dharma*) is not to be mastered by mere seeing, hearing, and thinking. If it is, it is no more than the seeing, hearing, and thinking; it is not at all seeking after the truth itself. For the truth is not in what you hear from others or learn through understanding. Now keep yourself away from what you have seen, heard, and thought, and see what you have within yourself. Emptiness only, nothingness, which eludes your grasp and to which you cannot fix your thought. Why? Because this is the abode where the senses can never reach. If this abode were within the reach of your sense it would be something you could think of, something you could have a glimpse of; it would then be something subject to the law of birth and death.’ (Barrett, 1996, p. 141)

When thus the seeing of self-nature has no reference to a specific state of consciousness, which can be logically or relatively defined as a something, the Zen Masters designate it in negative terms and call it ‘no-thought’ or ‘no-mind’, *wu-nien* or *wu-hsin*. As it is ‘no-thought’ or ‘no-mind’, the seeing is really the seeing. (Barrett, 1996, p. 163)<sup>101</sup>

The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges

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<sup>101</sup> “The state of no-mind-ness refers to the time prior to the separation of mind and world, when there is yet no mind standing against an external world and receiving its impressions through the various sense channels” (Barrett, 1996, p. 219).

from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur. (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 62-63)<sup>102</sup>

The present – not that which is like a point and merely designates whatever our thoughts may posit as the end of ‘elapsed’ time, the fiction of the fixed lapse, but the actual and fulfilled present – exists only insofar as presentness, encounter, and relation exist. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being.

The I of the basic word I-It, the I that is not bodily confronted by a You but surrounded by a multitude of ‘contents,’ has only a past and no present. In other words: insofar as a human being makes do with the things that he experiences and uses, he lives in the past, and his moment has no presence. He has nothing but objects; but objects consist in having been.

Presence is not what is evanescent and passes but what confronts us, waiting and enduring. And the object is not duration but standing still, ceasing, breaking off, becoming rigid, standing out, the lack of relation, the lack of presence.

What is essential is lived in the present, objects in the past. (Buber, 1970/1996, pp. 63-64)

“‘Breathing in, I dwell deeply in the present moment. Breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment’” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 70).

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<sup>102</sup> This reference to the disintegration of means is reminiscent of Kant’s (1785/1964) notion of a “Kingdom of Ends.” “For rational beings all stand under the *law*, that each of them should treat himself and all others, *never merely as a means*, but always *at the same time as an end in himself*” (p. 101).

‘And what friends is right concentration? Here quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters upon and abides in the second jhāna, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce: “He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.” With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This is called right concentration.’ (Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 1101).

“In the context of Buddhist meditation practice the weight of the ax may be compared to serenity (*samatha*), its sharpness to insight (*vipassanā*). These two aspects of meditation play the crucial roles in awakening beings to the nature of reality and releasing them from suffering” (Chandako, 2004, p. 1).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Samatha* refers to “serenity,” (Chandako, 2004, p. 1) or “stopping,” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 24) meditation, and *vipassanā* refers to “insight,” (Chandako, 2004, p. 1) or “looking deeply,” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 24) meditation. *Samatha* allows for concentration and one-pointed awareness, and *vipassanā* allows for insight to flow from the mindful observation of phenomena.

“The practice of Right Concentration (*samyak samadhi*) is to cultivate a mind that is one-pointed” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 105). Mindfulness and concentration are mutually supportive. It is the serenity and one-pointedness of Right Concentration that makes the insight that comes from mindfulness possible (Chandako, 2004 and Nhat Hanh, 1998a). “While samatha generates energy, vipassanā puts it to work” (Chandako, 2004, p. 2). “We concentrate to make ourselves deeply present” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 106). Moreover, for concentration, or samādhi, “to be ‘right’ and leading to Nibbāna, there must also be clear mindful awareness (*sati*) moment by moment” (Chandako, 2004, p. 3).

To practice samadhi is to live deeply each moment that is given us to live. Samadhi means concentration. In order to be concentrated, we should be mindful, fully present and aware of what is going on. Mindfulness brings about concentration. When you are deeply concentrated, you are absorbed in the moment. You become the moment. That is why Samadhi is sometimes translated as ‘absorption.’ (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 107)

Wholesome concentration makes it possible to sustain mindfulness in order to gain insight and to cultivate more deliberate management of one’s actions of mind, speech, and body. Training the mind to concentrate allows one to gain a measure of control over the mind’s attention and allows one to apply mindfulness with more success. This, in turn, allows for more successful application of the other factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.





The eight parts of the Noble Eightfold Path work together with profound synergy.

The eight practices of the Noble Eightfold Path nourish each other. As our view becomes more ‘right,’ the other elements of the Eightfold Path in us also deepen. Right Speech is based on Right View, and it also nourishes Right View. Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration strengthen and deepen Right View. Right Action has to be based on Right View. Right Livelihood clarifies Right View. Right View is both a cause and an effect of all the other elements of the path.  
(Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 58)

The division of the Buddha’s path into eight steps does not imply that it’s a vertical ladder. It’s not necessary to master one step before moving on to the next. The path is more like a spiral. When you set out on the path, you have a certain amount of understanding of all eight steps. As you keep practicing, the steps become clearer and clearer in your mind, and you progress to the next stage.  
(Gunaratana, 2001, p. 247)

“The present moment is your teacher. Turn it into your own personal laboratory. Pay attention. Investigate. You alone can generate wisdom in yourself. You do this by pursuing what is skillful” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 253).

## CHAPTER 6: PROGRESSIVE WESTERN PEDAGOGY: TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING GEARED TOWARDS LIBERATION AND WELL- BEING

This chapter reviews and discusses elements and themes from contemporary Western educational theory in order to provide a lens through which to view socially-engaged Buddhism in order to see its potential for informing and enriching contemporary Western educational practice in order to make teaching and learning more effective at transforming students, society, and the world for the better. It examines Graham Pike and David Selby's (1988, 1999, 2000, Pike, 2000a, Pike, 2000b, and Selby, 1999) conception of global education, the dialogical character of critical pedagogy, the importance of critical consciousness to politically liberatory teaching and learning, and the emerging field of Social and Emotional Learning. The discussion serves to articulate elements of contemporary Western pedagogy that align with socially-engaged Buddhism in order to provide a foundation for the final chapter of this thesis and the conception of socially-engaged pedagogy that is advocated there.

### Global Education: An Example of Transformative Pedagogy

There are negative conditions and situations in the world, including suffering, stress, illness, violence, war, injustice, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation. Regardless of their root causes, problems and injustice manifest around the globe, and profound troubles confront people in every corner of the planet. As participants in and citizens of the world,<sup>104</sup> we have an obligation to address the problems that face humanity. These issues and problems are part of

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<sup>104</sup> By "citizen" I mean *inhabitant* in a sense that implies a sense of allegiance and ethical responsibility to the environments, communities, and web of relationships (both physical and social) that one inhabits.

students' reality, so teachers should address them in order to equip students to effectively deal with them – as well as similar and related issues and problems that may arise in the future.

In an interdependent world, suffering and injustice cannot be contained. The world is a system that is characterized by social, ecological, political, and economic interdependence (Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, and 2000). The implication is that suffering, injustice, and negative conditions in one part of the world threaten positive conditions in other parts of the world. For teachers and students, this has two-fold relevance.

First, because of the profound impact that global conditions have on local conditions, crisis or injustice affecting a distant corner of the world could soon have a real impact in one's own neighborhood, even if it doesn't at first. An example is when domestic wages are driven down by market forces influenced by the cheap cost of labour in foreign countries that experience exploitative labour practices.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, because of the nature of our interrelationship with people in other parts of the world, we are accountable for the existence of suffering and injustice in other parts of the world, even when it doesn't have a direct effect on us. We make choices about how to act in the world, and those choices have impacts far and wide. We have the capacity to inform ourselves about the impacts that our choices have and the power to make choices that support happiness and justice rather than suffering and injustice. The essence of social responsibility is to stand up for what is right and take action to support it. This provides a basis for a fundamentally transformational approach to teaching. This approach to teaching is represented by the

conception of global education presented by Graham Pike and David Selby (1988, 1999, and 2000).

### The Efficacy of Global Education

In my view, school is an effective place to address real-world problems for two reasons. First, to be effective and ethical global citizens, students need to learn about negative or problematic situations and injustice so that they can know about the condition of the world and make informed decisions. Second, I have observed that students are motivated and engaged in learning when they learn about real-world problems and what they can do to address them. In other words, not only is it ethical to encourage students to make ethical choices and live ethical lives; it is pedagogically sound to do so. Moreover, contemporary curricula emphasize the importance of character education and social responsibility; addressing real-world problems and injustice is an ideal way to attend to such curricula through the exploration of and engagement with authentic issues.<sup>105</sup>

Therefore, school is an ideal place to introduce students to the notion of justice, to inform them about the state of affairs in the world, and to empower them to take action to address problems that exist in the world. As it is conceptualized by Graham Pike and David Selby (1988, 1999, 2000, Pike, 2000a, Pike, 2000b, and Selby, 1999), global education does exactly that.<sup>106</sup>

### Defining Global Education

David Selby (1999) defines global education as follows,

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<sup>105</sup> For example, in British Columbia, there are the “Social Responsibility Performance Standards,” which emphasize “contributing to the classroom community,” “solving problems in peaceful ways,” “valuing diversity and defending human rights,” and “exercising democratic rights and responsibilities” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 4).

<sup>106</sup> Moreover, it does so in a way that aligns well with the implications of the Dharma as described above (which are summarized in Chapter 7).

Global education is an holistic paradigm of education predicated upon the interconnectedness of communities, lands and peoples, the interrelatedness of all social, cultural and natural phenomena, the interpenetrative nature of past, present and future, and the complementary nature of the cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual dimensions of the human being. It addresses issues of development, equity, peace, social, and environmental justice, and environmental sustainability. Its scope encompasses the personal, the local, the national and the planetary. Congruent with its precepts and principles, its pedagogy is experiential, interactive, children-centred, democratic, convivial, participatory, and change-oriented. (p. 126)

#### The Paradoxical Tension between Worldmindedness and Child-centredness

As defined above, global education is an attempt to navigate a profound “paradoxical tension:”<sup>107</sup> the tension between the educational space honoring the student as an individual while taking into account the entire world in which the individual finds her or himself. Graham Pike and David Selby (1999) describe global education as bringing together two “strands of educational thinking and practice,” one being “worldmindedness” and the other being “child-centredness” (p. 11).

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<sup>107</sup> Parker J. Palmer (1998) writes about what he calls “paradox and pedagogical design.” He describes several “paradoxical tensions” that he considers when planning how to facilitate learning. Each set of tensions describes two seemingly-opposite qualities that characterize a positive learning environment or “space,” and Palmer posits that good teachers find creative ways to make room for the qualities on both ends of each apparent dichotomy. He offers these tensions as examples:

1. The space should be bounded and open.
2. The space should be hospitable and ‘charged.’
3. The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.
4. The space should honor the ‘little’ stories of the students and the ‘big’ stories of the disciplines and tradition.
5. The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of community.
6. The space should welcome both silence and speech. (p. 74)

Worldmindedness is an attitude about the world that recognizes the interdependence of its peoples and ecosystems and the dynamic and systemic relationships that exist between the parts of the whole. In short, worldmindedness looks at pedagogy from the perspective of the biggest picture on Earth, that of the whole planet. On the other hand, child-centeredness focuses pedagogical awareness on the individual learner his or herself, building pedagogy on the student's background, makeup, and perspectives as an individual. In short, global education is an approach to education that aspires to honor the individual learner, both out of respect and out of a sense of pedagogical efficacy, while facilitating that learner's development into a global citizen, committed to the interests of the "global village" and capable of achieving success on that stage.

#### Historical Development and Views of Global Education

The term "global education" arose in the United States in the late 1960's, around the same time as, but prior to, the term "world studies" arose in the United Kingdom (Pike & Selby, 1999, p. 30). In Canada, global education has "many strands running through it [that] can be traced to initiatives in the fields of development education and peace education, led by educators and social activists in the 1970s" (Pike, 2000b, p. 219).

