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The ethical space of mindfulness in clinical practice

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The Ethical Space of Mindfulness in Clinical Practice

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ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University op gezag van de rector
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het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de Ruth First zaal van de Universiteit
op
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door
Donald Allison McCown Jr
geboren op 1 oktober 1953 te Bryn Mawr, P.A. USA

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Prof. dr. K. Gergen
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Start Here

A Final Scene as Prologue

I am just a part of the circle. In this moment, at the close of a guided meditation, we are silent. We are looking up, eyes meeting sometimes, or looking down, or aside: subtle smiles, conscious solemnity, transparent sadness. I have invited the circle to "say what needs to be said" at the end of this eight-week course in mindfulness. We are already saying most of it in silence.

For some, feeling a way into speech may be smooth and direct, for others, it may be a longer passage. And there is always the choice to maintain silence, to share as we are sharing now. We are in a palpable relation that becomes audible at last. "I don't think I even know everyone's names, but I feel very close to you all. That's not anything I expected when I started this class. I need to say thank you to everyone for being here, for being with me in this."

So a theme is established. Then it's reinforced. "I don't know why, but practice has been much more profound in some way when I'm with the group. I'm a little worried that I won't be able to keep it going without you." Variations arise. "I was so glad to get to class every week, and when I missed, it helped to think of you all when I practiced at home." And again. "I never would have believed that I could feel so relaxed in a group of strangers."

One particular name, mine, comes into the thank yous quite often, "for guiding us," or, even more simply, for "holding this space for us." Yet I find this is turned easily back into the "we" of the class.

Very personal stories from our eight weeks together—of struggle and transformation, of pain faced, grief encountered, change begun—get told, and heard, and held once again in empathy and silence. There are also some big surprises. "I never mentioned this, but my husband passed away just a month

before class started. Just to be here has helped me so much." And the woman who rarely, maybe never, spoke in class says it all. "This may be the first time that I've ever really felt safe and accepted."

I am just a part of the circle. What I need to say has already been said, powerfully, by others. I offer my own confirmation. And silence. In a very short meditation practice—our time is almost up—we offer to each other wishes of unconditional friendliness, peace, safety, health, and ease. When we look up, it's to say goodbye with our eyes, and hands, and arms, and voices. It's hard to do, hard to stay with, and yet we find that even this we can do, together.

What a Difference a View Makes

I've been teaching mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in hospital and organizational settings for a decade. So, I have been just a part of nearly countless circles, each much the same, and yet each unique. And nearly countless times I've been struck by the paradox of the view from my seat. I could choose to describe each of the individuals assembled here, with their particular vulnerabilities, pains, and fears. Yet, simultaneously, I could choose to speak of the group's powerful sense of its interrelatedness—even if unspoken—forming the friendly contours of a container that is each moment alive with promise for each of us.

These are two ways of seeing, two ways of talking, that open into different realms of meaning and potential—especially in considering the ethical. In the first, where the circle is a collection of individuals, I am definitively the teacher, the professional, the therapist even, responsible for each one. I see the faces with the stories of their suffering locked inside, behind their eyes, and my first ethical thought is "let me do no harm." Further, I think, "let me comfort these people who are in my care." That thought, however, cannot be expressed to them; it's all on me. I lose my voice. I'm put in that position where I worry about "compassion fatigue" and my ever-diminishing opportunities for self-care. In the second way of seeing/talking, where the circle is defined in relationship, I am part of a group that has co-created ways to bear whatever is there—joy or pain or fear—with each participant in each moment. We have come to trust that we can continue in relationship,

however simply, throughout our time together. The ethical thought that arises for me is directly related to this sense of co-creation: "Here is a safe place where comfort and care can happen—and are happening." As we tend to our relational process together, I can be certain that the next step I take will be right or (at worst!) quickly corrected. I am indeed the teacher, and have borne responsibility for bringing the group together and sharing what I know of mindfulness. I offer the authenticity of my own mindfulness practice, the authority of what I have learned in working with it (deeply enough to be its author), and the friendship of simply meeting people where they are in the moment without an agenda. So, in this co-creation, I am not an agent who "does" things to the class. I do not shoulder the ethical burden alone. I have my own voice and place in the group that offer me satisfaction. And, rather than fearing compassion fatigue, I look for connection and refreshment.

The first way of seeing/speaking is one in which we are embedded through culture, education, and professional training. It seems simply obvious that we are autonomous agents who choose our actions and can be held responsible for them. This view is assumed as "how it is." Our government, economic system, institutions (health care and education, certainly), many friendships and families are shaped by and around it. This view of autonomy can be seen as key to morality and justice. Reward or punishment follows from the individual's free choice of action. This is the view in which professional codes of ethics, applied ethics schemes of various theoretical stripes, and expert clinical ethicists, provide some security—and insulation—for clinicians.

The second way of seeing, it goes without saying, is not so embedded, does not come so easily. Understanding the view, therefore, requires a bit of flip or turn. In fact, it's possible to describe one by using the other. The very concept of autonomous individuals is created within relationships, through the ways that we communicate (Cupitt, 1992, 2001; Gergen, 2009). In seeking a fast and simple explanation, Gergen (2011) points to Wittgenstein's (1953) concept of language games. That is, words come into meaning as they are used in a relational community—what Wittgenstein calls a "form of life." So, "autonomous individuals" with "inner lives" who exercise

"free will" are products of—and resources for—the relationships in which they are talked about. Essentially, the meanings of words, or gestures, postures, facial expressions, deliberate sounds or markings, the whole human repertoire, arise in the relational process. With my chess-playing friends, to use a Wittgensteinian example, I can speak of pawns and knights and castling and checkmate, or share a raised eyebrow as we watch another player make a dangerous move. Just so, with each of my MBSR classes or private clients, a different set of shared experiences creates a unique way of communicating; certainly every group or dyad may speak of "sitting meditation" and "the breath," yet only one group comprehends "the red cylinder of Joanne's pain" or "Bob's second raisin." In concert, we create "forms of life" that are rich, thick with value and meaning.

Likewise, we can have such a relational view of the moral or ethical. In Gergen's (2009, 2011) description of this, as a group's shared meanings and values are enriched, a particular sense of the "good" is established. This "good" is not a narrow, action-oriented setting out of oughts and ought nots, such as is common currency in much contemporary ethical thinking, particularly in professional applications. Rather, it is a shared understanding, which may or may not be articulated, of the good life as lived within our group. It is difficult, then, to step outside that good life together and to choose "evil." It would not be bad so much as it would be unthinkable; it would make no sense in the particular context. For example, in an MBSR class, the participant who would sing (at least aloud!) during sitting meditation would be very rare indeed—"that's just not what we do." Gergen's (2009, 2011) term for such an establishment of goods is "first order morality," and he sees first order moralities within groups large and small continuously and spontaneously being generated.

These proliferating first order moralities, between group and group, continuously impinge on one another, Gergen (2009, 2011) says. Among my own commitments to first order moralities, I must squelch one good to boost another. For example, the mindfulness community's good of keeping contemplative time on my calendar gives way to the university's good of responding promptly to a student in need. Where the stakes are higher, in say politics or religion, these impingements may

have dire consequences. Rather than squelch and boost, the verbs tend towards threaten, repress, eliminate. Lines are drawn between good and evil, which, seen objectively, is between good and good. And with the drawing of a line comes an end to a relationship. Individuals or groups with impinging goods cannot enter dialogue, coordinate actions, or co-create meaning. On a parallel plane, with stakes no less high, the clinician–patient or caregiver–client relationship hold this same potential for impinging goods—not just in the dyad, but in the relationships that radiate from each participant, through family, profession, community, and further (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Questions of clinical ethics may be seen as good impinging on good.

In this view, first order moralities are bounded by a particular horizon of values. When they meet each other, the kind of coordination that generates ways of being together (a new first order!) is inconceivable. What is required at this point, suggests Gergen (2009, 2011), is a *second order* morality, a possibility of relating again in a way that can co-create meaning. This is not achieved by each taking *individual responsibility*—tending toward conflict again—but rather by replacing such an inflammatory view with *relational responsibility*, that is, attending to the relationship itself. The challenge is to find ways to keep the relationship going, and particularly to explore the possibilities for co-creating meaning and value. Again, it's possible to see how questions of clinical ethics share this conceptual form. And, more important, it's possible to see how such questions may be resolved through second order moral practices.

Gergen (2011, p.219) is doubtful that theorizing second order morality itself could be of use in the day-to-day world. To bring it further into language brings it further into academic theorizing, a "form of life" often at a distance from the quotidian. He proposes an alternative:

> *Rather than beginning with a full-blown theoretical analysis, we may search for existing patterns of action within the culture—actions that appear to be effective in achieving second-order morality. We may then cross the boundaries separating theory and practice by drawing these domains into conversation with each other… Practitioners may become*

more reflective about their activities and find theoretical articulation useful in expanding the implications and potentials of practice.

In the essay that follows, I intend to take up what I see as a challenge— to show in practice and in theory how the first order morality of the mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) is of significant value to its community in considering clinical ethics, and, further, to show how its unique constitution also suggests its utility as a second order morality. I trust that the theoretical articulation required will be useful, as promised, to clinicians and educators in working with the challenges of their day-to-day practice, as well as to the MBI community as it faces the urgencies attendant to its rapid growth and painstaking search for definition.

I have no intention of prescribing what a professional in the MBIs should or should not do, or ways for her to be or not to be. That is not my ethical interest. Rather, it is my hope to generate two linked actions within the fast-growing MBI community: first, deeper and more specific reflection upon our own practices, and, second, broader and more discerning dialogue about the category of the ethical and the questions that are most pressing now. I hope to get something started, not finished. This essay is offered, then, from a mindful stance, which maintains a present-moment focus, avoids the reification of concepts, and admits any theory's inherent insufficiency and impermanence. What's more, in spite of academic convention, but very much to invite dialogue and ongoing generation of ideas and possibilities, this essay is written in the first person. I am just a part of the circle.

In Search of What's Already There

The Unique Situation of the MBIs

This essay into the ethics of the mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) is just that, an essay, which as a verb means to try or attempt: "He *essayed* a smile." I am testing my understanding of the ethics implicit in the pedagogy of the MBIs by sending out a probe. As Annie Dillard's image has it (1989, p.7), "The line of words is a fiber optic, flexible as wire; it illumines that path just before its fragile tip. You probe with it, delicate as a worm." My intention is to make some small contribution to the most urgent concerns within the MBI community, even though those concerns may not even appear, on the surface, to be ethical.

In its first 30 years, the community of practitioners and researchers in the MBIs has shown little interest in engaging the ethical, at least under that term. I searched two significant repositories of the academic research literature on the MBIs, the MEDLINE and PSYCHinfo databases, using the very broad search string of "mindfulness" and "ethics" and was rewarded with 8 and 31 articles, respectively. Again respectively, 0 and 3 of those articles specifically referred to ethics within the MBIs (Cullen, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Sauer, *et al.*, 2011), and none was devoted to the subject.