Graham Pike (2000a) points out that views of global education can range from seeing global education as "giving a broader geographical perspective to the social studies curriculum so as to equip students to compete more effectively in the global marketplace," to "a fundamental reevaluation of the content, organization, and purpose of schooling in line with a transformative vision of education in a planetary context" (p.64). How one conceptualizes global education depends upon one's broad aspirations for

education itself. This thesis aligns with the second option articulated by Pike, and this alignment is articulated with greater precision in Chapter 7.

#### The Future Focus and Action Orientation of Global Education

Two crucial components of global education are its action orientation and its focus on the future. Although global education looks at the lessons of the past and takes a comprehensive view of the present, it sees the connection that our contemporary contexts and actions have with the future. This concern with the future links with the aspect of global education that calls for authentic action on the part of students who become involved in projects that allow them to work on learning content, developing attitudes, and practicing skills while engaged in real activities that have an actual impact on the future. This allows students to develop what Walt Werner (1997) calls a sense of “personal efficacy,” which he sees as being “a driving force behind any achievement” (p. 252).

#### Pike and Selby’s Four-Dimensional Model

Graham Pike and David Selby (1999 and 2000 and Selby, 1999) have constructed a four dimensional model of global education that provides a useful framework for these values and ideas.

##### Spatial dimension.

This dimension is an attempt to describe the complex and web-like system of relationships and interdependencies of people and ecosystems on Earth. It represents the environmental, political, economic, and social connections and relationships between people, places, and things associated with “globalization,” and this dimension parallels

Buddhist teachings such as emptiness, no-self, and *paticca samuppāda*, discussed in Chapter 3.

#### Issues dimension.

This dimension is an attempt to acknowledge the necessarily multi-disciplinary nature of many of the big issues that arise when one looks at globalization and other challenges facing citizens of the world. It also recognizes the fact that such issues do not exist in a vacuum and are often interconnected and multi-faceted. On top of that, depending on one's culture, values, viewpoint, and aspirations, there are a multiplicity of perspectives that one can take in relation to any given global issue or set of issues. The issues dimension gives global education an almost unlimited potential for curricular integration in the classroom, because most global issues have obvious connections to learning outcomes in several subject areas and disciplines.

#### Temporal dimension.

This dimension is an attempt to illustrate the connection between the past, the present, and the future. This dimension recognizes that events of the past have shaped the present, and, likewise, events of the present, including our actions, will similarly shape the future. The temporal dimension provides a justification both for global education's future focus and its emphasis on authentic student action. A crucial aspect of the temporal dimension is the notion that there are three different classes of alternative futures:

- *probable futures* are those sets of circumstances that are likely to arise in the future if present trends continue;
- *possible futures* are those sets of circumstances that may possibly arise in the future, as long as certain conditions change; and



- *preferable futures* are those sets of circumstances that we would like to arise in the future, because they match our values and aspirations.

Inner dimension.

This dimension represents the paradoxical tension described above, between honoring the student as an individual while taking into account the global context in which the individual finds her or himself. “The inner dimension draws upon the quantum insight [which mirrors the Buddhist concept of no-self] that our self world is a co-evolving world; it shifts in consequence of the sum total of our ongoing interactions and exchanges with the wider world” (Selby, 1999, p. 132). The inner dimension encloses two parallel journeys taken simultaneously by the student: the journey outwards to discover the world at large and the journey inwards to understand and tap into one’s potential as a human being. “The two journeys are complementary, reciprocal and mutually resonating. This is nothing more or less than education for authentic personhood” (Selby, 1999, p. 132).

In the words of Graham Pike and David Selby (1999),

Both journeys constitute a necessary preparation for personal fulfillment and social responsibility in an interdependent and rapidly changing world. In conducive conditions, both journeys can be undertaken simultaneously. Through encountering multiple perspectives, envisioning the future and understanding global systems, students are faced, inevitably, with challenges to their own beliefs, values and worldviews. Personal development goes hand-in-hand with

planetary awareness. In this sense, global education is as much an exploration of the global self as of the global village. (pp. 12-14)<sup>108</sup>

### The Dialogical Character of Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy

Similar to Pike and Selby's (1988, 1999, and 2000) global education, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/1997) articulates a vision of education that is also fundamentally transformative in that it seeks to transform oppression into political liberation. One of the most striking features of Freire's vision is its fundamentally *dialogical* conception of critical pedagogy. It shares this dialogical character with the work of Freire's predecessor Martin Buber (Murphy, 1988 and Hodes, 1972). Martin Buber's (1970/1996) concept of I-Thou/I-You relationships is explored in relation to Buddhist ethics and practice in Chapter 5, and his ideas about education follow from that framework.

Martin Buber criticised both the "sentimentalized, child-indulging tendencies associated with some progressive conceptions of teaching" as well as "formalistic and highly didactic" education characterized by restraint and compulsion (Murphy, 1988, p. 93-95). He used metaphors to illustrate the polarity between these two approaches, comparing the former to a pump (to draw forth or pump out the child's latent abilities) and comparing the latter to a funnel (to pour ideas into the student who passively assimilates them). In the former conception, the teacher can be compared to a gardener, and, in the latter, the teacher can be compared to a sculptor (Murphy, 1988). As Buber says,

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<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, Pike and Selby's (1999) notion of two journeys, one inward and one outward, echoes Yoshiharu Nakagawa's (2000) description of the "twofold movement of seeking and returning in contemplation" (p. 33), which is discussed in Chapter 3 and provided a structural framework for Chapter 5.

The first approach may be compared with that of a gardener who fertilizes and waters the soil, prunes and props the young plants, and removes the rank weeds from around it. But after he has done all this, if the weather is propitious, he trusts to the natural growth of that which is inherent in the seed.

The second approach is that of the sculptor. Like Michelangelo, he sometimes sees the shape hidden in the crude marble, but it is the image which exists in his soul which guides him in working on the block, and which he wishes to realize in the material at his disposal. (as quoted in Murphy, 1988, p. 90)

To Buber, neither of these approaches is satisfactory; rather, education occurs in the context of a “personal encounter” between the teacher and the student, which draws from elements of both approaches; to Buber, the “teacher/learner relationship... is located firmly within the framework of his dialogic philosophy as a whole” (Murphy, 1988, p. 96-97). This is similar to Parker Palmer’s (1998) conception of a “subject-centered classroom,” which he proposes as a synthesis of the “teacher-centered” model of education and the “student-centered” model; in Palmer’s model, “the teacher’s central task is to give the great thing [, or the subject being studied,] an independent voice – a capacity to speak its truth quite apart from the teacher’s voice in terms that students can hear and understand” (p. 118). He models this conception on “the community of truth,” where the “subject ‘sits in the middle and knows’” (p. 116).<sup>109</sup>

Central to the dialogic relation between teacher and student, Buber sees encounter as the site of relationship. Sometimes called “the sphere of ‘between,’” (Hodes, 1972, p. 72) and sometimes “the narrow ridge,” (Hodes, 1972, p. 70) this space between

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<sup>109</sup> “The community of truth, far from being linear and static and hierarchical, is circular, interactive, and dynamic” (Palmer, 1998, p. 103).

individuals is where relationship occurs. According to Buber, ““The narrow ridge is the place where I and Thou meet”” and it is ““the meeting place of the We. This is where man can meet man in community. And only men who are capable of truly saying “Thou” to one another can truly say “We” with one another”” (as quoted in Hodes, 1972, p. 70). People engage with one another in the “sphere of ‘between’” though genuine dialogue; therefore, to facilitate this kind of ethical relationship-making, the development of the capacity of people to encounter others in this relational space must be one of the primary purposes of education.

Individual growth, [Buber] insisted, is enlivened, deepened and fulfilled by the various relationships (interpersonal, aesthetic and social, the relationship of learning and knowing, etc.) which constitute human existence. The nurturing of relational capacities, rather than the provision of opportunities for self-expression and growth, becomes therefore the main function of education. (Murphy, 1988, p. 92)

To Buber, truth itself is found in the relationship between individuals, making it “intersubjective,”<sup>110</sup> in that it is neither objective nor subjective. While some might justify it on the basis of a positivistic or objective notion of truth, to Buber, the moral authority to teach is “grounded in the integrity of and truth of the relation in which the teacher is reciprocally engaged with his pupils and by the various forms of relational truth towards which he can guide them by his word and example” (Murphy, 1988, p. 95).

Writing about Martin Buber’s teaching, Aubrey Hodes (1972) says,

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<sup>110</sup> I have taken the term “intersubjective” from Jürgen Habermas (1983/1996), who says, “I call interactions *communicative* when the participants coordinate their plans of action consensually, with the agreement being reached at any point being evaluated in terms of the intersubjective recognition of validity claims” (p. 58). Joshua Guilar (2006) also uses the term in “Intersubjectivity and Dialogic Instruction,” and David Selby (1999) uses it as well (p. 129).

He was an educator in the true sense of the word within the limits of his own definition of it. He did not try to impose a self-evident formula upon his pupils, but posed questions which forced them to find their own answers. He did not want his pupils to follow him docilely, but to take their own individual paths, even if this meant rebelling against him. Because for him education meant freedom, a liberation of personality. (p. 136)

Similarly, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/1997) emphasized the role that traditional educational structures and processes play in perpetuating social structures characterized by inequality and oppression. “Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (not often perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to a world of oppression” (p. 59). Freire (1970/1997) characterized narrative, transmission-oriented education as an instrument of oppression, and he criticized this type of education, calling it the “banking concept of education,” with the teacher making metaphorical deposits in a bank and with politically-charged “information” being the money and students being the bank (p. 53). Freire (1970/1997) argues that, in banking education, students are seen as “containers” and “receptacles” to be filled by the teacher.

Alfie Kohn (2004) calls this a “Core Knowledge” approach to teaching, and he argues that mandated curriculum standards, or mandatory learning outcomes, lead to this approach. “In effect, a Core Knowledge model, with its implication of students as interchangeable receptacles into which knowledge is poured, has become the law of the land in many places” (p. 7). In fact, this is one of “the complex ways social, economic, and political tensions and contradictions are ‘mediated’ in the concrete practices of

educators as they go about their business in schools” (Apple, 1979/1990, p. 2). By reducing students to interchangeable receptacles or containers, this model of education devalues and marginalizes the individual perspectives, understanding, and personal histories of students (insofar as they are inconsistent with the narratives that serve the interests of hegemonic power), while simultaneously elevating the “knowledge” – in other words, the perspectives and claims – imparted to them in this way to the status of unassailable truth.

Echoing Buber, one of Freire’s (1970/1997) crucial contributions to pedagogy is the notion of the importance of dialogical relationships between teachers and students. “Authentic education is not carried out by ‘A’ *for* ‘B’ or by ‘A’ *about* ‘B,’ but rather by ‘A’ *with* ‘B,’ mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties giving rise to views or opinions about it” (p. 74). The dialogical character of the pedagogy proposed by Freire rests, in part, on the notion of posing problems about reality, rather than attempting to indoctrinate students into hegemonic notions of reality.

The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student: she is not ‘cognitive’ at one point [while preparing lessons] and ‘narrative’ at another [while expounding to students]. She is always ‘cognitive,’ whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with the students... The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher... The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* [which I take to mean orthodox public opinion, or ideology] is superceded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos* [interestingly enough, a term in this context I

take to be roughly equivalent to Dharma, insofar as that word means truth or the guiding principles of the universe]. (Freire, 1970/1997, pp. 61-62)

In Freire's (1970/1997) conception of problem-posing education, the problem is posed for the teacher and students to collaborate in the process of making meaning, and this collaboration occurs in Buber's "sphere of 'between,'" or on his "narrow ridge;" the teacher encounters the students in relation to the problem that has been posed, in what Palmer (1998) describes as a "community of truth" or a "subject-centered classroom."

The task of the dialogical teacher in an interdisciplinary team working on the thematic universe revealed by their investigation is to 're-present' that universe to the people from whom she or he first received it – and 're-present' it not as a lecture, but as a problem. (Freire, 1970/1997, p. 90)

Freire's (1970/1997) problem-posing approach to education is based on an aspiration to profoundly dialogical relations between teachers and students.

Indeed, problem-posing education, which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education, can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom only if it can overcome the above [teacher-student] contradiction.

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers.

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (p. 61).

Freire (1970/1997) asserts that teachers and students must work together to make genuine meaning out of their experience and to generate personally-meaningful knowledge. This too reflects Buber's view.

[Buber] suggests that the goal of teaching must be to seek in every way possible – especially through the confirming action of the teacher – to bring about the process of conversion by which objectified knowledge is transformed into the realm of the I-Thou – the sphere where it becomes personally meaningful.

(Murphy, 1988, p. 107)

### The Importance of Critical Consciousness

Hegemony is the exercise of power or control over, or the exploitation of, marginalized or oppressed people by those with power; it involves the production of an outlook or worldview – which takes the form of ideology – that supports the power dynamic. As Michael Apple (1979/1990) puts it, “hegemony acts to ‘saturate’ our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic, and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world *tout court*, the only world” (p. 5). Epistemology is the engine that drives hegemony, because ideology is always rooted in a particular set of claims about what one can know and how one can come to know it.

Because teaching and learning is, by its very nature, a fundamentally epistemological enterprise, educational practices, structures, and institutions play a role in the process of indoctrination and the propagation of ideology that support the social structures and conditions of the status quo (Gatto, 1992/2005 and Kohn, 2004). To use Apple's (1979/1990) words, education serves to “preserve and distribute” “symbolic



property – cultural capital” (p. 3). Since teaching and learning practices can serve (and traditionally have served) to transmit ideology and facilitate the reproduction of oppressive social structures and contexts, education is a crucial part of hegemony. “Schools... do not only ‘process people;’ they ‘process knowledge’ as well. They act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony, in [the social and cultural critic Raymond] Williams’s words, as agents of selective tradition and of cultural ‘incorporation’” (Apple, 1979/1990, p. 6).<sup>111</sup>

Hegemony, as derived from the work of Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, is used to express how certain groups manage to dominate others. An analysis of hegemony is especially concerned with how the imposition of particular ideologies and forms of authority results in the reproduction of social and institutional practices through which dominant groups maintain not only their positions of privilege and control but also the consensual support of the other members (even those subordinated) of society. (Leistyna, 1999, p. 221)

Contemporary educational practice is driven by learning outcomes, or standards, that are imposed on teachers by government-approved and mandated curriculum – an outside institutional force, operating as part of a historical and socio-economic situation characterized by hegemony. This has implications for the construction of knowledge and the legitimization of truth claims in society; after all, certain “facts,” perspectives, paradigms, epistemes, and ideologies get represented in mandated curricula, while others do not. In this way, curriculum helps to operationalize hegemony in society, since hegemonic structures in a society are reinforced and propagated by prevalent ideologies

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<sup>111</sup> In particular, schools “help create people (with the appropriate meanings and values) who see no other serious [alternative] to the economic and cultural assemblage now extant” (Apple, 1979/1990, p. 6).

and ways of knowing, including the set of truth claims that is viewed as valid and legitimate. In other words, those who have power have the power to decide what gets taught in schools, and they decide that teachers should teach “facts” and perspectives that justify and support their power.<sup>112</sup> In addition, there are forces at work in the field of education that represent hegemonic influences in society at large.<sup>113</sup>

Many people, including John Taylor Gatto (1992/2005) and Alfie Kohn (2004), have criticized our current public education system as fundamentally transmission-oriented, as opposed to transformational, and they point out that this serves to reproduce existing social structures and relations, which serves the interests of those with power and privilege. Gatto (1992/2005) argues that our public education system is designed to teach students how to participate in the economy as consumers and conform to the social order. Kohn (2004) also argues that transmission-oriented education preserves the status quo of social structures and relations. “To emphasize the importance of absorbing a pile of information is to support a larger worldview that sees the primary purpose of education as

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<sup>112</sup> Social actors who have this kind of power, in varying degrees, include (but are not limited to) politicians (Members of the Legislative Assembly), government policy makers, Ministry of Education staff, university staff (particularly those that teach and train pre-service teachers), private contractors (e.g., those that write curriculum documents), corporations (particularly those that create “curricula” or other materials for use in classrooms or schools), staff and officers of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, members of Boards of Education, parents of students, school administrators, department heads within schools, and, of course, teachers themselves. In turn, each of these social actors are influenced by extant power structures and dynamics in society, including those based on, *inter alia*, wealth, class, race, ethnicity, gender, colonial status, and sexual orientation. For example, corporations may make decisions based on economic factors related to the existing division of wealth (including the socially-constructed institution of private property and the historically-constructed system of capitalism), and provincial politicians may make decisions based on their perception of colonization of First Nations’ land as legitimate (and the validity and legality of the historically-constructed “sovereignty” of the arbitrary social and political construct we call Canada).

<sup>113</sup> One example is the way that standardized tests and the current B.C. government’s “school of choice” policy (where students are not required to attend their neighbourhood school but can be enrolled by their parents in another school “of choice”) are being used as tools to advance a *laissez-faire* privatization agenda in relation to public education. The publication of standardized test results allows for the rating and ranking of schools, which creates an environment where some schools are valued and others are not, and the “school of choice” policy allows parents to act on the basis of the perception of value created by the dissemination of such test results. Many fear that this presages (and perhaps already represents) some sort of multiple-tiered educational system. Further discussion of this dynamic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

reproducing our current culture” (p. 6). This echoes Freire’s (1970/1997) emphasis on the role that traditional educational structures and processes play in perpetuating social structures characterized by inequality and oppression, discussed above.

What Freire (1970/1997) calls a banking approach and what Kohn (2004) calls a Core Knowledge approach to education, where students are viewed as containers to be filled with pre-packaged pieces of knowledge, assumes that students are blank slates or “empty vessels” to be filled with knowledge, rather than active participants in a process of making meaning or constructing knowledge (Anderson, 1998, p. 8). From an epistemological point of view, it assumes that knowledge is something that is fixed and objective, rather than contingent on circumstance and perspective. Both of these views support the ideology of oppression and therefore the hegemonic influence enjoyed by those exercising power; those with power get to define objective truth (choosing, of course, to construct it in a way that consolidates their power), and they get to fill a captive audience of empty vessels with that version of objective truth.

According to the assessment and evaluation practices dominant in contemporary schools, those students that do not unconditionally assimilate (and regurgitate on tests and other “objective” evaluative instruments) “knowledge” represented by dominant ideology are deemed to have failed (they did not successfully meet the educational objectives - i.e., to see things the same way as those in power do). On that basis, they are denied credentials or qualifications granted upon the successful completion of the educational program in question. This serves to marginalize all perspectives and any set of truth claims that compete or conflict with those that justify the current set of social and power relationships.

Critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that attempts to question and problematize hegemony. It takes a critical approach to existing oppressive and exploitative social structures and relations and the ideologies that support them. Concurrent with that critique of hegemony itself, it takes a transformational approach to education, since it seeks to transform existing hegemonic relationships from oppressive relationships into relationships of equality. Reynolds and Trehan (2000) describe several approaches that introduce an element of “critical interpretation” to teaching practice, ranging from “critical theory, liberationist (Freirian) theology, feminist and post-structuralist scholarship, to Marxism and labour process analysis” (p. 267). Reynolds and Trehan (2000) argue that these approaches are likely to have the following features in common:

- questioning assumptions and taken-for-granted, asking questions which are not meant to be asked;
- foregrounding processes of power and noting how inequalities of power intersect with social factors such as race, gender or age;
- identifying competing discourses and the sectional interests reflected in them; and ultimately
- developing a workplace and social milieu characterised more by justice than by inequality or exploitation. (p. 267)

#### The Relationship between Knowledge and Hegemony

Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge “holding that reality is not objective but is constructed differently by different people, largely through social interactions, according to cultural biases and historical conditions” (Rohmann, 1999, p.

363). This is related to Jean Piaget's psychological theory of constructivism, although Piaget's constructivism "assumes an objective reality that we apprehend through the construction of cognitive patterns in response to environmental influences" (Rohmann, 1999, p. 364). Even to a constructivist like Piaget, "children actively construct their own cognitive worlds; information is not just poured into their mind from the environment" (Santrock, 1998, p. 41). Regardless of whether children and students construct reality itself in the process of their learning (social constructivism) or just "cognitive worlds" in response to their interactions with reality (constructivism), the point is that, at the very least, they construct their *understanding* of reality.

The process by which they do this, which includes the learning process either directed or facilitated by teachers, is the site where the student's epistemological framework is generated.<sup>114</sup> In short, the teaching and learning process generates in students (and teachers, for that matter) specific understandings of how knowledge is manufactured, what knowledge is acceptable, and what is true. In the act of teaching, teachers influence the development of their students' epistemological frameworks. Because of this, teachers have the ability to act either in ways that further the operationalization of hegemony or in ways that subvert it.

### Constructivism as Counter Hegemony

Teachers have a choice whether to act as agents of hegemony, willingly and cooperatively transmitting the set of truth claims and "knowledge" dictated by those with power, or to teach students how to generate knowledge themselves by constructing meaning and understanding that is not dependent upon the ideology influenced by and

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<sup>114</sup> Michel Foucault might call this epistemological framework an "episteme," while Thomas Kuhn might call it a "paradigm." A metaphor that I use to describe the notion is "the furniture of one's mind."

designed to perpetuate hegemonic power relations.<sup>115</sup> If one teaches according to social constructivist or constructivist tenets, one adopts the latter approach.

“Education from a constructivist perspective is about assisting students to learn how to obtain knowledge” (Anderson, 1998, p. 7). Many teachers teach in this fashion purely because of its pedagogical effectiveness, but the added benefit is that it places the teacher’s practice outside of the role dictated for the teacher by hegemony: that of a conduit for ideology, or, as Buber might describe it, a “funnel” (Murphy, 1988, p. 95). In a constructivist classroom, students learn how to think for themselves and gain experience doing just that, and this sows seeds needed for critical consciousness, conscientization, or what Freire calls conscientização.

### Social and Emotional Learning

The contemporary educational approach described as “social and emotional learning,” or SEL, is geared towards promoting the emotional and psychological well-being of students and facilitating their development of social competencies that allow them to interact in positive ways with others.

In recent years, teachers and researchers have rediscovered what good teachers and parents have known for many years: that knowledge of ourselves and others as well as the capacity to use this knowledge to solve problems creatively provides an essential foundation for both academic learning and the capacity to

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<sup>115</sup> By suggesting here that teachers have a choice, I do not mean to suggest that teachers simply act *either* as agents of hegemony *or* as facilitators of the generation of knowledge completely independent of ideology. Rather, their actions can be located somewhere on a spectrum or continuum between these two extremes, and are usually inclined towards one extreme more than the other.

become an active, constructive citizen (Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1995; Sternberg, 1997). (Cohen, 1999, p. 3)<sup>116</sup>

SEL can be characterized as educating both the mind and the heart, and this relates well to the Buddhist understanding of mind and heart states discussed in Chapter 4. Based on the basic assertion that “we can never separate how we feel about ourselves from our mastery of any given subject” (Cohen, 1999, p. 8), SEL asserts that educating the heart enhances the education of the mind. “When educators provide ongoing opportunities for children to learn ‘lessons of the heart’ (Lantierie & Patti, 1996), this has, according to a growing body of research, an enormous impact on the children’s lives as students” (Cohen, 1999, p. 7). Moreover, SEL asserts that educating the heart leads not only to success in school but also to personal and interpersonal success, as well as health and happiness. “Emotional well-being... is dramatically and positively predictive not only of academic achievement but also of satisfactory and productive experiences in the worlds of work and marriage – in fact, it even is predictive of better physical health (Goleman, 1995; Heath, 1991; Valliant, 1977, 1993)” (Cohen, 1999, p. 7).

Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. It includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others. Social and emotional learning

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<sup>116</sup> “Today’s educators have a renewed perspective on what common sense has always suggested: when schools attend systematically to students’ social and emotional skills, the academic achievement of children increases, the incidence of problem behaviors decreases, and the quality of the relationships surrounding each child improves” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 1).

is the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence. (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2)

#### Conclusion: The Dharma and Progressive Western Pedagogy

As Ian Johnson (2002) indicates, there are “synergies between the Buddhist approach to teaching and learning and the current streams of thought in more Western-based educational theories (such as humanistic educational philosophy or an emphasis on critical reflection and educational holism)” (p. 110). The contemporary Western educational theories and approaches described above align well with the implications of the Dharma described in earlier chapters, and they provide a lens through which to view the Dharma in order to see more clearly its implications for contemporary educational practice (or, if one prefers, they provide a theoretical platform upon which to build an articulation of those implications). Chapter 7 seizes upon these synergies and articulates principles for teaching and learning that draw from both the Dharma and the contemporary educational ideas discussed above.



## CHAPTER 7: SOCIALLY-ENGAGED PEDAGOGY: PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL WELL-BEING

My true religion is kindness.

- His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (as quoted in Conover, 2001, p. ix)

Drawing from previous chapters, this chapter defines and provides a theoretical foundation for “socially-engaged pedagogy.” I have drawn this terminology, and aspects of its conception, from bell hooks’ notion of “engaged pedagogy,” which she introduced in *Teaching to Transgress* and which is discussed in Chapter 2.<sup>117</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, “socially-engaged pedagogy” means the integration of the implications of the Dharma with the practice of teaching and learning in a transformational, liberatory, and progressive way.<sup>118</sup> Socially-engaged pedagogy represents the notion that teaching and learning can be a practical and efficacious site for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering, both in the present and in the future, as it manifests in the world, exemplified by stress, illness, violence, war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.

### The Implications of the Dharma

The preceding chapters describe and discuss several important philosophical principles of socially-engaged Buddhism. First, people, animals, and the environment – essentially all phenomena in the world – are profoundly interconnected, interrelated, interdependent, and interpenetrating. The discussion of the concepts of impermanence,

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<sup>117</sup> In their editorial entitled “Toward a Socially Engaged Holistic Education,” Jeffrey Kane and Dale Snauwaert (1998) used the description “socially engaged” to describe their vision of holistic education. In that editorial, they assert that “critical social engagement” is a “central dimension of a holistic education” (p.3).

<sup>118</sup> “Dharma” is defined in Chapter 3 as the body of teachings of the Buddha, Buddhist theory, or Buddhism. It can also mean the truth or the way of truth.

emptiness, no-self, and *paticca samuppāda* in Chapter 3 explains how this is so: each phenomenon both impacts and is impacted by its environment, as it interpenetrates the other phenomenal components of its environment, and as they interpenetrate it. As a result of this fundamental interpenetration of all phenomena, phenomena are impermanent and lack intrinsic being; they are “empty,” in that they lack a separate, discrete, and independent self or identity. Moreover, the notion of *nirvāṇa*, or spiritual liberation in the Dharma, is related to the perspective that one is able to have and has about the nature of this interpenetrating reality of relationship between conventionally seemingly-separate things.

Second, Chapter 4 describes how suffering and the cessation or absence of suffering are related, not only to the perspective that one has in relation to reality, but also to the nature of the mind and heart states (in other words, the unconscious and conscious experiences, patterns, and tendencies of cognition, emotion, conation, perception, and sensation) that one experiences, both as a result of habit and as a result of one’s experiences, effort, and intentions. The practice of Right Effort involves cultivating and promoting wholesome and skillful mind and heart states and abandoning and overcoming unwholesome and unskillful mind and heart states. This practice can be applied to the mind and heart states that one experiences, in order to improve the quality of one’s state of mind and heart. In essence, by applying Right Effort, one can train one’s mind and heart to be more inclined to wholesome states and happiness than to unwholesome states and suffering.

Third, the Noble Eightfold Path that describes Buddhist practice and ethics, explored in depth in Chapter 5, consists of practices that can be characterized either as

morality, concentration, or wisdom. The wisdom practices (Right View/Understanding and Right Intention/Thinking) relate to perceiving and understanding the ultimately interpenetrating nature of phenomena and the presence and cultivation of “conative balance,”<sup>119</sup> or intentions in accordance with that interdependence (i.e., intentions and aspirations oriented towards the well-being of both oneself and others). The morality practices (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood) relate to acting in a way that takes that interpenetration and interdependence into account. The concentration practices (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) relate to discerning the nature of reality and developing a refined sense of how one’s actions and mind and heart states can best be aligned with cultivating and fostering well-being and reducing suffering for all.

Buddhist practice and ethics are geared towards individuals (as humans conventionally perceive themselves and operate in the world) recognizing the interdependent and non-dual quality of reality and aspiring to and acting in wholesome ways that resonate with the fundamental interdependence of all things. Buddhist practice allows individual practitioners to perceive their interpenetrating relationships to phenomena and with seemingly-separate others and, on the basis of this understanding, to construct and put into practice ethical ways of acting that take the interests of both Self and Other into account.

Although some characterize Buddhism as a religion, the principles described above are persuasive and justifiable from a strictly rational and secular – as opposed to a faith-based – standpoint. Framed without any Buddhist terminology, these principles can be articulated as follows,

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<sup>119</sup> This concept, articulated by Wallace & Shapiro (2006), is discussed in Chapter 4.

1. Things in the world are impermanent and therefore fundamentally interconnected and interdependent; the actions of humans influence and have a profound impact upon others, the environment, and the reality that they experience, and the actions of others and the condition of the environment and reality influence and have a profound impact upon humans;
2. When one's perspective of the world is not aligned with this reality, one inevitably experiences suffering or dissatisfaction;
3. One's present thoughts, emotions, intentions, perceptions, and sensations are caused and conditioned by one's previous experiences:
  - a. When one habitually experiences thoughts, emotions, intentions, perceptions, and sensations associated with dissatisfaction (e.g., desire for things that one can't have or experience and aversion to things that one has or experiences), one will tend to experience dissatisfaction, and this will tend to influence others to experience similar or related thoughts, emotions, intentions, perceptions, and sensations; and
  - b. Conversely, when one habitually experiences thoughts, emotions, intentions, perceptions, and sensations associated with satisfaction (e.g., contentment with and acceptance of what one has or experiences), one will tend to experience satisfaction, and this will tend to influence others to experience similar or related thoughts, emotions, intentions, perceptions, and sensations; and

4. Since one's actions influence all the things that one experiences interdependence with (i.e., everything), one is ethically obliged to take that interdependence into account when setting intentions and acting in the world:
  - a. To take one's interdependence into account effectively, one needs to understand it and set intentions that accord with it;
  - b. If one carefully scrutinises one's physical and mental experience, including intentions, perceptions, sensations, emotions, feelings, and thoughts, through calm and focused awareness on a moment-to-moment basis, one can then use the information that one gains from this process to (1) align one's perspective with the way that things are in reality and (2) decide what future thoughts, intentions, speech, and actions would be in the best interests of both oneself and others influenced and impacted by one's actions; and
  - c. When one acts in the best interests of both oneself and others influenced and impacted by one's actions, this will better serve the overall well-being of both oneself and the communities and society that one belongs to than if one fails to act in those best interests or acts in a manner that is contrary to those best interests.

Working from the principles described above, one can frame an approach to ethical life founded upon key features or characteristics. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Joseph Goldstein (2002) proposes three aspects to what he calls the "One Dharma of Western Buddhism:" *"the method is mindfulness, the expression is compassion, and the*

*essence is wisdom*” (p. 13).<sup>120</sup> Seen in light of the above-described principles, these three aspects also provide a rational, ethical, and secularly-justifiable approach to teaching and learning. In embarking on a description of this framework, it is helpful to heed the words of Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003) in the article “Buddhism as an Example of a Holistic, Relational Epistemology.”

Teachers teach spirituality by the way they talk to their students and treat them; by the way they move through the classroom environment and how they care for it; by the way they treat the studying of other cultures and various subject areas; by the way they model for students how to live one’s life as someone who is under the illusion of being disconnected, autonomous, and free, or someone who understands that they are connected and related to others including their natural world. It is impossible to separate spirituality from education, for our spiritual beliefs serve as our compass, guiding us in the choices we make and the meaning we give to our experience. (p. 36)

### Addressing Suffering through Teaching and Learning

Chapter 2 discusses the principles of holistic education and proposes that teaching and learning should facilitate the growth and development of the whole person by taking an approach that addresses the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, creative/intuitive, aesthetic, and spiritual needs of learners (Miller, 2006). Moreover, holistic education views the student’s wholeness in the context of the student’s interconnection with the world that he or she is a part of (Clark, 1991). This conception of education leads naturally to an inclination to address suffering – of both self and others – through the

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<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Fritjof Capra (1977) quotes D. T. Suzuki as describing wisdom and compassion as “the ‘two pillars supporting the great edifice of Buddhism’” (p. 88).

process of teaching and learning. It leads naturally to a vision of education that is fundamentally *engaged* with the physical and social environments of teachers and learners.

A theory and practice of holistic education must not be concerned only with the internal processes of the child's development but must be equally concerned with the critical evaluation of society's influence in shaping that development. Furthermore, it must be concerned with fundamental social considerations from poverty to environmental sustainability.

In other words, holistic education must be 'socially engaged.' Holistic educators must be concerned with the debilitating effect of social injustice in all of its various dimensions: political, economic, ecological, cultural, social. As Martin Buber deeply understood, dialogical encounter – and a pedagogy so based – is both intrapersonal and social. (Kane & Snauwaert, 1998, p. 3)

In other words, holistic education leads naturally to a vision of what I call *socially-engaged pedagogy*. Pike and Selby's (1988, 1999, and 2000) conception of global education, described in Chapter 6, is an example of socially-engaged pedagogy. Recognizing the interdependent nature of the social, ecological, political, and economic systems that students find themselves in, it uses educational contexts to address negative conditions and situations in the world in order to give students the opportunity to develop the capacity to transform themselves – and their world – for the better.

At the heart of global education is a recognition of our obligation, as participants in and citizens of the world, to address the problems that face humanity; this obligation follows from the interdependence of things in and the systemic nature of the world, and it

is rooted in mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom. Furthermore, Right Intention involves aspiring to act in ways that benefit oneself, others, and the world, and several other aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path, including Right Action, Right Speech, and Right Livelihood, involve acting in accordance with that intention. By using the process of teaching and learning to address the problem of suffering, teachers give students the opportunity to build their capacity to effectively deal with the problem of suffering as it manifests in the world.

As it is conceptualized by Graham Pike and David Selby (1988, 1999, 2000, Pike, 2000a, Pike, 2000b, and Selby, 1999), global education is based upon the idea that school is an ideal place to introduce students to the notion of justice, to inform them about the state of affairs in the world, and to empower them to take action to address problems that exist in the world.<sup>121</sup> Global education does these things in a manner that is completely consistent with the implications of the Dharma. Graham Pike's (2000a) analysis, discussed in Chapter 6, makes it clear that one's conceptualization of global education depends upon one's broad aspirations for education itself. Since this thesis represents a vision of socially-engaged pedagogy that is transformational, liberatory, and progressive, it aligns with the second option articulated by Pike (2000a) – that of “a fundamental reevaluation of the content, organization, and purposes of schooling in line with a transformative vision of education in a planetary context” (p. 64). This thesis offers a transformative vision of education in the context of *the interpenetration of all things on the planet*.

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<sup>121</sup> Pike and Selby's conceptualization of global education, is discussed in depth in Chapter 6.



### The Fundamentally Transformative Nature of Socially-Engaged Pedagogy

Recalling the question posed in Chapter 1 about whether the goal of education should be (a) the transmission of information which serves to justify and reproduce existing social structures or (b) the transformation of social structures, individuals, and the world as a whole for the better, it becomes clear that socially-engaged pedagogy is founded upon the latter. Socially-engaged pedagogy is a profoundly *transformative* vision of education. Rooted in a non-dualistic understanding of all phenomena as being interpenetrating and in dynamic relationship with each other, it offers a vision of education that aspires to transform teachers, students, their societies and communities, and the world for the better. Much like Pike and Selby's (1988, 1999, and 2000) conception of global education, it is action-oriented and concerned with the future, while well-established, through the centrality of the practice of mindfulness, in the present.