I was not surprised. In my own conversations within the community over the past ten years or so, my interest in articulating an ethics for mindfulness teachers has been met mostly with puzzlement and curiosity—"Why are you thinking about that?" Meaning that we are facing other, more pressing issues, so shouldn't the community's energy be going towards those? Concerns over an articulated ethic

certainly have taken a back seat to generating the empirical research that has been so influential in spreading the good word and, frankly, relieving more suffering in the world—an inarguable urgency. The community has engaged that urgency remarkably well. So well, in fact, that new urgencies, in a whole different register, are arising, due to growth in the number of interventions and involved professionals that seems likely to render the adjective "exponential" meaningless. The two new urgencies that have arisen together are pointed inward, towards the community of professionals. It is not coincidental that they are described again and again in the few articles that mention ethics. (I did find more than three articles, through various other venues!) The first urgency is the need for a careful definition of mindfulness, not only to improve the science, but also to protect the construct from being watered down or misconstrued. This is being approached by continued dialogue within the scientific community (e.g., Brown, *et al.*, 2011; Grossman, 2011; Hölzel, *et al.*, 2011b), by appeal to foundations in Buddhist theory (e.g., Cullen, 2011; Grossman, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; see special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism*, 2011, 12(1), for more), and by developing new language and theory to distinguish differences of the MBIs from conventional clinical practices (e.g., Sauer, *et al.*, 2011). The second urgency is a related need to ensure that the newer professionals being trained in the MBIs will have deep, authentic understandings and experiences of mindfulness and be able to maintain an ongoing connection to mindfulness meditation practice (Cullen, 2011; Grossman, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Santorelli, *et al.*, 2011).

I believe that a clearly described ethics of the MBIs, conceived from a relational perspective and reflective of the moment-to-moment experience of teacher and participants, has something to contribute to both of these urgencies of the MBI community. The "theoretical articulation," as promised in the prologue, will at least provide a new perspective on both urgencies. The view from the "relational being" standpoint is close in many ways to views within the MBIs, as I hope to show. Further, I hope that the shift in language required to accomplish this will help define or refine some tiny portion of the MBI community's experiences of mindfulness practice and pedagogy. Before *essaying* this articulation, however, it will be helpful to build a

background in the growth and identities of the MBIs, the place and person of the teacher in the MBIs, and the potential directions for and definitions of ethics in the MBIs.

Growth and Proliferation of Identities

If we simply date MBIs from the 1979 start of Jon Kabat-Zinn's program of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990), we could say that MBIs are entering their fourth decade of development.[1] In the 1980s and '90s, the clinical application of

1   If we take a broader view of meditation, we might push a date for clinical applications and medical research back to 1972, when Herbert Benson began developing the concept of the relaxation response (Benson, 1975). Perhaps a more inclusive and judicious date, however, would be 1945, when the occupation of Japan by American forces brought American clinicians into contact with—and admiration for—Zen Buddhism and Zen-derived modalities, such as Morita therapy. Such practices and approaches influenced the ongoing development of psychotherapy from that date—for example, the influence of Zen on psychoanalysis, on the genesis of Gestalt therapy, and on the flowering of the humanistic therapies generally (see Dryden & Still, 2006, or McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010, for elaboration). It is helpful to understand that because the literature of those earlier interventions is based in theoretical and qualitative discourses, as opposed to the empirical and quantitative discourse of the MBIs, their legacies and continuing contributions have been effectively silenced in the current academic discussions of meditation and mindfulness.

Perhaps it is also helpful to understand that the influence of Eastern spirituality on Western intellectual concerns is far more longstanding than its current discourse suggests: it began in earnest in the eighteenth century, as Europeans (and North Americans) translated and interpreted sacred texts from the "Orient," first from the Hindu scriptures, and, by the early nineteenth century, from Buddhist sources, as well (see McCown & Micozzi, 2012, for detail). By the mid-nineteenth century, it suited the purposes of the Colonial powers and the colonized cultures to develop a discourse in which Buddhism could be seen as a "scientific" religion. The seemingly intractable scientific challenges to the Judeo-Christian worldview led the elites of the West to look elsewhere, and Buddhism was malleable enough to be presented as friendly to the scientific worldview—even through the evolution of that science from Victorian mechanistic views to the ineffabilities of contemporary quantum concepts. Certainly, this romantic/modern construal of Buddhism as "scientific" is salient in the discourse of the MBIs (see Lopez, 2008, and McMahan, 2008, for more).

mindfulness was a niche practice in both medicine and mental health care that developed slowly. The even pace of that development can be seen as the straight handle of the "ice hockey stick" in the chart in Figure 1.1, showing the growth of the academic and scientific literature on MBIs. As the figure shows, interest in and research on the MBIs began moving from the hockey stick handle to the blade toward the end of the 1990s. This escalating growth can be interpreted with an eye to the cultural uptake of Kabat-Zinn's de facto manual for MBSR, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, published in 1990, and, particularly, the Public Broadcasting System's television program *Healing and the Mind*, hosted by Bill Moyers, which featured Kabat-Zinn in a substantial segment, first shown in 1993. Beyond its sizeable impact on the popular culture—the Moyers series has been credited with opening American culture both to mindfulness and to Traditional Chinese Medicine (Harrington, 2008)—the series was also a powerful catalyst for professional interest in mindfulness across the full range of helping professions. Physicians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, marriage and family therapists, professional counselors, occupational therapists, pastoral counselors, life coaches, spiritual directors, educators, and folks from the professions and business disciplines began lining up for professional training programs to learn how to bring mindfulness to their patients, clients, students, and colleagues. It's been a long line. By latest count, more than 9,000 professionals—from 35 nations— have received at least the initial level of training in MBSR, and among other accomplishments, now offer MBSR in more than 500 clinics around the world (Cullen, 2011).

Those "other accomplishments" include the development of other group-format MBIs, most of which are built with lesser or greater fidelity on the structure of the MBSR program. The first of these MBIs married cognitive therapy (CT) with MBSR, creating mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), for preventing relapse in major depressive disorder. The research using this MBI showed a powerful effect—cutting the relapse rate by nearly half, versus treatment as usual, for target patients (Teasdale, *et al.*, 2000). Further, joining CT and MBSR leveraged the dominance of

the cognitive-behavioral therapies in clinical and academic psychology and related disciplines—hitching mindfulness to a star with a legacy of decades of successful research. This had a dramatic impact on funding further research and expanding the potential to reduce suffering in the world. For example, the evidence base persuaded the National Health Service to fund patient participation in the program in every country in the UK, which in turn has created a huge demand for trained teachers, and has spawned many training programs both in and outside the university system (Crane, *et al.*, 2010).

Mindfulness publications by year, 1980–2011
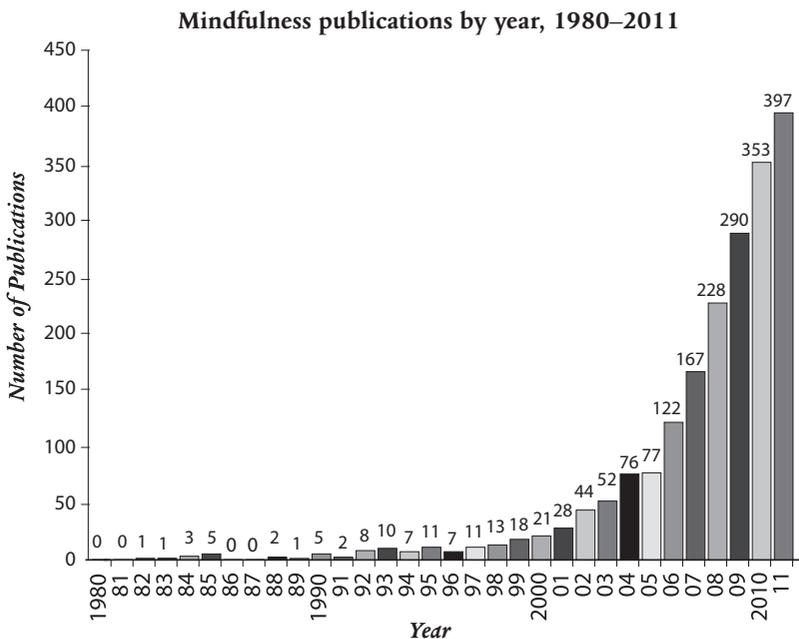
Figure 1.1 Data obtained from a search for "mindfulness" in the ISI Web of Science database (search limited to research-related articles; book-related material excluded)

Figure provided by David S. Black, Ph.D. Figure available from Mindfulness Research Guide—mindfulexperience.org

In continuing the established pattern and modes of empirical research, then, MBSR, MBCT, or hybridized forms have been and are now being targeted to specific populations and/or medical or mental health conditions or disorders, to investigate the efficacy of

MBIs for further specific conditions. In a list drawn just from the intervention and application research published in the first month of 2012, the lists of populations and conditions are indicative of the size of the undertaking (Black, 2012): there are Chinese patients, midlife patients, African American adolescents, refugees and ethnic minority populations, veterans of war, prisoners, smokers, and school counselors. Switching to conditions, I find rumination and depression, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), hypertension, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), negative emotional behavior, chronic pain, substance use, bi-polar disorder, and command hallucinations in psychotic disorders. A list from a decade—even a year—would be vast.

Logically, generating more and more specific MBIs is one result of such a research agenda. There is mindfulness-based relationship enhancement (MBRE) (Carson, *et al.*, 2006), mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP) (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985), mindfulness-based eating awareness training (MB-EAT) (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999), mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting (MBCP) (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010), to name just a few. I often get a laugh by ending any list I present with MB-ETC, since every list is outdated so quickly. Each of these can be an entry point for further professionals to become interested in mindfulness, and to seek training—which, of course, is willingly offered. The ranks swell, and training programs multiply.

The MBIs also are considered to include two psychotherapeutic interventions developed without specific reference to the MBSR armature: dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993a, b), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT, pronounced "act") (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). While neither of these emphasizes disciplined meditation practice over relatively long periods in the ways of the MBIs based on MBSR, they join in the valuing of mindfulness principles and informal practice in daily life. As both also come from the cognitive-behavioral tradition, they significantly and continually augment the shared evidence base for the efficacy of MBIs in mental health applications. Both, again, are entry points for recruitment and training of many professionals.

And we must not forget that there are also independent psychotherapists who are applying mindfulness in their practices with

groups and individuals. Some may have training in MBSR or another MBI, while others may have trained in "unaffiliated" mindfulness-based programs or be relying upon training in spiritual traditions in which mindfulness is used. The growth here is equally amazing. In a 2007 survey, *Psychotherapy Networker* magazine found that "mindfulness therapy" was the third most popular approach, employed by more than 40 percent of the more than 2,500 respondents—a percentage that has no doubt been increasing as the trend continues (Simon, 2007).