Rooted in the Dharma, much as global education is rooted in Pike and Selby's four dimensions, socially-engaged pedagogy's action orientation is based on Buddhist ethics and practice, as discussed in Chapter 5. Its concern with the future is more subtle, since that concern is embedded in the present moment. Just as present conditions depend upon and are rooted in causes and conditions from the past, present causes and conditions provide a foundation for future circumstances and phenomena.

Past, present and future are embedded, one within another. Future is a 'zone of potentiality' (Pike & Selby, 1995, p. 16) or potentiality as a plethora of 'virtual' transitions spread across present reality (Zohar, 1994, p. 50) or that which unfolds from within the implicate order of reality (Weber, 1986, p. 23-29). (Selby, 1999, p. 131)

According to the logic of *paticca samuppāda*, the creation of wholesome states of affairs in the future depends upon mindful and skillful action in the present, motivated by Right Intention and characterized by Right Effort. By attending to the present moment with mindfulness and skillful intentions and effort, one can have a positive and transformational impact on the future.

Through envisioning such alternatives [including probably futures, possible futures, and preferable futures], through heightened responsiveness to the latent potential of situations, through intellectual and sensorial engagement in the present, and through developing our capacity and skills for change agency, we can become transforming learners. (Selby, 1999, p. 132)<sup>122</sup>

The foundation of socially-engaged pedagogy is reflected in the concept of *Bodhichitta*, or the “Mind of Love.”

The great vow of the Buddha, *Bodhichitta*, is ‘With loving-kindness, I will help all beings to suffer less.’

*Bodhichitta* is our great aspiration to wake up, to transform our suffering into compassion and serve all beings as a *bodhisattva* – a person of great compassion. (Nhat Hanh, 2003, p. 39)

*Chitta* means ‘mind’ and also ‘heart’ or ‘attitude.’ *Bodhi* means ‘awake,’ ‘enlightened,’ or ‘completely open.’ ... It is equated, in part, with our ability to love... *Bodhichitta* is also equated, in part, with compassion – our ability to feel the pain that we share with others. (Chödrön, 2001, p. 4)

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<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, “intellectual and sensorial engagement in the present” sounds like a description of mindfulness as defined in this thesis (see Chapters 3 and 5, as well as the discussion of mindfulness below).

Bodhichitta implies that the more one understands reality, the more one will be motivated by love and compassion. Simply by linking enlightenment with love and compassion, it asserts that understanding the true nature of things will lead naturally to the generation of love, compassion, and good will. When these motivations inform action, and action is rooted in understanding and reflective awareness, that action has the potential to transform conditions and circumstances for the better. Socially-engaged pedagogy aspires to equip students with these qualities – openness, understanding, awareness, love, compassion, and good will – and provide them with opportunities to cultivate and develop them.

Those who train wholeheartedly in awakening ... bodhichitta are called bodhisattvas or warriors – not warriors who kill and harm but warriors of nonaggression who hear the cries of the world. These are the men and women who are willing to train in the middle of the fire. Training in the middle of the fire can mean that warrior-bodhisattvas enter challenging situations in order to alleviate suffering. It also refers to their willingness to cut through personal reactivity and self-deception, to their dedication to uncovering the basic undistorted energy of bodhichitta. (Chödrön, 2001, pp. 5-6)

Socially-engaged pedagogy envisions an educational situation where teachers and students work together to, as Chödrön (2001) puts it, “train wholeheartedly in awakening:” to develop mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom in order to alleviate suffering, their own and that of others. Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) calls this the “action of enlightenment,” where social action “may be remarkably different from social actions in a conventional sense, because it comes from the absolute affirmation in Suchness

[discussed in Chapter 3, in relation to emptiness,] that has transcended the relative, conventional judgments” (p. 221). By understanding the fundamental interpenetration of all things in the world (as represented by the concepts of no-self and emptiness), one is able to mindfully, compassionately, and wisely act in the interests of self and others in the dimension of reality represented by the conventional, empirical, and ordinary world of seemingly discrete phenomena. In this context, Nakagawa (2000) suggests that compassion is “a fundamental concept of education” (p. 225). Furthermore, he suggests that compassion, combined with wisdom, can provide a foundation for what he calls a “society of enlightenment” (p. 232).<sup>123</sup>

Nakagawa’s (2000) vision of a society of enlightenment fuses what he calls “the Western way of action,” (p. 232) rooted in conscientization and praxis, with “the Eastern way of action,” (p. 233) which includes a contemplative aspect geared towards understanding the vertical depth, or profound ontological interdependence of all phenomena, and the cultivation of action which accords with that understanding. According to Nakagawa (2000), his multidimensional theory, which aligns with the Dharma,

requires the social dimension to cease dominating the others and to embrace them so as to support them. The social reality must be redefined in terms of the other dimensions – the cosmic reality, the infinite reality, and the universal reality. (p. 233)

Nakagawa (2000) bases his vision for a society of enlightenment on what Robert Thurman (1998) calls the “politics of enlightenment.” The title of Nakagawa’s (2000)

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<sup>123</sup> I would add mindfulness to his formulation, bringing it in line with Goldstein’s (2002) three aspects of the “One Dharma of Western Buddhism.”

book, *Education for Awakening*, presages the character of socially-engaged pedagogy as education for enlightenment in the interests of all people and the entire planet.

Education is the major tool of truth-conquest, as well as the most important survival technique known to man. It promotes enlightenment as the flowering of the individual's own awareness, sensibility, and powers, and thereby develops a strong society. Within the context of the politics of enlightenment, it is understood that the purpose of human life is education, not that education prepares a person for some other life-purpose. Education is a requirement for ... ensuring that [the individual] achieves the quantum jump of awareness from the constriction of automatic self-centeredness into the freedom of selfless relativity. (Thurman, 1998, p. 126)

Socially-engaged pedagogy, as I conceptualize and articulate it, is a practice that aspires to facilitate this “quantum jump,” or as Nakagawa (2000) puts it, “Copernican revolution,” (p. 233) on the part of both teachers and students in a way that will allow them to contemplatively, reflectively, effectively, mindfully, compassionately, and wisely take action to positively transform themselves and their world, thus alleviating suffering and promoting happiness.

### The Teacher-Student Relationship

Perhaps the most important principle for teaching and learning that can be drawn from the Dharma is that the relationship between teacher and student should be respectfully dialogical. This principle follows from the discussion of Right Speech, Right Dialogue, and mindful, communicative kindness in Chapter 5, and it aligns well with Martin Buber's (1970/1996, Murphy, 1988, and Hodes, 1972) theories relating to the

dialogic character of education, as well as Paulo Freire's (1970/1997) dialogical conception of critical pedagogy, discussed in Chapter 6.

In applying interdependence and non-duality to the ontological context of teaching and learning, it becomes clear that teachers and students are not independent entities; they are participants in a process that involves the “flow-through”<sup>124</sup> of information, dialogue, a shared interaction with various texts, and both the teacher's and the student's construction of meaning from personal and shared experience, influenced by the teacher, other students, and members of the larger communities which teachers and students are a part of.

When one considers the implications of this profound interdependence in the dynamic of teaching and learning, it becomes obvious that the relationship between teachers and students should be deeply dialogical. First of all, teachers and students are engaged in very real relationships as actual human beings; to relate to one another ethically (i.e., in ways that are oriented towards the well-being of and serve the interests of teachers, students, and others) and in ways that are consistent with the Noble Eightfold Path, they are obliged to treat each other with respect, recognize their interrelation, and participate authentically in communicative action designed to generate “communal connection rooted in the perspective of relation” and non-duality, or, as Buber (1970/1996) puts it, to stand in the sacred basic word pair I-Thou/I-You.<sup>125</sup>

Secondly, the dynamic between teacher and student is a powerful lesson in and of itself; students learn about how to be and act in the world from the way that their teachers

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<sup>124</sup> This is Joanna Macy's (1991b) term (p. 12), which is discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the concept of no-self.

<sup>125</sup> “Communal Connection Rooted in the Perspective of Relation” is the title of a section of Chapter 5, which explores the Noble Eightfold Path.

act and the ways that they are treated by their teachers; for this reason, the dialogical relationship between teacher and student sets a powerful example of how students can participate in the world. By participating in a genuinely dialogical relationship with teachers and each other, students cultivate and practice mindful, communicative kindness.<sup>126</sup>

In constructing the educational enterprise as a dialogical encounter between teacher-student and students-teachers, it can be re-framed in a way consistent with the notion of Right Livelihood, which is discussed in Chapter 5. As mentioned in Chapter 5, applying the principles of Right Livelihood to teaching and learning involves scrutinising the pressures that exist in schools and acting in ways that minimize the potential that they have for harm.<sup>127</sup> This scrutiny must be undertaken, first and foremost, with the purpose of ensuring that students are not reduced to mere receptacles of information, and that education is not reduced to a commodity to be provided to “customers;” rather, as a transaction, it takes place in the context of a real and human relationship, entered into for the good of student, teacher, and society at large. While teachers may see themselves as called to “serve” in the sense that teaching is a vocation, they are not providing a “service,” in the crass sense of the marketplace.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “Mindful, communicative kindness” is introduced in Chapter 5. This practice is also discussed below, in the context of community-building. By referring to a “genuinely dialogical relationship,” I am making a distinction between that and an inauthentic façade of dialogue, where one listens to another person strictly in order to serve one’s own interests (e.g., in order to encourage the other person to listen to oneself).

<sup>127</sup> Some of these pressures are described in Chapter 5.

<sup>128</sup> Other ways in which the institutional pressures related to the educational process can be re-framed to be consistent with Right Livelihood are discussed below.

### Teaching and Reaching for Community<sup>129</sup>

The interrelational and interpenetrating nature of reality leads naturally to founding a vision of socially-engaged pedagogy on a profound notion of community.

An experience is an integral part of some web of experience. Experiences cannot be analyzed into ultimate unanalyzable entities. The component parts invariably reach out to components outside themselves. To isolate an experience from its references is to destroy its essence. In short, experiences must be viewed as parts of webs, whose parts are not defined except through their connections to the whole.

One finds, therefore, in the realm of experience, essentially the same type of structure that one finds in the realm of elementary-particle physics, namely a web structure: Analysis never yields an ultimate set of unanalyzable basic entities or qualities. The smallest elements always reach out to other things and find their meaning and ground of being in these other things. (Stapp, 1971, p. 1319)

In addition to the nurturing of relational capacities and facilitating ethical relationship-making, another of the primary purposes of education must be to nurture and develop the community-building capacities of individuals. To Buber, “The purpose of education was to develop the character of the pupil, to show him how to live humanly in society. One of his basic principles was that ‘genuine education of character is genuine education for community’” (Hodes, 1972, p. 137). According to Buber, the ultimate goal of community education, which, in my view, can be easily applied to education in

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<sup>129</sup> With credit due to bell hooks (2003), whose book, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, inspired the title of this section heading.



general, should be “the active promotion of peace, through the resources of interpersonal and communal dialogue” (Murphy, 1988, p. 193).

And it is here in the ‘between’ that he saw hope for a third alternative between individualism and collectivism: the path of community, of small groups of people who recognize one another in the crowd and come together in a genuine encounter for the sake of all mankind, not only for their particular group, country, or race. (Hodes, 1972, p. 72)

The problem-posing approach to teaching advocated by Buber and Freire lends itself to community-building; the teacher-student and the students-teachers share an experience of community in their dialogical relationship relating to the subject of inquiry. This allows for the classroom to become “a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership” (hooks, 2003, p. xv). The problem itself, or as Parker Palmer (1998) puts it, the “great thing” acts as a unifying force generating a teaching and learning community with the subject “at the center of the pedagogical circle” (p. 116). As bell hooks (2003) asserts, there is a “spirit of community that is always present when we are truly teaching and learning” (p. xv).