The number of professionals involved with mindfulness as an intervention, then, is indeed growing increasingly large. If that 40 percent number for therapists is usable the numbers are actually staggering—just using US Bureau of Labor Statistics figures for clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and mental health counselors, that translates to more than 225,000 mental health professionals practicing mindfulness with clients. If it's only half true, it's still a breathtaking number, and does not even suggest a final sum, when all disciplines within medicine, mental health care, and education—just the three most advanced areas of practice, are represented. It's no surprise then that urgencies arise around what might be expressed as "professional competence" in mindfulness and the MBIs. Cullen (2011, p.191) reports, "The exponential growth in MBSR and its many derivatives has created a universe of programs too big for either coordination or quality control by the Center for Mindfulness (CFM)"; the CFM has been the seat of professional training in MBSR since the 1980s. Of course, certification of teachers is also challenged by potential volume—in ten years, the CFM program has only processed around 100 certification applications, which came from around the world (Cullen, 2011). With an experiential, embodied practice, there are no easy measures; no computer-scored licensing exam could do the job. Urgency? Indeed.

While this exploration of growth and identity of the MBIs has done little more than wave the names and suggest the targets and scope of these ever-multiplying entities, it is useful to know more about them. What will be of most use however is to know their demands upon and ways of shaping the professionals who deliver them. This will be included as we explore the person of the teacher.

The Place and Person of the Teacher

Not only is there little interest in ethics, the literature also reveals little interest in the person of the teacher and her place in the delivery of the intervention—except by negation. As colleagues and I have pointed out (McCown, *et al.*, 2010), there has been a paradox at work. By adhering to the "gold standard" clinical-trial model for studies of the MBIs, researchers effectively neutralized the role of the teacher. Such research sees mindfulness as analogous to a medication, and assumes that it's not the person delivering it that is important, but rather the ingredients that matter. Naturally, then, research demands that MBIs be developed as manualized interventions with fidelity measures to control for "therapist effects" and reveal the efficacy of the "medication" itself. As we put it:

> *All this has allowed the secondary needs of researchers to overshadow the primary needs of teachers and students. The research on MBIs is the sunny side of the mountain—warm, inviting, and a topic of much animated discussion. The pedagogy of mindfulness, then, is the shadow side—forbidding, less explored, and spoken of only in small groups and rarely above a whisper. (McCown, et al., 2010, p.26)*

There is another underexplored area, to which the teacher contributes. Within the discourse of the current scientific studies, mindfulness is conceived as an individualist undertaking. The teacher–participant relationship has not been thoroughly considered, except in terms of fidelity of delivery of the intervention. Further, the interdependent relationships within the group have been a thing for footnotes and fear, not for promotion and exploration. As far as the research community is willing to be concerned, each participant learns mindfulness practice for herself or himself, and any benefits produced by the practice accrue to the individual alone. Although the studies report on differences between the "MBSR group" and the "control group," they are merely considering an aggregate of isolated individuals, not a co-created and sustained community.

The current discourse about the teacher and her place in the MBIs is tangential to the highly successful discourse of current research. It seems that it may take larger forces to create a dialogue. The demands of

academic discipline on teacher training, as is being felt in the dedicated programs in the United Kingdom (Crane, *et al.*, 2010), are one set of forces. Gentle calls from teachers for robust dialogue with researchers about the seemingly opposed yet potentially complementary needs for *fidelity* to a protocol and *integrity* in responding authentically in the moment, is another force that may come to bear (e.g., McCown & Wiley, 2008, 2009).

The teaching community's public dialogue is still in its infancy. An outsider trying to define the person of the teacher would find a black box with very little light. There are published manuals for particular MBIs, but these are far more concerned with curriculum than teacher qualities (Hayes, *et al.*, 1999; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Linehan, 1993a, b; Segal, *et al.*, 2002). The few easily available direct discussions of the teacher include reflections by Jon Kabat-Zinn in various contexts (2003, 2005, 2011) and his sustained statement in the Foreword to *Teaching Mindfulness: A Practical Guide for Clinicians and Educators* (McCown, *et al.*, 2010). Following this foreword, the work by me and my colleagues Diane Reibel and Marc Micozzi essays a more pragmatic "how to" approach to becoming a teacher in the MBIs. A more inspirational (and aspirational) treatment of teaching is *Heal Thy Self: Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine*, by Saki Santorelli (1999), director of the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness (UMASS CFM). An article on the experience of developing a comprehensive program to educate new MBI teachers in the UK (Crane, *et al.*, 2010), offers valuable insights and identifies particular challenges. The UK work has also resulted in a teacher rating scale and manual (Crane, *et al.*, 2012).

The overwhelming portion of the discourse of teaching and teachers, then, is difficult to access. It is to be found, at cost, within the trainings offered through the wide variety of venues, from the MBSR-centered trainings of the Oasis program of the CFM; to established and emerging academic programs and courses that may include training in other MBIs; to the proprietary programs offered by the originators or early practitioners of other MBIs, such as ACT or DBT; all the way to workshops offered by relatively new graduates of other training programs. From one perspective, this is simply an artifact of

market forces, the established pattern through which innovators can be rewarded financially for their work. From another more profound perspective, this reveals the experiential character of teacher formation. There is a mixing of existential commitment to formal mindfulness practice and the "inner work" of personal transformation with the more mundane, though innovative, pedagogical skills required to guide participants and clients in exploring experiences that are often quite different from those of other interventions. This mixture is identifiable in the different MBIs, and can perhaps be seen as a continuum that helps in understanding both the place and expectations of the person of the teacher within them. I trust that there is much to learn from a look across the four most established MBIs—MBSR, MBCT, DBT, and ACT—plus consideration of the hard-to-define category of professionals that teach mindfulness to clients. As I explore these, please keep in mind that it is more to establish clarity for the theoretical work that I am undertaking than it is to make distinctions or create categories. And, as I have acknowledged (McCown, *et al.*, 2010), while it is possible to draw these distinctions based on the literature for each intervention, professionals in the MBIs are uneasy about even suggesting a bounded definition of a competent teacher.

MBSR

Mindfulness-based stress reduction anchors one end of the continuum. It is targeted to a heterogeneous audience, who may be coming for relief from any intensity and any kind of medical or psychological issue. Its training programs emphasize the developing teacher's ongoing practice of formal mindfulness meditation and "inner work," leading to transformation of the teacher's way of being in the world. The CFM's recommendations for training and development before beginning to teach are striking. Perhaps a detailed look at the guidelines for teachers at the entry level in the CFM itself (Santorelli, 2001a) will give the flavor more precisely than the more easily accessible, but less quantified description on the CFM website. Beyond a graduate degree in a health- or education-related discipline and completion of MBSR training programs, the existential commitment comes on strong. A candidate would have a disciplined personal practice: a

minimum of three years of formal daily mindfulness meditation and three years studying hatha yoga or another practice of embodiment. Further, the candidate would also have participated in two five-day or longer retreats in the Theravada or Zen Buddhist traditions and be committed to ongoing, regular retreat practice. Santorelli (2001b) has described how the existential demands on the teacher are not for the purpose of improving pedagogical skills, but rather to impact the teacher's presence—in the moment and with the participants. That is, deeply practiced teachers offer "an authentic embodiment of this commitment to be awake to one's life no matter what is occurring" (p.11-8.1). He notes the results (p.11-8.4): "When patients feel this unspoken connection with their instructor, it offers them the possibility of feeling the same kind of warm connection with themselves." So, it's the person *of* the teacher, not the person *as* a teacher that is central to the pedagogy of MBSR.

MBCT

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, as a specifically psychotherapeutic intervention, was designed originally for participants who had suffered from major depressive disorder and were taking the course to help prevent relapse of depression. With its success, applications continue to expand, joining the basic armature, derived from MBSR, and specific adjustments in the cognitive therapy components for a growing variety of psychiatric diagnoses. MBCT's view of the person of the teacher takes on a more pragmatic and professional quality, given the context within academic and clinical psychology. A primary qualification for teaching is a professional degree and license in a mental health profession. This is joined, it is hoped, with a background in cognitive therapy and group dynamics. The existential commitment required is "having your own practice" (Segal, *et al.*, p.83), which is directly related to the developers' failures in attempts to teach without one. The reasoning is more practical, if you will, than in MBSR. It's stated as—you can't teach someone to swim unless you're a swimmer too. Given MBCT's position in the discourse of science, statements regarding the teacher's personal development must be couched with some wiggle room:

> *Until there is empirical evidence backing up the key importance of particular competencies, there is some room for open-minded skepticism in this area, but current best practice by individuals and organizations offering mindfulness-based teacher training is based on the understanding that distinctive and particular training processes are required. (Crane, et al., 2010, p.78)*

With that mild caveat, "good practice guidelines" have been promulgated, with the first ensuring that "there is an ongoing commitment to personal mindfulness practice and regular attendance on silent retreat" (Crane, *et al.*, 2010, p.81). There is an invitation to assume an existential commitment, as in the MBSR context.

DBT

Dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993a, b), was developed originally for patients diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and is a platform that has found utility in an expanding number of clinical applications. As its name suggests it balances cognitive-behavioral therapy's strategies for change and the mindfulness tradition's strategies for acceptance. It is a year-long program of both weekly individual therapy and group-based skills training, plus individual coaching as needed. Mindfulness is a salient feature: "it is both the practice of the therapist and the core skill taught to clients" (Robins, Schmidt, & Linehan, 2004, p.37). The existential commitment here is equivocal, because Linehan confronts any demand on the therapist for meditative practice as a spiritual and religious issue. Therefore, asking professionals to engage in ongoing personal practice and retreat attendance is "beyond what a therapeutic model can require" (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). The stated requirement in DBT is simply to practice and have an experiential understanding of the DBT mindfulness skills. Nevertheless, on the side of existential commitment, Linehan suggests that being connected to a mindfulness teacher within a spiritual lineage and participating in practice within a community could be "the most important element of a therapist's training" (cited in Welch, Rizvi, & Dimidjian, 2006, p.123).

ACT

Acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes, *et al.*, 1999; Hayes & Strosahl, 2004) developed originally as an individual therapy modality allowing brief interventions for specific issues, and has grown to incorporate group-based interventions as well. It is highly theorized, using a base of relational frame theory (RFT) to allow empirical testing and development of its applications. As an intervention developed within cognitive-behavioral therapy, those particular clinical skills are assumed in its practitioners, yet no specific standards for formal meditation practice are set. Seemingly, skills may be taught as if mindfulness "has a coherent theoretical model and the ideas are easily conveyed to the 'student' by a practitioner who practices little or not at all" (Allen, Blashki, & Gullone, 2006, p.291). Again, unofficial expectations are more in the existential vein. ACT literature notes that core competencies for an ACT therapist include being able to contact what ACT refers to as the "space" of mindfulness, and being able to model the skills—and the benefits— that derive from that ability; "such competencies can be developed through attending ACT intensive retreats or mindfulness retreats in other traditions—characterized as good for contacting the ACT 'space', less useful with ACT techniques" (Strosahl, *et al.*, 2004, p.57).