True community in any context requires a transcendent third thing [in addition to teacher and students] that holds both me and thee accountable to something beyond ourselves, a fact well known outside of education... When the great thing speaks for itself, teachers and students are more likely to come into a genuine learning community, a community that does not collapse into the egos of students

or teacher but knows itself accountable to the subject at its core. (Palmer, 1998, pp. 117-118)

In this sense, teachers and students addressing and learning about a problem are acting in accordance with the idea of “no-self,”<sup>130</sup> and in alignment with the praxis and practical social activism of socially-engaged Buddhism. Through problem-posing education, the community of learners, as well as the subject, or great thing, with which they are engaging, becomes accountable to something larger than itself. Problem-posing connects teachers, students, and subjects to the whole world as they realize that each individual is profoundly connected to each other individual and the world as a whole. This profound sense of community, connection, and communion relates to the first part of the definition of “spirituality” in Chapter 2,<sup>131</sup> the definition of “nirvāna” in Chapter 3,<sup>132</sup> and the definition of “spiritual liberation” in Chapter 3.<sup>133</sup>

“Progressive education, education as the practice of freedom, enables us to confront feelings of loss and restore our sense of connection. It teaches us how to create community” (hooks, 2003, p. xv). The practice of “mindful, communicative kindness,”

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<sup>130</sup> “No-self” is briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, introduced and discussed in depth in Chapter 2, and related to socially-engaged Buddhism and *paticca samuppāda* in Chapter 3. As Jeffrey Kane and Dale Snauwaert (1998) say, in the context of envisioning socially engaged holistic education, “Our conception of the true nature of the human Self is that it is relational and enmeshed in Being. Each of us – all of us – exists in a dynamic, fluid set of relations that shape the very foundations of our existence” (p. 3).

<sup>131</sup> In Chapter 2, “spirituality” is defined as a practice or a field of inquiry composed of two different parts. One part of spirituality is the notion that there is a connection between “one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 83 and Steingard, 2005, p. 228), and the other part of spirituality is the notion that there is a mysterious aspect to being that transcends rationality and that we are naturally drawn to contemplate this aspect (Palmer, 1998, Palmer, 2004, and McLeod, 2002).

<sup>132</sup> In Chapter 3, “nirvāna” is defined as, in one sense, meaning the end or absence of suffering, and, in another, meaning a state of being unconditioned by a misconceived sense of separateness from other phenomena. In this latter sense, it implies a deep understanding and radical acceptance of one’s impermanence and consequently profound interrelationship and interpenetration with the rest of existence; in this sense, nirvāna can be conceived of as the state of being enlightened or awake to the true nature of reality.

<sup>133</sup> In Chapter 3, “spiritual liberation” is defined as the presence of wholesome mind and heart states (such as wisdom, lovingkindness, and generosity) and the absence of unwholesome mind and heart states (such as ignorance, hatred, and greed), in the context of a profound understanding of the non-existence of a permanent self (no-self) and the dynamic interrelationship of all things.

introduced in Chapter 5, was designed and proposed with this kind of dialogical community-building in mind. Practicing mindful, communicative kindness, speaker and listener are connected in a profoundly respectful dialogue, which aspires not only to communion between and the well-being of speaker and listener but also to communion of the speaker and listener with and the well-being of all beings and, indeed, all of reality. Mindful, communicative kindness aligns well with Parker Palmer's (1998) community of truth. "The hallmark of the community of truth is in its claim that *reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it*" (p. 95).

One of the primary purposes that the practice of mindful, communicative kindness was designed to achieve is peace, both within oneself and with others and the world as a whole. This aligns well with Martin Buber's (Murphy, 1988) thoughts relating to peace, community, and dialogue. "Peace, [Buber] writes, is not simply the absence of conflict; it is achieved through the speech of genuine conversation. The presupposition of this conversation is mutual trust, a willed entering into interpersonal and communal dialogue" (p. 194). Accordingly, in order to build strong communities, teachers and students should aspire to the practice of mindful, communicative kindness, or some similar practice, both in their relations with each other in educational contexts and as something to cultivate for its implications for everyday life. Practices like mindful, communicative kindness will lead naturally to and cultivate a sense and practice of "deep community" in the classroom, the school, the family, the larger societal and cultural milieu, and in relation to ecosystems and the planet as a whole.<sup>134</sup> Deep community describes the existence of, and

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<sup>134</sup> I have chosen the term "deep community" to reflect the notion of "deep ecology," which was "coined in the mid 1970s by Norwegian philosopher and mountain-climber, Arne Naess, to contrast with the

an aspiration for, a relational situation where community members recognize and act in accordance with their profound interdependence with one another.

### Buddhist Practice as the Cultivation of Profound Conscientization and Praxis

Chapter 6 includes a discussion exploring the crucial role that critical consciousness (conscientization, or what Freire calls *conscientização*) plays in political liberation. It allows students to critique and see through ideology in order to construct meaning and understanding that is not dependent upon the ideology influenced by and designed to perpetuate hegemonic power relations, thus generating personal knowledge that can serve their own emancipatory interests. The Dharma conceives of a critical consciousness that plays a similar role in an individual's spiritual liberation.

The Kālāma Sutta is described by some as the Buddha's "Charter of Free Inquiry" (Thera, 2007). "[T]he spirit of the sutta signifies a teaching that is exempt from fanaticism, bigotry, dogmatism, and intolerance" (Thera, 2007, Preface ¶ 1).<sup>135</sup> Even critics who think that the description of the sutta as "the Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry" overstates the case, assert that it "counter[s] the decrees of dogmatism and blind faith with a vigorous call for free investigation" (Bodhi, 2007, ¶ 1).<sup>136</sup> Andrew Olendzki (2003) describes the Buddha's attitude that practitioners should critically examine his teachings, or the Dharma, as an invitation to "come and see" (p. 29).<sup>137</sup> In the Kālāma Sutta, the Buddha addresses a group of people, called the Kālāmas, living in a town

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environmentalism that still sets itself apart from the world" (Macy, 1991b, pp. 12-13 and Nakagawa, 2000, p. 81).

<sup>135</sup> "The reasonableness of the Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching, is chiefly evident in its welcoming careful examination at all stages of the path to enlightenment" (Thera, 2007, Preface ¶ 2).

<sup>136</sup> Another such critic, Geoffrey DeGraff (2003b), or Thanissaro Bhikkhu, says, "Although this discourse is often cited as the Buddha's *carte blanche* for following one's own sense of right and wrong, it actually sets a standard much more rigorous than that" (p. 29). The nature of the standard set by the discourse is discussed below.

<sup>137</sup> "This sentiment is expressed by the adjective '*ehi-passika*' applied to the teaching of the Buddha, a word meaning literally 'come and see'" (Olendzki, 2003, p. 29).

called Kesaputta. The Kālāmas have expressed their uncertainty and doubt about the basis on which one should trust “priests and contemplatives,” and they ask the Buddha how to determine whether such a spiritual teacher is “speaking the truth” or lying (DeGraff, 2003b, p. 30). He responds to their query by saying,

Of course you’re uncertain Kālāmas. Of course you’re in doubt. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kālāmas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering’ – then you should abandon them. (DeGraff, 2003b, p. 31)

This is a profound call to develop what Freire (1970/1997) calls *conscientização*, or critical consciousness: to critically examine ideology, to reject indoctrination, and to endeavour to directly perceive for oneself the nature of reality and the human condition, free from distortion by politically-charged ideological structures.<sup>138</sup> The Buddha’s call for the development of critical consciousness is nuanced and deepened by his application of the three roots of wholesome or skillful mind and heart states – non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, or, stated in positive terms, generosity, love, and wisdom – to the enterprise and process of developing critical consciousness.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Indeed, when one considers the Buddha’s exhortation to not go by “logical conjecture,” “inference,” “analogies,” or “agreement through pondering views” in the context of the Zen concept of no-mind discussed in Chapters 1 and 5, he is suggesting that the perception of reality and the human condition can be free from thoughts, words, or concepts altogether, thus transcending their ideological character.

<sup>139</sup> These roots, called *kusalamūla*, are discussed in Chapter 4.

The Kālāma Sutta goes on to make it clear that one should evaluate teachings based on whether they represent “lack of greed,” “lack of aversion,” and “lack of delusion” and whether they “lead to welfare & to happiness” (DeGraff, 2003b, p. 32).<sup>140</sup> Further, the Buddha makes it clear that a teacher who can be trusted is “devoid of greed, devoid of ill-will, undeluded, alert, & resolute” and has an awareness “imbued with good will,” “compassion,” “appreciation,” and “equanimity” (DeGraff, 2003b, pp. 33-34).<sup>141</sup>

In this way, the Dharma calls for critical consciousness to be rooted in generosity, love, and wisdom and animated by lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Ajahn Sona’s description of meditation as “awakening from cultural hypnosis” is apt here.<sup>142</sup> The Dharma calls for mindfulness, which allows one to become aware of dukkha and its causes, including what Paulo Freire (1970/1997), in his description of conscientização, calls “social, political, and economic contradictions” (p. 17).<sup>143</sup> Moreover, the Dharma calls for mindfulness to be used in the service of Right Effort, or the cultivation and development of skillful mind and heart states and actions and the abandoning of unskillful mind and heart states and actions. In this way, the Dharma clearly calls for praxis, or action based on one’s unclouded perception and contemplation of reality with the aspiration to reduce stress and suffering in the world, both as it relates to oppression and otherwise.

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<sup>140</sup> As Thanissaro Bhikkhu – DeGraff – (2007) says, the Buddha “did not leave [the Kālāmas] wholly to their own resources, but by questioning them led them to see that greed, hate and delusion, being conducive to harm and suffering for oneself and others, are to be abandoned, and their opposites, being beneficial to all, are to be developed” (¶ 5).

<sup>141</sup> These are the four Brahmavihāras – lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity – which are discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>142</sup> This description of meditation is introduced in Chapter 5, and it mirrors Alan Watts’ assertion that “the main function of a way of liberation is to release the individual from his ‘hypnosis’ by certain social institutions” (as quoted in Nakagawa, 2000, p. 216).

<sup>143</sup> Looked at in this way, conscientização becomes mindfulness of oppression.

Applied to teaching, this means that the teacher's role, as cultural worker,<sup>144</sup> becomes facilitating an educational process whereby students come to critically examine the world, understanding the various ways that oppression, stress, and suffering arise, both in their own consciousness and in social conditions, while at the same time cultivating wholesome and skillful mind and heart states, patterns of intention, and skills for taking effective social action to transform oppression, stress, and suffering into well-being, happiness, peace, and joy.<sup>145</sup>

#### Right Livelihood for Teachers and Students: Addressing Well-Being in the Classroom

Recently, while on a meditation retreat, I had an opportunity to reflect on the pleasure of being able to eat a meal slowly and with mindfulness, not having to worry about anything else. This led to the realization that I am normally distracted and inattentive while performing routine tasks, including (and often because of) many of the myriad tasks that teaching involves. Being able to perform a task slowly and mindfully stands in stark contrast to the busy, frantic, chaotic, and panicked mood that usually prevails in a school (Glass, 2006). In my experience teaching elementary school, there is always an aura of overwhelming expectation, which often leads to a sense of impending failure. This is because failure is inevitable in relation to at least some of the countless expectations placed on teachers and students, which are impossible to meet *in toto*.

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<sup>144</sup> "A cultural worker (transformative intellectual or public intellectual), in the best light, is an educator who critically engages learning (wherever it may take place) with the goal of working pedagogically and politically to ensure the development of a socially responsible citizenry and a critical, multicultural democracy" (Liestyna, 1999, p. 218).

<sup>145</sup> This is evocative of what David Selby (1999) describes as "transformative learning." "Transformative learning, inspired by the writings of Thomas Berry (1988; Swimme & Berry, 1992), calls for education that will assist and foment the transition from the present 'terminal cenozoic' (industrial, consumer, market-driven) phase of earth history to an 'ecozoic' phase, one where the well-being of the entire earth community is the primary project. Its curriculum and pedagogy offers a new cosmology, a widened and permeable sense of self, and a radically different orientation to quality of life issues (O'Sullivan, 1999)" (pp. 127-128).

In trying to meet the myriad expectations applied to my role as a teacher, I (and many teachers that I know) scramble to meet a multitude of those expectations at once and feel frustrated when all of my students don't (or aren't able to) do the same. Incidentally, this represents a failure, since one of the expectations placed on me as a teacher is to create an environment where all students are intrinsically motivated to perform to their ultimate potential and in which they are able to do just that, despite any biological, social, psychological, institutional, or other variables that might run counter to this plan.