Psychotherapy

As I've noted, there are many approaches to the use of mindfulness as an intervention that are less closely affiliated with the MBIs. In psychotherapy, the psychodynamic tradition, for example, has long been influenced by meditative and contemplative traditions from the East and the West. Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung were well informed about the experiential side of meditative disciplines. Freud's famous discussion of the "oceanic feeling" in meditation in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930, p.65) came from direct reports of practitioners, and although he claimed to be constitutionally incapable of meditation himself, his description of the analyst's "evenly suspended attention" in the consulting room (1912/1953, p.111) add brightness to an understanding of mindfulness in the clinical encounter. Jung

actually did practice "certain yoga exercises" for decades, to help him maintain psychological balance (Jung, 1967, p.177), and undertook dialogue with contemporary scholars and practitioners within Eastern traditions, including D.T. Suzuki and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu (Meckel & Moore, 1992).

Later, in the 1950s, the "Zen Boom" influenced both the psychoanalytic tradition and the emerging stream of humanistic psychology through encounters of meditation practitioners and therapists. The famous "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" conference spearheaded by Eric Fromm and D.T. Suzuki had significant impact, while Fritz Perls's study of Zen significantly shaped the development of Gestalt therapy. In more recent times, this legacy of encounter with Eastern meditative traditions has shaped a number of modes of practice of psychotherapy. A Buddhist influence on psychodynamic clinical approaches is reflected in the ongoing work of Mark Epstein, whose *Thoughts without a Thinker* (1995) with its foreword by the Dalai Lama brought the eye of the public to the possibility of mindfulness practice as a powerful complement to psychotherapy. Other contributions to this Buddhist–psychoanalytic conjunction include the work of Jeffrey Rubin (e.g., 1996), Jeremy Safran (e.g., 2003). Flipping the union of Buddhism and psychotherapy the other way, it is interesting to consider figures such as Jack Kornfield, Sylvia Boorstein, or Tara Brach, who are mindfulness teachers within the Western Vipassana Buddhist tradition and also practicing psychotherapists. That is certainly a model of existential commitment. Attachment theory and research have shaped relational, intersubjective approaches to psychotherapy, and have connected with mindfulness of therapist and client in the consulting room and beyond. I'll explore this particular jointure in more detail later. Influential ideas come from Daniel Stern (2004), who explores the moment of meeting of client and therapist, David Wallin (2007) who proposes mindfulness training as essential for therapists, and often for clients, and Daniel J. Siegel, whose view of mindfulness through lenses of attachment, child development, and neuroscience (e.g., 2007, 2010) resonates throughout the professional community—well beyond the bounds of psychotherapy.

The size of the impact of mindfulness in this outside-the-MBIs domain is expansive and difficult to comprehend. There is accumulating evidence that a professional's own practice of mindfulness has an effect on patients or clients even when it is not practiced with them. For example, a very well designed empirical study of therapists in training in a German psychiatric hospital showed that *the patients of* the therapists who practiced Zen meditation each day before beginning clinical work had significantly better outcomes than patients of therapists in the non-meditating control group (Grepmair, *et al.*, 2007). Calls from around the professions for clinician mindfulness have some authority, for example, for physicians (Krasner, *et al.*, 2009), nurses (Cohen-Katz, *et al.*, 2004, 2005a, 2005b), psychotherapists (Bruce, *et al.*, 2010) mental health counselors (Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008), and more. From a different direction, as Jeffrey Martin (1997) has pointed out, mindfulness can be seen as a "common factor" across psychotherapeutic modalities. "In a sense, mindfulness is right under our feet when we and our patients are doing our best work" (p.310). Martin's conception implicates every therapist (or, possibly, every interventionist) as a mindfulness teacher—implicit or explicit. Defined as psychological freedom that softens the problematic senses of a permanent self, this common-factor mindfulness makes it possible for client and interventionist to explore present moment experience in new ways. Insight, self-acceptance, and change become possibilities.

A Continuum of the Person of the Teacher

Looking out over this broad landscape of MBIs, of interventions that include mindfulness, and even of interventions and relationships only subtly infused with mindfulness, it is possible to see a continuum of the person of the teacher. This might run from the existential commitment of the person's entire life to the practice, as in the discourse of MBSR, to the minimal wiggle room of MBCT, through the greater freedoms of position within DBT and ACT, and on to the undefined positions of "common factor" mindfulness—derived from meditation or not. As well, it's possible to see how the continuum can collapse on itself, into a single point—a moment of freedom in

relationship, a moment of mindfulness—when all is possibility. This is a moment that professionals, in any position, can share with a client or group. It is a moment of all-in existential commitment, which Jon Kabat-Zinn has characterized by quoting T.S. Eliot's lines from *Little Gidding*: "A condition of complete simplicity/(Costing not less than everything)."[2] Here then is the person and position—the moment—in which the ethic I am working towards can blossom.

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2   It is worth noting, for the comfort it may bring the aspiring teacher, that the succeeding lines, drawn from *The Revelations of Divine Love* of Dame Julian of Norwich, a 14th-century English mystic, are "And all shall be well and/All manner of thing shall be well…"

Potential Approaches to Ethics in the MBIs

As a teacher in the MBIs, and a teacher of teachers, my concern in ethics centers on the quality of the relationships among teachers and participants—how are they to be together, ethically? It appears to me that this question is linked quite solidly to the two urgencies of the MBI community—how to define mindfulness, and how to assess and ensure teacher competency. I trust that answers arising from the underexplored realm of the ethical will help generate new ideas, approaches, even answers to those urgencies.

The urgency to define and operationalize a useful construct of mindfulness is being addressed within the Western scientific paradigm through projects such as development of self-report questionnaires measuring mindfulness as a trait or state (e.g., Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, MAAS, Brown & Ryan, 2004; Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, FFMQ, Baer, *et al.*, 2006; Toronto Mindfulness Scale, Lau, *et al.*, 2006), and more and more sophisticated imaging studies of activity and structural changes in particular brain regions correlated with meditation (e.g., Hölzel, *et al.*, 2008, 2010, 2011; Lazar, *et al.*, 2005). Such approaches valorize the individual, "inner" experience of mindfulness meditation; thus ideas from the ethical realm offer a contrapuntal narrative, leading with relational concerns.

The urgency around teacher competency is likewise focused individually—on the pedagogical actions and the "inner life" of the teacher (comprising formal mindfulness meditation as well as adjunctive psycho-spiritual development activities). Certainly, this

focus reflects the key role the teacher plays in the unfolding of the curriculum and the co-creation of mindfulness in the group. The groundbreaking and subtle work that is being done in the UK to define and implement teaching assessment criteria (Crane, *et al.*, 2010, 2012) also notes that there are many unknowns. For example, two teachers can hit all of the objective marks for competence even though they differ greatly in their curricular emphasis and teaching style. I again hope that the ethical view will offer useful insights.

Now, let's return to my primary question: "How are teachers and participants to be together, ethically?" The answer could be that it is not an alive question. The community could answer that there is no ethical crisis in the MBIs, that there have been no headlines, no stories of ethical abuses to draw fire, and, in effect, "We've already got it covered." There are two ways of considering this answer. One is more concrete than the other.

Professional Codes

The MBIs are, in the main, taught by healthcare professionals who by virtue of their identities are bound by codes of professional ethics. The ethical discipline precedes the teacher's identity, so to say. So important are these codes to the establishment and survival of professional disciplines, not to mention the professional standing and livelihood of the professionals themselves, that an MBI teacher may impose her relevant code reflexively and therefore not consider a specific ethic of the MBIs as helpful or necessary. In many of the MBIs—for example, MBCT, DBT, ACT—the teacher by definition already has a professional identity within a mental healthcare discipline, where ethics codes are a focus of training and practice, and ongoing ethics training is required to maintain licensure. On the other side, MBSR teachers are drawn from much broader backgrounds— from physicians, nurses, and other medical personnel, to the full range of mental health professionals, and including educators, attorneys, and other non-healthcare backgrounds.

Might we not consider it axiomatic that the MBIs are delivered within a professionalized context, and that the normative ethical

considerations of the teacher's own professional context are therefore operative for her? This is a comforting concept, and MBI teachers are to be commended for their professional ethical commitments. Yet, it seems naive to believe that professional ethical codes and customs can be applied comprehensively to the MBIs, which have been described as paradigmatically different from conventional theory and practice in medicine (e.g., Sauer, *et al.*, 2011), mental health care (e.g., Grossman, 2010), and a range of social undertakings including education (e.g., Roeser, *et al.*, 2012), law (e.g., Riskin, 2002), and business (e.g., Sethi, 2009). In fact, in the UK training programs for professionals, developers made a deliberate choice to eschew the designation "therapist" and substitute the term "teacher," because it "captures the nature of the activity that takes place in an MBSR or MBCT classroom" (Crane, *et al.*, 2010).

This dual identity for teachers in the MBIs—the professional identity and the "teacher" identity—means that there must be a way in which the identities interact, and, thus, in which the operative professional code interacts with the different imperatives of teaching in the MBIs. I will explore the ways that conventional professional codes interact with the ethical dimensions of the MBIs in later sections of this essay.

The Health Care Ethos

There is a less concrete way of seeing that professionals already have the ethical demands of the MBIs covered. It is the implicit grounding of medicine and related disciplines in the Hippocratic tradition—particularly the principles of *doing no harm* and *placing the patient's good before one's own*. Despite challenges to its authenticity and its relevance, the Hippocratic oath, with a date of composition sometime in the fourth century BCE, is still used in some version in more than half of the medical schools in the United States, and the vast majority of medical schools use some form of professional oath in their graduation ceremonies (Orr, *et al.*, 1997). The resonance of this pervasive ethos with the clinical applications of mindfulness is suggested in comments from Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003, 2009, 2011)

and Saki Santorelli (1999), the former and current directors of the UMass Center for Mindfulness, which developed within a hospital setting and is now part of a medical school.

Kabat-Zinn points first to a concrete connection: "Of course, a degree of mindfulness is required even to sense that one might be doing harm, either by commission or, more subtly, by omission" (2011, p.294). Interestingly, the overwhelming theme of the articles I retrieved in my search of the terms "mindfulness" and "ethics" was actually the concept of "ethical mindfulness," a vital awareness of the ethical implications of a situation. Logically, then, mindfulness training for medical and mental health care professionals, particularly while students, has been suggested as a route to fostering ethical behaviors (e.g., Davis & Hayes, 2011; Epstein, 1999; Krasner, *et al.*, 2009; Sibinga & Wu, 2010).