### Taking Time to Teach and Learn Mindfully

Mindfulness involves taking time to pay attention to what one is actually doing at that moment, whether it is washing the dishes, walking, talking to someone, or simply breathing. Being mindful means being “present” in the moment and experiencing awareness of what arises as it is without projecting any concepts or agendas onto it. Mindfulness may involve paying attention to one's body, sensations that arise, thoughts and emotions that arise, or sensory information from the environment.<sup>146</sup>

This is reflected in what Rachael Kessler (2004) calls “the teaching presence:”

Being fully alive to the present is the very heart of ‘the teaching presence.’ A teacher is expressing this capacity when she is:

- open to perceiving what is happening right now,
- responsive to the needs of this moment,
- flexible enough to shift gears,

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<sup>146</sup> These are the four foundations of mindfulness, described in the discussion of Right Mindfulness in Chapter 5.



- prepared with the repertoire, creativity and imagination to invent a new approach in the moment.
- humble and honest enough to simply pause and acknowledge if a new approach has not yet arrived. (p. 18)<sup>147</sup>

This takes concentration, and one can't bring concentration to bear while one is panicked or frantic. "Under conditions of real or imagined threat or high anxiety, there is a loss of focus on the learning process and a reduction in task focus and flexible problem solving" (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997, p. 3). Therefore, for teaching and learning to truly represent Right Livelihood, in a way that allows for a degree of mindfulness, it needs to take place in a context where both teachers and students are able to fulfill their responsibilities calmly and with a sense of ease and confidence. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Right Livelihood calls for a work environment that makes it possible for the mind to settle down. This means that the number and scope of the responsibilities placed on teachers and students needs to be achievable, and teachers and students need to be allowed to take their time while working towards them. It is also important for teachers to take time to self-reflect on their teaching practice and "reflect on their own professional development and their role in enhancing the social-emotional skills of students" (Cohen, 1999, p. 19).

This reasoning resonates with the "Slow School" approach advocated by Maurice Holt (2002).

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<sup>147</sup> Quoting an earlier version of Kessler's (1991) paper on this subject, published in the *Holistic Education Review*, Kimberly Post Rowe (2007) writes, "practicing mindfulness enables us to be 'fully present... alert to the circumstances of what is happening right now... open to perceiving what is happening... responsive to the needs of this moment... flexible enough to switch gears, and to have the repertoire, creativity, and imagination to create a new approach in the moment'" (p. 44)

The slow approach to food allows for discovery, for the development of connoisseurship [*sic*]. Slow food festivals feature new dishes and new ingredients. In the same way, slow schools give scope for invention and response to change, while fast schools just turn out the same old burgers. If we think about the future of education, we assuredly want a more satisfying and stimulating approach than the present sad state of affairs. Only slow schools hold out that kind of promise. (p. 270)

As Kimberly Post Rowe (2007) points out, this kind of “rest-and-digest response,” as opposed to the “fight-or-flight response” created by stressful circumstances, enhances well-being.

When the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, the heart rate drops, blood pressure falls, and respiration slows and deepens. This allows digestion to resume as blood flow to the core of the body is reestablished [after being interrupted during the fight-or-flight response], and our immune systems receive a boost as we are infused with a sense of well-being. (p. 5)

Howard Cutler (Lama & Cutler, 2003) compares mindfulness to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of “flow,” which has been described as “an optimal human experience” (Lama & Cutler, 2003, p. 88) and “a force that moves us towards growth and achievement of our human potential” (p. 90).

To be in flow means to be totally absorbed in whatever one is doing at the moment. It occurs when one is fully present and completely focused on the task at hand. One can be in flow while playing basketball, sculpting, solving a difficult

math problem, involved in a business transaction, rock climbing, or simply in a deep conversation with a friend or lover. (p. 79)

John P. Miller (2006) describes what he calls “timeless learning” as often being characterized by “what Csikszentmihalyi has called the *flow* experience” when someone “becomes fully immersed in an experience” (p. 9). According to Miller (2006), entering a state of flow, when one completely focuses one’s attention on the task at hand, creates conditions “optimal for learning. The state of awareness that arises in flow helps the individual in acquiring new perspectives and skills” (p. 10).

When one is mindful, or truly aware, of what one is studying or learning about, one is able to achieve what Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) calls “communion” with the truth that is represented by the subject, or “great thing,” (as Palmer [1998] puts it) that one is studying. This kind of communion is characterized by directness, non-duality, and non-interference.<sup>148</sup> “These concepts from Buber’s ‘I-You relation’ to Krishnamurti’s ‘communion’ disclose an essential aspect of communal relationships – non-articulation and non-differentiation (or connectedness and unification). Moreover, they suggest that the communal reality is deeper than the communicative reality” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 55).

Communion, both between teacher and student and between student and subject, allows the student to understand, comprehend, absorb, and assimilate knowledge with great effectiveness. This kind of communion can only be achieved through awareness of the present moment – in a word, mindfulness. “It seems as if mindfulness might cultivate the perfect learning state: observant, thoughtful, and capable of deep listening” (Post

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<sup>148</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into Nakagawa’s discussion in any depth. In his discussion of “the Pedagogy of Communion,” he reviews, among other things, “ideas such as Buber’s ‘I and You relation,’ Fromm’s ‘being’ mode, Illich’s ‘conviviality,’ Turner’s ‘communitas,’ Grof’s ‘holotropic mode of consciousness,’ and Bateson’s ‘Learning III’” (2000, p. 51).

Rowe, 2007, p. 44).<sup>149</sup> In this way, mindfulness on the part of students serves to enhance their psychological well-being as well as their ability to learn in the dialogical and constructivist sense outlined above.

The discussion of mindfulness in Chapter 3 emphasized how mindfulness aligns with suprarationality and contemplation, as opposed to conventional analytical and discursive thought rooted in what Tobin Hart (2004) calls the “rational-empirical approach” (p. 28). Since mindfulness practice represents an attempt to realize complete and direct awareness of the present moment, unmediated by words, thoughts, or concepts (this direct awareness is known in Zen as no-mind), it requires the cultivation of what Tobin Hart (2004) calls “contemplative knowing” (p. 28). Hart (2004) points out that this aspect of human intelligence is “a missing link, one that affects student performance, character, and depth of understanding” (p. 28).

As for the counter-intuitive sound of “suprarationality,” Nakagawa (2000) says that, “If we see Eastern ideas of holistic education from Western perspectives, they may look ‘absurd’ or very opposite to Western ideas... But the ‘absurd’ ideas make sense if we recognize the multidimensional structures of Eastern philosophy” (p. 144). This is because suprarationality and contemplation, though not rational in the sense of Western reason, represent attempts to build an understanding of and insight about the deeper dimensions of reality represented in Eastern and Buddhist notions like “vertical depth,”

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<sup>149</sup> Ellen J. Langer (1997) makes a similar argument in her book, *The Power of Mindful Learning*, though with a slightly different definition of “mindfulness.” Briefly, Langer’s (1997) book explores the topic of how mindful learning, which she defines as learning which takes place with an awareness of context and of the ever-changing nature of information, can benefit students. In contrast to this thesis, Langer’s work is rooted in Western psychological theory.

the “noumenal aspect of reality,” the “ground of being,” the “infinite reality,” and “nirvāṇa.”<sup>150</sup>

The suprarational and contemplative aspects of mindfulness practice has implications for teaching and learning. If educational practice is to facilitate mindfulness, it needs to make space for silence and what Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) calls “unlearning” (p. 151). Although language and its effective and clear use in communication, both oral and written, is crucial to pedagogy and has held a privileged status in Western educational frameworks, “Eastern ideas [and therefore the Dharma] have traveled along the opposite direction to the furthest point; that is, words, concepts, logic, and knowledge – all these meant something ‘negative,’ something to be abandoned” in favour of silence (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 145). According to Nakagawa (2000), this is because “Eastern philosophers have regarded language as the basic hindrance to realizing a deeper reality and identified silence as an avenue to it and furthermore as the infinite reality itself” (p. 145).<sup>151</sup>

The space opened up by silence and contemplation allows for one to make direct and unmediated contact with the insights and wisdom that one develops, many of which are beyond description and ineffable.<sup>152</sup> According to Nakagawa (2000), silence “*is* an

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<sup>150</sup> These notions are discussed in Chapter 3, in relation to the Buddhist understanding of reality (along with concepts like no-self, emptiness, and *paticca samuppāda*).

<sup>151</sup> This is, in part, because “we have a strong tendency to identify with language so that we hypostatize concepts language creates as if they were real objects... although the map is not the territory (e.g., Hayakawa, 1939/1978, chap. 2), we tend to confuse them” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 148). It is important to emphasize that I am not proposing here the complete abandonment of educational strategies and approaches geared towards and designed to develop literacy (defined, for the purposes of this thesis, as the effective use of both expressive and receptive verbal and written language to communicate); rather, I am proposing that education aimed at developing literacy be complemented with educational strategies and approaches that cultivate the equally-important ability to utilize silence, suprarationality, contemplation, and “unlearning,” which is described below, to develop depth of understanding and insight.

<sup>152</sup> “Taoist philosophy [, which is similar to the Dharma, especially as it is understood in the Zen tradition,] holds that the infinite reality is absolutely ineffable, and that words serve to veil the unknown by the known” (Nakagawa, 2000, pp. 148-149).

immediate revelation of ineffable reality” (p. 150). As Palmer (1998) puts it, “in authentic education, silence is treated as a trustworthy matrix for the inner work students must do, a medium for learning of the deepest sort” (p. 77).

Because it operates outside of language and theory and therefore lacks ideology, silence facilitates profound constructivism and conscientization; if it is authentically contemplative and suprarational, the development of insight and wisdom in the context of silence is beyond the reach of indoctrination. This is an aspect of what Nakagawa (2000) describes as “unlearning.”

The Eastern way of learning is to realize the deeper dimensions of reality through unlearning the learned. Therefore, the way of contemplation (at least in its initial phases) concentrates on unlearning. However, unlearning is not meant to destroy or annihilate acquired knowledge... What really happens in unlearning is that an exclusive identification with knowledge or the known is gradually reduced and eventually ceases to be. What is unlearned is this part of identification. (p. 152)

In this way, unlearning represents a profound conscientization that allows one to transcend ideology and begin to transcend other socially-constructed conventional notions that contradict reality at its deepest level, such as the illusory sense of self that stands in contrast to no-self and reductionism that stands in contrast to emptiness. Not only does this allow one to develop conscientization to serve as a solid basis for praxis geared towards emancipation from hegemony in a political sense, it provides a foundation for the development of the kind of wisdom that leads to spiritual liberation.

## Aimlessness in Teaching and Learning

Another implication of the Dharma is the importance of “letting go” of outcomes, or the results of one’s efforts. This may seem to contradict outcome-based, instrumental approaches to education, and, in a way, it does, since those approaches to education focus on the product of teaching and learning, which make schools comparable to factories and makes teaching comparable to an investment and the learning of students comparable to a return on that investment.<sup>153</sup> Accordingly, this approach reduces students to manipulable commodities, much like the empty vessels contemplated by transmission-oriented education; this kind of reductionism is clearly comparable to the notion of objectification, described in Chapter 5, in contrast with the framework of non-duality proposed by the Dharma.<sup>154</sup>

In the context of this view of teaching and learning, teachers become practically indistinguishable from retail-sales employees, since their job is simply to provide students with the products of education, in other words, new sets of knowledge and skills. Some even view teachers as serving the interests of parents, providing them, at the end of the educational process, with a child who has improved and enhanced abilities and economic potential as compared to at the beginning of the educational process.<sup>155</sup>

“Simply put, the mainstream educational initiatives [, including national standards and

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<sup>153</sup> “Public school teachers feel extremely confined by classroom size and set lesson plans where they have little choice about the content of the material that they are required to teach. And if required standardized testing is institutionalized anew, it will be even harder for public school teachers to bring creative ideas to the work of teaching. *They will be required simply to relay information as though the work they do is akin to that of any worker on an assembly line*” (hooks, 2003, p. 16, emphasis mine).