Kabat-Zinn also recognizes connections between the foundations of Western medical ethics and Buddhist moral thought. The concept of *ahimsa* (non-harming) may be seen as "the distinguishing mark of *dhamma* [the Buddha's teaching]," as defined in the Milindapanna Sutta (v.185, quoted in Keown, 1995, p.44). Further, Kabat-Zinn notes that the placing of the patient's good before one's own "is mirrored in the Bodhisattva Vow to attend completely to the suffering and liberation of an infinite number of beings before attending to one's own" (2011, p.295). The Bodhisattva is a powerful figure, choosing to be reborn even after enlightenment for countless lifetimes until every living creature has been released from suffering. The Bodhisattva's choice translates, in the secular teaching of the MBIs, to an extraordinary solidarity with the patients and their conditions. Kabat-Zinn invokes a non-dual view in which the Bodhisattva and limitless beings "are not separate, and *never* were" (2011, p.295; emphasis in original).

Santorelli's (1999) way of expressing a connection extends the Hippocratic resonances back into the Western tradition—from the mists of time to the myths. He traces Hippocrates's lineage back to Asclepius, Greek god of medicine and healing, raised and educated by Chiron, the centaur who raised Asclepius and many other ancient heroes. Chiron, earlier in life, had been shot with a poisoned arrow, causing a terrible wound that could not kill him—he was

immortal—and yet could not be healed. A life of pain gave Chiron the passion to learn the arts of healing from the gods and the compassion to share his abilities. This "wounded healer" is the archetypal health care professional. As Santorelli describes it, "Outwardly, we direct our efforts toward restoring others, but somewhere maybe we know there really is no *other*" (1999, p.17; emphasis in original). The italicized *never* and *other* from Kabat-Zinn and Santorelli perhaps press the health care ethos beyond what it usually bears—suggesting the unique nature of the MBIs.

Greek physicians, Bodhisattvas, and centaurs aside, there truly is something unique in the MBIs. Perhaps it is a capacity that many individuals develop, perhaps it is something shared mysteriously (or not so) by the group. Whatever it is that allows teacher and participants to be together in a "not separate" way, I am holding it at the forefront of my explorations as this essay unfolds.

The Temptation of Buddhist Ethics

The MBIs frequently cite Buddhism as a foundation for the practice of mindfulness, as it is the tradition in which the practice is presented most clearly and distinctly. It would seem sensible to seek there for a clear, applicable ethical theory. Surprisingly, however, such a turn meets with complexity and contradiction, both from Buddhism and the MBIs themselves.

A distinction is sometimes made in English between morality and ethics. Morality comes from the Latin *mos* (plural *mores*), meaning manners or customs. Ethics derives from Greek words such as *ethos* or *ethikos*, referring to the character or customs of a social group. While both denote appropriate behavior, morality connotes actions in the workaday world, while ethics connotes philosophical reflection on such actions. I could say, then, that Buddhism is one of the most moral of all the world's religions, yet is lacking an ethics. Damien Keown, the first and only person currently to have an academic title specifically in Buddhist Ethics, has spent his career pondering this. In his 1992 work, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, he notes at the outset that the Buddha's effort was dedicated to the fundamental ethical problem

of defining the good life and how to live it. The Buddha solved it, resoundingly, leaving in his teachings a detailed description of how to lead that life. All that was left for his followers, then, was to do it, not to theorize. As Keown puts it, "The expectation in Buddhism seems to be that ethical problems will be entirely resolved or 'dissolved' in the pursuit of the religious life" (1992, p.2). So, intense pragmatism may be a core reason that Buddhism has not developed an approach to ethics in anything like the way of Western philosophy.[3]

Before exploring the complexities and contradictions in attempting to apply a Buddhist ethics (whatever that may be) to the MBIs, it will be helpful to survey the territory of Buddhist moral thought. In an essay such as this, there is little space to provide any but the essential points, so I trust that the sources I use here will be accessible and useful for pursuit of further understanding.[4] I also hope that through

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3   Damien Keown (2006) has described how when he was a research student pursuing Buddhist ethics, he began to become aware of the dearth of ethical writings "in a manner somewhat akin to that of the little boy in the fairy-tale of the emperor's new clothes" (p.47). He notes, further, that in looking at Western thinkers roughly contemporaneous with the Pali Canon of early Buddhism, Plato and Aristotle are writing extensively about themes of politics, ethics, and justice, and that there are no extant Buddhist equivalents to the *Republic* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*. An amusing way of putting it is captured in the title slide of his keynote address to the Contemporary Perspectives on Buddhist Ethics Conference, the first academic conference to focus solely on Buddhist ethics, held in 2011 at Columbia University. That slide pictured the *Star Trek* characters Captain James Kirk and Doctor Leonard McCoy, with the line, "It's ethics, Jim, but not as we know it" (Keown, 2011).

4   Keown is Emeritus Professor of Buddhist Ethics at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and a key figure in the development of the academic study of Buddhist Ethics. His *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (2005) is indeed short, and fine. His *Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (2001) is important in the development of the field. Peter Harvey's *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (2000) is the first textbook treatment of the subject. Also useful is the periodical *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* co-founded and edited by Keown and Charles Prebish. I have found that Richard Gombrich's *What the Buddha Thought* (2009), in looking at the earliest texts and witness of Buddhism emphasizes the ethical nature of the Buddha's message, and, indeed, argues that the Buddha identifies love and compassion as the means to achieve nirvana, the ultimate good.

investigation of Buddhist thought and the MBIs from this different perspective—relying on sources and scholars with different outlooks and concerns—new ideas, questions, and considerations my enliven the dialogue in the MBI community.

As a fundamental background for its moral thought, Buddhism in its traditional forms relies upon a worldview that includes concepts of karma and rebirth. These were not exclusively Buddhist, but rather accepted in the thought of greater India at the time. Key to Buddhism itself are the Buddha's early teaching of the four noble truths, the eightfold path, the precepts and rules for monks and nuns, and the positive values that lead to salvation. In the later, Mahayana, tradition, a key concept is compassion, as expressed and embodied in the figure of the Bodhisattva (Harvey, 2000). It will also be valuable to consider the contributions of such doctrines as impermanence, no-self, and dependent origination.

Karma and Rebirth

For the Buddha, in historical context, the ideas of karma and rebirth are intertwined. The Buddha can be said to have fully "ethicized" the theory of karma and rebirth (Gombrich, 2009, which I have drawn on for much of the discussion that follows). In the most ancient or small-scale societies that believe in rebirth, there is no ethical connection between one's actions in life (*karma* means action) and the form of one's reincarnation. Such societies can actually see justice done to its members in this world, this lifetime, and simply understand rebirth as a toggling between this world and another one, which is possibly identified with the ancestors, a paradise, or (rarely) a place of punishment. As societies grow larger and more sophisticated, rebirth may begin to be ethicized to ensure that those who break moral rules meet with justice, even if community members cannot witness it. In fact, an ethicized theory of karma and rebirth solves the theological problem of *theodicy* (in theistic terms, reconciling God's loving omnipotence and the existence of evil), also described as the problem of suffering—the wicked thrive while the innocent and worthy suffer, with no justice to be seen. Karma puts the ethical cause

in a former life. More important, an ethicized theory of karma and rebirth makes intelligible the idea that one can be liberated from the cycle of rebirths, by leading an ethical life and being reborn with the possibility of a still higher level of attainment, ascending until one is free. Buddhism offers a highly ethicized theory; the Buddha goes so far as to identify karma not with action (karma means action) but with intention. It is not an action by itself, or even a thought by itself that is ethical or unethical, rather, it is the intention that accompanies it. Consciousness itself is ethicized, so it is hardly surprising that Buddhism is suffused with moral teaching.

Karma and rebirth are compelling reasons to act morally and accumulate good karma (or "merit") to achieve one's own liberation from suffering and a place beyond rebirth, as emphasized in the earlier traditions, as well as compelling opportunities to forego one's own freedom and share one's accumulated merit in order to achieve the liberation of all beings, as emphasized in the later, Mahayana, traditions.

Though karma and rebirth are central to traditional Buddhist thought, and key to its ethics, they do not fit well with the empirical, naturalized worldview that most Westerners hold. Among Western scholars considering Buddhist ethics, there are a wide range of positions.

For example, Robert Thurman (2011) insists on the traditional doctrine, claiming that without the relationship of karma and rebirth to a particular soul, ethical life is not possible. Winston King (1994), D.S. Wright (2004), and Owen Flanagan (2011) advocate adopting a naturalized karma without rebirth as a way to observe contemporary standards of critical thinking while exploring the utility of Buddhist ethics. Sallie King (2011), from an engaged Buddhism perspective actually sees karma as a major problem or stumbling block to justice and ethical action within Buddhist contexts. That is, traditional understandings of karma are often used to rationalize oppressive social practices. People with disabilities are considered to karmically "deserve" their disabilities. Traditional economic practices, such as tenant farmers paying 70 percent of their harvest to the landowner is simply seen as the "workings of karma." The Western Buddhist meditation teacher and Buddhist theologian Stephen Batchelor (2010) takes the position that karma and rebirth can simply be let

go—affording a Western Buddhism that is responsive to both the scientific worldview and the need for spiritual expression outside the theistic traditions that shape much of contemporary Western thought. He goes further, to suggest that Buddhism offers a weak ethic in any case, with little compelling reason for moral engagement with the world. In fact, he proposes the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition— particularly, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas—as a potential resource for a Buddhist ethic in the Western condition (Batchelor, 2004).

The Middle Way, Noble Truths, and Eightfold Path

The Buddha's solution to a fundamental ethical question, "What is the good life and how do I live it?" is delivered in his first sermon, *The Dhammacakka-pavattana Sutta* (setting in motion the wheel of the *dharma*), which he delivered just weeks after his awakening to the five ascetics with whom he had been practicing before his awakening. These instructions about the life of one who has awakened, the good life, introduces the Middle Way, the four noble truths, and the eightfold path, which are touchstones for all of Buddhism's many forms.[5]

MIDDLE WAY

The Middle Way is described in the sutta as the way of practice between extremes of asceticism and sensual indulgence that allowed the Buddha to awaken. The Middle Way may be identified as the eightfold path. It has also become a traditional way of characterizing the Buddha's mode of thinking in any domain. Some examples are suggested in Kalupahana (1995). In philosophy, the Buddha rejects the two extremes of absolute existence and nihilistic nonexistence of the world, and points to the middle way of *impermanence*—the things of this world arise and cease, as the conditions for them arise and cease. This is a central point in Buddha's analysis and solution of the question of the good life, as the four noble truths show.

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5   Buddhism emerged as an oral tradition. We have no written texts of fourth century BCE discourses such as these before the first century BCE.