<sup>154</sup> “To be reductionistic is to simplify a particular phenomenon so as to mask its complexity” (Leistyna, 1999, p. 225).

<sup>155</sup> John Taylor Gatto (1992/2005) goes even further, arguing that schools are designed as instruments of control, to serve hegemonic interests with their final “product.” “Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulas, formulaic human beings whose behaviour can be predicted and controlled” (p. 23).

testing movements,] have virtually nothing to do with the needs and interests of growing human beings. Their aim is the cultivation of *intellectual capital*” (Kane & Snauwaert, 1998, p. 3, emphasis mine).

I cannot accept... as legitimate a definition of education in which our task is to prepare students to function easily in the ‘business’ of that society. A nation is not a firm. A school is not part of that firm, efficiently churning out the ‘human capital’ required to run it. We do damage to our very sense of the common good to even think of the human drama of education in these terms. It is demeaning to teachers and creates a schooling process that remains unconnected to the lives of so many children. (Apple, 1979/1990, p. xiv)<sup>156</sup>

Alternatively, looking at teaching and learning from a perspective that considers and values the needs and interests of growing human beings, letting go of outcomes allows both teacher and student the opportunity to become present in the actual, relational experience of teaching and learning, without projecting into the future an agenda based on rigidly intended outcomes. Taking this view also allows for teacher and student to be open to actually experiencing the “sphere of ‘between,’” as Martin Buber refers to the locus of relationship between humans (Hodes, 1972, p. 72). This allows for much deeper and more profound learning and for a much more profound connection between teacher and student, as well as between people and the problem that has been posed for their joint consideration (Palmer’s [1998] “great thing”).

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<sup>156</sup> Interesting, Apple (1979/1990) asserts that our society has “generated” a “system of meanings and values” “increasingly dominated by an ‘ethic’ of privatization, unconnected individualism, greed, and profit” which “has to be challenged in a variety of ways” (p. xv). This description sounds strikingly like the Buddhist list of unwholesome roots: greed, hatred, and delusion (the last of which, in particular, refers to a lack of understanding of our interdependence with each other and our environments); aligned with Apple’s call to action, the Dharma’s very purpose is to challenge these unwholesome roots in a variety of ways.



Being present can mean letting go of a particular approach. It may also mean letting go of the goal of that day's class. Is this goal more important than what is coming up in the moment? We must wrestle with this question, because the answer is always different. If we have developed our capacities for discipline, we will not change course just because students complain or get sidetracked. But sometimes our larger vision of the purpose of this class, which transcends the goal of a particular lesson plan, reveals an opportunity to learn better now what we might have planned for two months from now. (Kessler, 2004, p. 18)

In the Dharma, letting go of outcomes is called “aimlessness” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 152), a concept rooted in equanimity and non-duality, or the notion that things are acceptable the way they are (since suffering contains within it the essence of its own cessation).<sup>157</sup>

This does not mean that we do not care. We do and we should care. We choose to open our hearts and to offer as much love, compassion, and rejoicing as we possibly can, and we also let go of results. (Salzberg, 1995/2002, p. 147)

From the perspective of the Four Noble Truths, discussed in Chapter 4, adhering to an educational agenda based on rigidly-held outcomes only provides fuel for the Second Noble Truth to operate. Since, according to the Second Noble Truth, suffering arises from not getting what one wants, contemporary outcome-based education provides many opportunities for both teachers and students to needlessly suffer. Moreover, this suffering fails to advance the interests or improve the well-being of students or the

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<sup>157</sup> Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) calls this “ontological peace,” which “has nothing to with a psychological harmony or a political peace but refers to absolute acceptance of all that which is without such dualism as good or bad, right or wrong” (pp. 220-221). Equanimity is discussed in Chapter 5.

communities of which they are a part. As Thich Nhat Hanh (1998a) puts it, “Worrying does not accomplish anything” (p. 154).

The Third Noble Truth, or the cessation of suffering, involves liberation from craving and aversion; in this instance, it implies being unattached to outcomes, or creating an educational culture where the well-being of students and teachers is not contingent or predicated upon successfully meeting a plethora of outcomes dictated from afar. The Third Noble Truth involves being happy with things as they are. It does not mean being indifferent or not taking action to transform one’s own suffering or the suffering of others. Not only can “being happy with things as they are” coexist with skillful action designed to reduce suffering and increase happiness, it is an essential aspect of reducing suffering and increasing happiness. “We only need to be happy in the present moment, and we can be of service to those we love and to our whole society” (Nhat Hanh, 1998a, p. 155).

Applying the concept of aimlessness to teaching and learning, one recognizes that it is beneficial for students to learn and to grow and develop as human beings. However, this aspiration would be better framed in terms of Right Intention instead of in terms of an agenda based on rigid learning outcomes, mechanistically applied to all students. To practice Right Intention as a teacher means aspiring for things that are in one’s students’ best interests, both as students and as human beings with particular backgrounds, circumstances, and histories. Of course, most teachers naturally aspire to this, but societal pressures and the formulaic institutional focus on learning outcomes distracts teachers from this primary focus, often making students a means to an end rather than the end in themselves.

## Teaching for Social and Emotional Well-Being of Self and Community

In “Educating the Heart,” Melvin McLeod (2007) makes a connection between His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s views on education, which are rooted in the Dharma, and SEL, which was discussed in Chapter 6. As discussed in Chapter 6, the characterization of SEL as educating both the mind and the heart is remarkably compatible with the pedagogical implications of the Buddhist understanding of mind and heart states discussed in Chapter 4. Moreover, SEL asserts that educating the heart is essential for the effective education of the mind, or that intellectual learning depends on emotional competence and well-being.

Jonathan Cohen (1999) asserts that social and emotional competency is based on the twin foundations of “*self-reflective capacities*” and the “*ability to recognize what others are thinking and feeling*” (p. 11).<sup>158</sup> Mindfulness of one’s own mind and heart states enhances the former capacity, and mindfulness of interactions and relationships, or authentic presence in the “sphere of ‘between,’” enhances the latter ability. Moreover, other aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path (e.g., the intention to act in ways that are in the interests of self and others and the cultivation of skillful mind and heart states) are geared towards taking action that enhances the social and emotional well-being of oneself and those that one interacts with. Therefore, Buddhist practice, as outlined in the Noble Eightfold Path discussed in Chapter 5, facilitates, develops, and strengthens what Cohen identifies as the foundations of social and emotional competency.

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<sup>158</sup> Cohen (1999) defines “social and emotional *competencies* or modes of intelligence” as those things that “allow us to modulate emotions, to solve social problems creatively, to be effective leaders or collaborators, to be assertive and responsible, or to be able to ask evocative emotional and/or social questions that lead to new learning” (p. 11).

Moreover, as the individual develops personal social and emotional competency, this will benefit society as a whole. Yoshiharu Nakagawa (2000) uses Leonard Angel's terms and calls personal growth and transformation "Enlightenment East" and the positive transformation of social structures and conditions "Enlightenment West" (p. 211).

The movements of deep ecology and Engaged Buddhism may be forms of Enlightenment East and West, and of contemplative and social-activist spirituality.

One of the basic assumptions of these movements is that the inner transformation of the self leads to social transformation.... A deep sense of interconnectedness through an inner transformation will lead to action on the social plane. (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 211)

Indeed, Nakagawa (2000) takes this argument a step further by liberating the conceptual split between individual and society from dualism. In alignment with the Dharma's understanding of non-duality and no-self, he argues that "in reality, the self and society can never be separated; society is within ourselves; we are socially conditioned in the body-mind structure, and in this sense 'we are the society'" (p. 216). In this way, contemplative practice makes profound critical consciousness, or, as Nakagawa (2000) describes it, "radical social criticism" (p. 215), possible; moreover, when critical consciousness matures into social action, that social action, as an expression of interdependence, becomes part of the practitioner's contemplative path.

Because the practitioner gains a measure of spiritual liberation strictly through the performance of social action geared towards well-being and emancipation, regardless of

its outcome, “the work of service and the inner work become one and the same thing... in the reciprocal way the work and the contemplative practice make a seamless fabric” (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 217). In this way, “action becomes a spontaneous expression from the compassionate heart” (p. 218). Essentially, strictly by engaging in praxis (by taking action directed at emancipation based on critical reflection) informed by the interdependence of self, others, society, and one’s environment, one achieves a measure of spiritual liberation.

### Conclusion

This thesis articulates a theoretical framework of socially-engaged Buddhism of enough depth to provide a foundation for an approach to teaching and learning I call “socially-engaged pedagogy.” Above, I define “socially-engaged pedagogy” as “the integration of the implications of the Dharma with the practice of teaching and learning in a transformational, liberatory, and progressive way. Socially-engaged pedagogy represents the notion that teaching and learning can be a practical and efficacious site for progressive social action designed to address the real problem of suffering, both in the present and in the future, as it manifests in the world, exemplified by stress, illness, violence, war, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, marginalization, and ecological degradation.”

Key elements of socially-engaged pedagogy include an intentional attempt on the part of teachers and students to address suffering in the world, the cultivation of a profoundly dialogical and respectful relationship between teachers and students, the valuing and building of community, the cultivation of critical consciousness, and an intentional effort to nourish the well-being of students, teachers, and their communities

through the constructing teaching and learning in ways that are consistent with Right Livelihood. Socially-engaged pedagogy is concerned with the generation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to thoughts, speech, and actions rooted in wholesome and skillful mind and heart states and animated by the intention to act in the ultimate interests of oneself and all others.

These kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes lead naturally to a sense and practice of “deep community” (in relation to a variety of communities, including the classroom, the school, the family, the larger societal and cultural milieu, and ecosystems and the planet as a whole), where community members aspire to recognize and act in accordance with their profound interdependence with one another. Examples of practices that generate this kind of community include mindful, communicative kindness, described in Chapter 5, and critical consciousness imbued with love, generosity, and wisdom, discussed above.

In this regard, this thesis primarily represents the theoretical and reflective aspect of praxis. It calls for further work to be done in relation to building and developing the practical and strategy-oriented aspect of praxis. Fortunately, this work has already begun. It ranges from Pike and Selby’s (1988, 1999, and 2000) existent work on global education, which includes a wealth of practical ideas and strategies for teaching and learning, and Kimberly Post Rowe’s (2007) practical manual and curriculum guide for facilitating mindfulness in the classroom, to picture books written for young children (Barbey, 2005, MacLean, 2004, and Susan, 2001), elementary school-aged children (Taylor, 2004, and Susan, 2007), and older children (Nhat Hanh, 2001b), as well as an audience of all ages (Conover, 2001, Nhat Hanh, 2005, Muth, 2002, and Muth, 2005).

The former are valuable resources for informing one's approach to teaching and lesson-planning, while the latter are useful as texts that can be used for teacher read-aloud activities, student-read texts, and reader-response activities in classrooms, as well as family or community-based reading and discussion outside of the classroom.<sup>159</sup>

In addition, organizations exist whose goals resonate with those articulated by and reflected in the present work. These include Inner Kids (Kaiser Greenland, 2007), the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA (2007), Mindfulness in Education Network (Brady, 2005), the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education (2007), the Garrison Institute (2005), and CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2007).

Essentially, this thesis represents a call for teaching and learning to make the world a better place for students, teachers, their families, and their communities, including the community that we all share – the planet Earth. Insofar as this call represents the existing aspirations of thousands of teachers world-wide and many existing educational programs and practices, the practical aspect of this theoretical work is already in progress. However, there remains much to be done, and it is up to us, as teacher-students, student-teachers, and citizens of the Earth, to further this work by continuing to plant and cultivate seeds of love, compassion, social action, joy, happiness, peace, equanimity, cooperation, and social justice. The field of teaching and learning provides fertile ground for us, as teachers, family members, community members, cultural workers, and human beings, to plant these seeds and encourage them to grow and develop.

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<sup>159</sup> Another resource with lesson ideas and ideas about how to approach teaching in this fashion is the Fair Trade Educational Toolkit that I wrote for La Siembra Co-operative (McLeod, 2007).

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