Another example that bears on this essay is the Buddhist conception of the individual and society. There is a middle way between a totally independent entity who is entirely self-determined and claims inalienable rights and a socially determined being that cannot claim individual rights; it is negotiated through *mutual self-interest*. I would state it as: "I care for myself and wish to flourish, and I know that others care for themselves in the same way. Therefore I should not harm others or prevent them from flourishing—perhaps I should even help them." It is noteworthy that the Buddha's idea of self-interest is not identified with greed as it has been in the West from Plato onward. A concrete example, in economics, again suggests a middle way. In a situation of great want—a famine—the middle way answer is not found in the overproduction of goods prompted by the producers' greed, but in filling the needs of a restrained society.

NOBLE TRUTHS

By following the Middle Way—walking the middle path—the Buddha awoke to his solution to the question of the good life, which he summarizes in the four noble truths. These truths, then, are not points of belief. The Buddha does not propose a creed to be recited or debated. Rather, he presents a process one may follow, which will lead ultimately to liberation—the ending of karma and rebirth. The first truth is *dukkha*, usually translated as "suffering," although a more encompassing, and accurate, definition might be "unsatisfactoriness." That is, the world is not as we want it to be, and even when it is, it changes, slips away. East and West, we all come to know this truth, which Robert Frost memorably describes with the line, "Nothing gold can stay."[6] The second truth is about *tanha*, often translated generically as "desire" or "craving," although it literally means "thirst"—an elemental metaphor. It is craving that causes suffering; when craving ceases, suffering ceases. The third truth is the experience of this ceasing, *nirodha*, which is liberation. This realization must be cultivated, for

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6   Nature's first green is gold,   Then leaf subsides to leaf.
     Her hardest hue to hold.   So Eden sank to grief,
     Her early leaf's a flower;   So dawn goes down to day.
     But only so an hour.   Nothing gold can stay.

which the fourth truth, *magga*, the Path, lays out an eightfold route—right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

In the second half of his first sermon, the Buddha discusses his threefold experience of each truth—that he glimpses each one, recognizes that he should get to know it deeply, and, finally, knows it completely. This is a process that, as Batchelor (1997) suggests, is iterative: one practices to come to know each truth as fully as possible, and on reaching the fourth, one is on the Eightfold Path, the final steps of which are right mindfulness and right concentration. And so, one is in meditation practice, a way to deepen knowledge of suffering, ceasing, liberation, and is beginning the process again.

EIGHTFOLD PATH

The eightfold path is the way to nirvana, to the ultimate good. Traditionally it is divided into a threefold practice of morality (*sila*), meditation (*samadhi*), and insight or wisdom (*panna*). In that formulation, the *sila* steps of right speech, right action, and right livelihood are considered to create the proper conditions of a "cool" mind, untroubled by passion or remorse, for success in the *samadhi* steps of right mindfulness and concentration, which lead at last to the *panna* steps of right view and resolve. Keown (1992), from the ethics perspective, suggests that a binary model, in which the meditative steps are seen as a method for cultivating both morality and insight is perhaps a clearer representation of the flourishing person with deep understanding and great virtue. The traditional metaphor, from the *Discourse to Sonadanda*, of one hand (or one foot!) washing another captures the relationship: "For understanding…is washed around with virtue and virtue is washed around with understanding. Where there is virtue there is understanding and where there is understanding there is virtue" (quoted in Keown, 1992, p.39). There is no hierarchy, no separation; both are essential to the good life—the path's goal.

Following the Rules

One clear way of outlining moral expectations in the Buddhist traditions is through lists of precepts or rules under the guidance of which practitioners agree to live. Precepts most often define moral activity through negative statements, as "ought nots." Keown (1992) identifies five major formulations. They are more and less specific (or restrictive) depending upon the intended population. The first is so pervasive that it might be considered the "ten commandments" of Buddhism (except that there are only five precepts in the list). When a lay person "takes refuge," that is, when she becomes a Buddhist, she undertakes to follow the five precepts (*pancasila*): refraining from (1) harming living beings, (2) from taking what has not been given, (3) from engaging in sexual immorality, (4) from speaking falsely, and (5) from using intoxicants. These precepts are often used, and often presented in Western Buddhist practice contexts as providing a structure to keep the mind calm for practice and to keep the community life of practitioners in balance (particularly in residential, retreat-style settings). Other formulations, reserved for lay people during special times, or for monastics, are the eight precepts (*atthangasila*), in which the five are followed, with refraining from sexual misconduct shifting to abstaining from sexual expression, and further adding abstention from (6) eating at the wrong time, (7) dancing, singing, music, watching entertainments, using perfumes, cosmetics, garlands, and other personal adornments, and (8) using a high seat or bed. The ten-precept formulation (*dasasila*), again mainly for monastics, repeats the eight, but parses numbers seven and eight differently, breaking out (7) dancing, singing, etc., from (8) perfumes, garlands, and adornments, while keeping the prohibition on high seats and beds (9), and adding (10) refraining from accepting gold and silver. It is noteworthy that even the more positively named formulation, the "ten good paths of action" (*dasakusalakammapatha*) is constructed almost entirely negatively—as abstentions from (1) taking life, (2) taking what is not given, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) slanderous speech, (6) harsh speech, (7) idle talk, and as (8) non-covetousness, (9) non-malevolence, (10) right views—only the last is a positive construction. The negative expressions operate clearly, pragmatically

orienting one for action with little need for theory or debate. It's worth remembering that the most common word for a "good" action is *kusala*, which directly translates as "skillful." This clarity and pragmatism characterizes the Buddha's thinking on ethical questions, and particularly on the development of rules for his community.

Early Buddhism developed a voluminous literature, the *Vinaya*, describing the discipline of the monastic community—how monks and nuns should behave in many situations beyond those covered in the simple precept formulations. The list of precepts for the early community (the *Patimokkha*) comprises 227 rules, reflecting both morality and religious etiquette. The *Vinaya* developed in an ongoing, highly pragmatic process of meeting urgencies within the community with direct solutions, which, in a trial and error process, may have resolved the issue or created a new one that required a further ruling. Richard Gombrich (2009) calls out the pragmatism of the Buddha's process, starting not with grand theories, but simply fixing what's broken and avoiding imposition of further rules—until necessary. So, here again, the definitions are negatively constructed, while the positives are simply defined against them. There is not much romance and affect in such ways of speaking, when one might progress on the path with "diligence" (as the English translations have it), but the actual Pali word is "non-carelessness" (*appamada*). In fact, the three "cardinal virtues" that complement the precepts—non-greed, non-hatred, non-ignorance (*araga, adosa, amoha*)—are linguistically negative constructions based on the "three poisons" or "three roots of evil" (*raga, dosa, moha*). Gombrich feels that such usages—non-hatred instead of, say, love—are "too bloodless" (2009, p.179). However, I wonder if such negative definitions may actually be useful in attenuating the potential for heroism or other specialness in the community. If you and I both are simply *not* doing the same thing, it's hard to compare or rank us, and difficult for either of us to build up our self-image. Negative definitions, then, would help to maintain the flat hierarchy in the community that the Buddha insisted upon. His insistence is best characterized by his refusal to name a successor in the community, urging each member to rely on himself or herself and the *dhamma*, not on someone else. A flattened hierarchy is also, interestingly, a key

message of the *Kalama Sutta*, one of the more important scriptural passages in the development of Western, democratic, Buddhism. In his talk with the Kalamas, the Buddha suggests that before believing anything, each of his hearers use the touchstone of his or her own experience to validate it. "Don't take my word for it, check it out for yourself," it might be said. In both these cases, the Buddha not only offers unfettered freedom of exploration, but also rests in the full confidence that the result of exploration will be corroboration of his own findings—the *dhamma*.

The Four Brahmaviharas

The Buddha also offered positive formulations of an ethical vision, particularly in the four virtues to be cultivated to attain the highest good. In Pali, as they are often stated in Western Buddhist usage, they are *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, and *upekkha*. They are usually translated, respectively, as lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. They are known as the four *Brahmaviharas*; *vihara* means a place to stay, and Brahma refers to *Brahman*, the ultimate one. The Buddha probably used this description to appeal to and persuade the Brahmins of his time, as to join or "stay with" Brahman is the goal of Vedic and Upanishadic wisdom. The four are also known as the *boundless states*, because in practice they are all-pervasive, creating a place in which there is no (finite) karma (Gombrich, 2009).

METTA

This word is often translated into English as "lovingkindness," which as Gombrich (2009) suggests, has a feel of a special technical Buddhist term, rather than a full-blooded English word. "Love" in its theological sense (Saint Paul's term, *agape*, pointing to a non-erotic love) is a good fit, although it is hard to indicate that use in English now. The fact that *metta* derives from *mitta*, which means friend, makes "friendliness" a possible translation as well. Flanagan (2011) defines it as "to bring happiness to others in the place of suffering" (p.108). *Metta* is stressed within the early tradition, and that emphasis continues in the contemporary Theravada.

KARUNA

This is often translated as compassion, and is much as we conceive it in English. Gombrich (2009) notes that Buddhagosa, the great systematizer, parses it as referring only to feelings for others that are suffering. Flanagan (2011) defines it as aiming "to end the suffering of others" (p.108). Compassion receives the lion's share of emphasis in the Mahayana tradition as the central concern of the Bodhisattva. Emphasis on either *metta* or *karuna* results in essentially the same way of being in the world (Gombrich, 2009), which might be seen as illustrating the ethical unity of the Buddhist tradition.

MUDITA

This term, meaning sympathetic joy, is a unique characteristic of Buddhist thought. To participate in the joy of one who has just beaten you in a game, say, is unusual and challenging within our culture. Gombrich (2009) puts it in context with karma and merit, so that one rejoices with another who has earned merit—or who has given it away.

UPEKKHA

Translated as equanimity, this seems at the surface to counterbalance the urgency of the other three states, counseling coolness rather than connection. Gombrich (2009) suggests that it is related to the professional ethos of the medical doctor, psychiatrist, even, who must be both benevolent and detached. Flanagan (2011) offers a different insight, in which *upekkha* is "equanimity-in-community" (p.108), so that the idea is not personal serenity, but rather an *equality of care* for all beings.

The four Brahmaviharas are virtues that are cultivated deliberately in formal and informal practices. Elicited all together, the greatest good arises. The ones who exhibit these virtues seem to find meaning, significance, and a particular type of happiness. As Flanagan notes (2011), this Buddhist conception of the good life, of flourishing, is based on direct observation—this works!—rather than on edicts from on high or abstract reasoning.

The Brahmaviharas have had a significant impact on the curriculum and pedagogy of the MBIs, as I shall detail in a later section of this essay. It is important at this point to note that in the MBIs lovingkindness is almost exclusively used to represent this collection of virtues. It is the one formal practice of the four that is taught in the classes, and comes to stand for the prevailing attitude toward oneself, toward one's experience moment by moment, and toward others. Its emotional charge is powerful; in fact, many of my students hear it as "love and kindness" and write it as such in their journals and reflections. The alternative translation of "friendliness" also has this same effect of crystallizing the attitude; it is the translation I use when teaching in the business world or other situations where "love and kindness" would be heard as too soft. If there is a source for an inherent ethical stance of the MBIs, this may well be it.

The Bodhisattva Figure and Compassion

In early Buddhism, the Buddha is the one identified as *Bodhisattva*, having "rediscovered" the eternal *Dhamma* for his time. This belief includes the idea that again and again throughout the eons, there have been Bodhisattvas who became the Buddhas of their times. The Buddha to whom we refer was a Bodhisattva in his former lives. He is given that title in the *Jataka Tales*, the fabulous stories of his past lives that make up an enormous folk literature. In these stories, the full heroic flavor of the Bodhisattva's saving work of compassion is on display. For example, the Jataka tale of the little gray parrot (Martin, 1998) describes how this small bird (the Bodhisattva) sees a raging forest fire (a typical metaphor for the world of suffering) and is moved by compassion to make a valiant attempt to put it out. The parrot flies to the river, collecting drops of water on his body, and then flies low over the forest to help extinguish the blaze a few water drops at a time. As the parrot repeatedly returns, scorched and exhausted, the gods look on in amusement and amazement. One god takes pity, and, in the form of an eagle, goes to advise the parrot to stop his hopeless work. The parrot rebuffs the eagle and flies on. The eagle is moved, weeping at this show of determination. The eagle's copious tears put

out the fire and restore the beauty of the forest. Flying on his mission beneath the crying eagle, the parrot, too, is showered with tears, and his gray, singed feathers are transformed into the bold colors of the parrots we know today. Compassion, heroism, special marks: here is a different discourse of the good than we found in the early discourses.

The heroic figure of the Bodhisattva is characteristic of the later, Mahayana, tradition of Buddhism. The Mahayana, the greater (*maha*) path or "vehicle" (*yana*), emphasizes the saving actions of the individual pledged to compassion, who is seen as a future Buddha, that is, a Bodhisattva. Practitioners may take the Bodhisattva vow to forego the benefits of their enlightenment until all beings are free of suffering, and to meanwhile work to relieve suffering.[7] This is contrasted (in Mahayana descriptions) with the more "selfish" drive of the practitioners of the early (Theravada) tradition, who are seen as seekers of "only" their own salvation. The change in emphasis is related directly to karma and rebirth, and the related concept of the transfer of merit. That is, accumulated good karma (merit) can be given to others to help them progress towards ultimate liberation. In fact, one can have faith and ask that a Buddha or Bodhisattva help one reach the ultimate good. So, there is not only what is called in the Mahayana of East Asia "self power," generating one's own merit, but also there is the possibility of calling on "other power." This

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7   The Bodhisattva Vow is a commitment to liberate all beings from suffering. Lopez (2001) presents the most famous East Asian version, as articulated here by a Chinese monk:

"Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to ferry them across [the ocean of samsara].
Delusion is inexhaustible. I vow to uproot it completely.
The gates of the dharma are endless. I vow to enter them all.
The way of the Buddha is unsurpassed. I vow to attain it."

It is possible to see here the four truths as an underlying structure (Batchelor, 2011):

1. suffering [the ocean of samsara],

2. is caused by delusion [that we can have what we crave],

3. having insight [entering a dharma gate] clears delusion,

4. As we do this we are on the path [the Buddha way].

outlook essentially downplays the notion of karma and expands the "pantheon" of saving Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Gombrich, 2009).

The Mahayana doctrine of "skillful means" is emphasized in the figure of the Bodhisattva. This doctrine is rooted in the Buddha's demonstrated ability to teach effectively to any audience. He used whatever means were necessary to get his message across. For the Mahayana, this idea of adapting the teaching to the audience's needs in the moment became a way of seeing the activity of the Bodhisattva—doing whatever would be most skillful and therefore helpful in reducing the suffering of particular beings in particular circumstances. The ethical impact of the idea is huge: a Bodhisattva has permission, as it were, to choose to bend or break moral precepts in order to serve compassion, the greatest moral good.

Doctrines that Contribute to Ethical Understanding

The deep knowledge that the Buddhist traditions rely upon for choosing the good/right thing can be described with reference to several key doctrines: the three hallmarks of existence, dependent origination, and (a Mahayana concept) emptiness. A brief sketch of each, of necessity simplified, will nonetheless, I hope, suggest their contribution to ethical understanding.

THREE HALLMARKS OF EXISTENCE

For the Buddha, the world bears three hallmarks—impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and absence of essence (*anatman*). These three are logically linked, in the order stated (Gombrich, 2009). Things arise, change, and pass away: people, loves, material goods, status, any experience at all is always in flux. For that reason, everything is ultimately unsatisfactory. And, since it is unsatisfactory, it cannot be essential—an unchanging "self," "soul," or *atman*. It is therefore *anatman* (not-*atman*). This is the world in which "I" am tasked with leading the good life. And this is a description of the "I" involved—continually in flux, unsatisfactory, and ungrounded. Yet it also needs to be said that the *anatman*, "no-self" self also has a strong continuity as flux follows flux. There's just no precise moment, distinct

place, or particular flux that I can point to as permanently me. It's possible that this knowledge has implications for ethical action. "The consistent claim across almost all Buddhisms is that if we absorb or internalize a certain metaphysic of the self, that I am no-self, anatman, then we will be motivated or see reason to be compassionate and lovingkind" (Flanagan, 2011).

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

It may be said that the Buddha awoke to the knowledge that whatever one experiences has a cause, or, put another way, that there are conditions that shape our experience. In the pithiest expressions of this doctrine of dependent origination, the Pali texts say, "*evam sati edam hoti,*" which is, "It being thus, this comes about" (Gombrich, 2009, p.131). This concept is not completely deterministic, because one's choices create causes and conditions as well. There is room for free will and ethical action.

One of the Buddha's great metaphors is that the world is fire. Flames arise from underlying causes (fuel), and when those causes are gone, the flames go too. The doctrine flowing from the Buddha's insight is *paticca-samuppada*, often translated in English as the "chain" of dependent origination. It lists the causal links leading to suffering, particularly the ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Working through the chain of causes—beginning with ignorance, through identification with senses and sense objects, to desire, clinging, and suffering—the Buddha saw how the world of such experience could cease to arise, which would be "a consummation devoutly to be wished," in Hamlet's apposite words. Indeed, *nibbana*, or nirvana, literally means the going out of a flame. Particularly in the early Buddhist tradition, it is easy to hear an ascetic, world-negating tone in this doctrine—urging the monks to dis-identify with sensory experience, worldly life, and all the interrelated causes and conditions in order to end their suffering in life after life. Buddhism's pessimistic, world-denying reputation among nineteenth-century Western thinkers arises from this. The picture is more balanced, perhaps, in that Buddhism was not entirely a world-renouncing movement, as the Buddha himself was concerned with daily life and offered advice and

to those "in the world" as well as those in the religious community. In the concept of dependent origination, there lurks, perhaps, a sense that everything is interrelated and interdependent, but that idea is not central in the early tradition.

EMPTINESS

The "Middle Way" (*Madyamaka*) philosophers of Mahayana Buddhism, Nagarjuna in particular, took a further step with the no-self and dependent origination doctrines by going beyond human experience to consider all phenomena as "empty." A statement might be, "nothing exists *sui generis*" or, from another perspective, "everything is related." Emptiness is radical relationality: "It being thus, this comes about." The move to "emptiness" was ethical at base, as Flanagan notes (2011, p.126): "Nagarjuna presses for philosophical clarity with the aim of having this clarity gain moral motivational bearing and force." That is, if I truly know that there is no unchanging thing that I can cling to and no unchanging I to do the clinging, I will find I have the freedom to act more compassionately.

INTERDEPENDENCE, EAST AND WEST

Many further moves from both inside and outside Buddhism in its Asian and Western expressions have been required to evolve the insights of the three hallmarks, dependent origination, and emptiness into an image of the universe as an interrelated web, as a sacred ecology in which everything is in balance and must be kept so. The image is of the net of Brahma or Indra, where each knot in the net holds a jewel that reflects all the other jewels in expansive, relational glory. This idea receives its fullest traditional expression in the East Asian traditions, where the natural world was conceived as a place of beauty and pleasure. While Zen Buddhism carries this as a subtext, perhaps Chinese Hua-Yen Buddhism (Cook, 1977) is the epitome of such thought.

The "interdependence" view is amplified in the new, contemporary expressions of Buddhism, in both the West and Asia. In fact, since the 1960s, "it has come to stand for the Buddhist position on virtually everything" (McMahan, 2008, p.181).

Historically, Buddhism came into the West along with other forms of Asian thought at a time when Romanticism was in full cry. In Europe and America, the Romantics identified nature as a sacred arena for expression of all that is good, where one can be connected with oneself, and even with God, to help repair the dis-ease and dis-integration brought about by modern life. The American Transcendentalists, such as Emerson and Thoreau, were heirs to German Romanticism, and, when they came to read the sacred works of Asia, they read them "back" into their already formed understandings of the healing powers of a connection to the *oneness* that untrammeled nature represents (McCown & Micozzi, 2012). Their influences included Buddhist works, but "Hindoo" thought was more dominant for the descriptions of their experience. In Emerson's lyric masterpiece "Brahma" the author speaks as the Hindu god Brahma, who is the oneness of the universe (Brahman):

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Thoreau famously had the *Bhagavad Gita* with him at Walden; it was not just literary text for him, but aspiration as well. In a letter to close friend H.G.O. Blake, he wrote, "rude and careless as I am, I would fain practice the yoga faithfully… To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogin" (quoted in Hodder, 1993, p.412). Like Emerson, he read Asian texts back into his own experiences of nature and the spirit, noting, "Like some other preachers—I have added my texts—(derived) from the Chinese and Hindoo scriptures—long after my discourse was written" (quoted in Hodder, 1993, p.434). And just to add further pluralism to the mix, a popular feature of the Transcendentalist journal *The Dial* was the English translations of Sufi poets it regularly published.

Such resonances of nature and oneness rang out through further generations, including, as examples, John Muir's drive to preserve wilderness and William James's championing of religious experience as offering healing and connection—and his kind words for Buddhism. The ground was well prepared for the linking of ecological awareness and environmental activism with the growth of American or Western Buddhism in the second half of the twentieth century to today. Representative figures of this outlook, with its implied and explicit ethical views, include Gary Snyder (1995), a poet and Zen practitioner, and Joanna Macy (1991), an environmental activist and Buddhist scholar. In this outlook, my limited self is expanded in participation with all of nature, and I thereby find the impulse to treasure and protect it all. Snyder expresses this joy in his poem "For All" (Snyder, 1983):

> *Ah to be alive*
> *on a mid-September morn*
> *fording a stream*
> *barefoot, pants rolled up,*
> *holding boots, pack on,*
> *sunshine, ice in the shallows,*
> *northern rockies.*

Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters
stones turn underfoot, small and hard as toes
    cold nose dripping
    singing inside
    creek music, heart music,
    smell of sun on gravel.

    I pledge allegiance
I pledge allegiance to the soil
    of Turtle Island,
and to the beings who thereon dwell
    one ecosystem
    in diversity
    under the sun
With joyful interpenetration for all.

Macy provides this description of the ethical impact of the recognition of interdependence on the self:

> *In the perspective of mutual causality the self appears as a fluid, changing structure, formed through interaction between the world it experiences and the codes by which it interprets this experience. From such a perspective values emerge as formative. Values are not only formative in constituting the criteria by which the self measures and guides its behavior—that is, in the descriptive sense—but also in the normative sense. For the very dynamics of mutual causality suggest that certain moral values are woven into the fabric of life, intrinsic to its harmony and continuity. These dynamics present a reality so structured as to require, for our conscious participation in it, that we live in certain ways. (1991, p.193)*

Chronicler of "Modern" Buddhism, David McMahan (2008), lists some of the contemporary Asian Buddhist leaders who also have adopted the view of "interdependence" as central to their message— the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Daisaku Ikeda, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Buddhadasa. There is both an ecological and social bent to the thinking that flows from the view, and suggests that something "new" is being presented, responding to changing understandings and issues

in the world. Nhat Hahn's interdependence concept of "Interbeing," is central to the vision he champions of socially engaged Buddhism.

The interdependence concept, however, is *not* congruent with the traditional understanding of no-self and dependent origination in the early Buddhist tradition. The world of humans—not nature—is central. Buddhist soteriology does not point to blissful participation, but to getting out, getting off the wheel of rebirth. McMahan (2008) quotes American-born Theravada monk Thanissaro Bhikku: "Traditional dharma calls for renunciation and sacrifice, on the grounds that all interconnectedness is essentially unstable, and any happiness based on this instability is an invitation to suffering. True happiness has to go beyond interdependence and interconnectedness to the unconditioned" (p.181). Although Mahayana traditions might hold interdependence views in more favorable light, "joyful interpenetration" still is not at the center of the understanding of the human relationship to the world of suffering, of *samsara*. McMahan quotes contemporary Tibetan teacher Chatrul Rinpoche: "the world has no real essence; it's meaningless, the whole of *samsara* is just meaningless. In fact, if you have complete realization of the faults of *samsara*, that *is* realization. That means you have gone beyond *samsara* to understanding that this world has no ultimate meaning" (2008, p.182).

There is certainly a tension between the newer views of interdependence and the more traditional views. Yet, as McMahan (2008) says, the tension is not about what is authentic in Buddhism, but rather is about the whole process of new ideas arising in response to new contexts within a living religion. Buddhism itself bears the three hallmarks of existence; it is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and lacks an essential "self."

Complexities and Contradictions

I suggested earlier that simply adopting a "Buddhist Ethic" for the MBIs would be difficult. I hope some of this difficulty has shown itself in the previous overviews of relevant Buddhist ideas. Let me pinpoint the central issues.

CLASHING COSMOLOGIES

Karma and rebirth are features of the ancient Indian worldview that can be seen to drive Buddhist ethics. Yet, both these concepts can be problematic for thinkers inside the contemporary scientific worldview, with some insisting on traditional understanding, others rejecting rebirth while attempting to "tame" karma in an acceptable way, and others calling for rejection of both concepts.

The linkage of these arguments to Buddhist ethics is especially troublesome when we consider the audience for the MBIs. The evidence base for acceptance of the interventions is empirically derived. The teachers and potential teachers are mainly drawn from the ranks of medical and mental health professionals with scientific training. And the participants find their way to classes through associations with hospitals, clinical practices, and other institutions aligned with the scientific paradigm. Adopting or adapting a Buddhist ethic that requires negotiating the terms karma and rebirth would cause consternation and alienation, and certainly would be counterproductive to the mission and grown of the MBIs—to ameliorate suffering for more and more people.

UNSTABLE PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

As I stated earlier, Buddhism does not have a moral philosophy or ethical theory as we would define it in the West. Buddhism does stake out a moral way of life—morality is directly associated with salvation. Yet, compared to Western philosophy, there are questions—regarding human or animal rights, say—that hardly get asked. One way of understanding this difference is political. Keown (2006) suggests:

> The link between ethics and politics goes very deep, and has left its mark on Western Civilization in a way which it may not have in the East… Buddhism…developed under a system which the Greeks would have regarded as despotism… To put the matter simply, while one may debate with a fellow citizen, only a fool would do so with an emperor. The sciences of politics and ethics, accordingly, are redundant where kings or tyrants rule… Since throughout its long history Buddhism has lived predominantly under non-democratic political systems, perhaps it is not surprising that it never developed the disciplines of ethics and politics. (p.54)

He further notes that with Buddhism's arrival in the West, a discipline of Buddhist ethics did come into being, as well as movements of socially engaged Buddhism, a political expression.

Our attempts to consider Buddhist morality in Western ethical categories for application in our own culture are tentative and confusing, if not confused. Perhaps this is related to our own ill-defined wants, needs, and desires. Keown (2000) calls attention to the subtle danger of "cultural misappropriation," which I've described historically in the reading of Romantic-Transcendentalist thought and experience back into Asian terms by Emerson and Thoreau. Keown notes:

> Many Westerners, for example, find Buddhism attractive because it seems congenial to their own liberal ideology. Thus, in contrast to much of what is perceived as negative in Western religion, Buddhism appears to be open-minded, rational, eco-friendly, kind to animals, pacifist, and neither authoritarian nor doctrinaire… [S]uch a conception—which for convenience we might term "liberal Buddhism"—is really only a construct which depends largely for its existence on Western culture, and in particular, Christianity. Buddhist sources…reveal a much more untidy and at times contradictory picture made up of different strands. To select only those which are in harmony with fashionable trends in Western society is to treat Buddhism superficially, and to fail to engage seriously with its views. (Keown, 2000, p.16)

Depending on which strand is taken up and followed, a Western thinker viewing Buddhist moral ideas would be led to different conclusions (or categories). If you look at rules, precepts and the force of karma and rebirth, the moral absolutes of deontological ethics come to the foreground. If you choose to focus on "right action" or "skillful means" you could decide that there is a utilitarian ethic in effect. While if you consider the eschewing of vices and the cultivation of virtues that is central to monastic training, virtue ethics may be the best label (Keown, 2005, 2011). And, as Flanagan (2011) suggests, you might even describe a Buddhist ethic with appeal for contemporary practitioners by blending elements of all these theoretical approaches.

The discipline of Buddhist ethics is very new. There is no clarity on even essential concepts. And the range of possible interpretations and classifications is enormous. It appears to me nearly impossible to choose—simply pick up—a particular line or strand of Buddhist ethics and apply it to the situation of the MBIs with any confidence of utility or acceptance. And that problem is amplified further when the variegated and composite strands of Buddhism, other religious outlooks, and philosophies that make up the MBIs are considered.

Relating the MBIs to Buddhism—or Not

Setting aside the lack of clarity about Buddhist ethical theory itself, there is also a lack of clarity about how the MBIs relate to Buddhism—and to which stream of Buddhist tradition they might be related. For example, Kabat-Zinn (2011) describes MBSR as connected most strongly to the Theravada tradition in its expression as Insight or Vipassana in the West. He also states that it is influenced by the Chinese Chan Buddhist tradition, as manifested in Korea and Japan. Further, he describes the practice in non-dual terms that connect perhaps most closely to practices within Tibetan Buddhism (Dunne, 2011). His description, then, covers the bases of the streams of Buddhism that emphasize meditation and have been adopted by non-ethnic practitioners in America. Beyond Buddhism, Kabat-Zinn recalls that:

> The early years of MBSR and the development of other mindfulness-based clinical interventions were the province of a small group of people who gave themselves over to practicing and teaching mindfulness basically out of love…usually stemming from deep first-person encounters with the dharma and its meditative practices, usually through studying with Buddhist teachers from well-defined traditions and lineages, and/or Asian teachers in other traditions that value the wisdom of mindfulness, such as Sufism, the Yogas, Vedanta, and Taoism. (2011, pp.295–296)

In the MBIs, then, there is a rich, spiritually pluralistic heritage, including not only "modern" Western Buddhist connections, but other traditions as well. Interestingly, the developers of MBCT note that their connection to the Theravada is stronger than to Zen when

compared to MBSR (Gilpin, 2008), although their close connection to MBSR doubtless also adds the other wider "flavors" to MBCT. I have noted the differing backgrounds of DBT (Zen and Christian contemplative practice) and ACT (relational frame theory and connections to the Romantic-Transcendentalist and Human Potential movements). All of this makes identification of the MBIs with any specific stream of the Buddhist tradition even more difficult.

Of course, the cultural situation in which the MBIs developed was resonant with Romantic-Transcendentalist views. As I have detailed elsewhere (McCown & Micozzi, 2012), the MBIs are a contemporary manifestation of the mixture of Asian religious and philosophical streams with home-grown thought and practice that has characterized the United States since before its founding, and that have waxed and waned in popular recognition through two centuries. The current waxing might be traced back through the "Zen boom" of the 1950s, which influenced the development of humanistic psychotherapies such as Gestalt; to the influx of Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the 1960s and '70s, which brought Transcendental Meditation and its secular medical version as the Relaxation Response (Benson, 1975); and finally to the influence of the Vipassana or Insight stream of Buddhism, with its high appeal to psychotherapists and its openness to empirical research. All of this is the essential ground of the MBIs.

Yet, the spiritual and religious genealogy not withstanding, one of the key characteristics contributing to the growth and cultural uptake of the MBIs is actually their secular stance. Certainly, the literature and discourse of the MBIs has always acknowledged a debt to Buddhism's clear articulation of mindfulness practice and understandings of its therapeutic utility. Yet, in the same breath, that discourse has also been insistent in assuring the broader culture in the West that the MBIs are freely translated from the religious and cultural contexts in which its origins can be found (e.g., Baer, 2003; Baer, *et al.*, 2006; Didonna, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990, 2003, 2011). A couple of sentences from a retrospective and reflective article by Kabat-Zinn suggest the attitude and mood:

The intervention needed to be free of the cultural, religious, and ideological factors associated with the Buddhist origins of mindfulness, because the objective was not to teach Buddhism or even "to make great meditators" out of people, but to offer an environment within which to experiment with a range of novel and potentially effective methods for facing, exploring, and relieving suffering at the levels of both body and mind, and understanding the potential power inherent in the mind/body connection itself in doing so... The task, which is always ongoing and immediate for the MBSR instructor, is to translate the meditative challenges and context into a vernacular idiom, vocabulary, methods, and forms which are relevant and compelling in the lives of the participants, yet without denaturing the dharma dimension. (2003, p.149)

Ideally, participants are not put off by strangeness, but rather are invited to explore their very ordinary experiences—their habits and defaults, helpful or hindering—in a way that offers both relief of suffering and personal growth. Most recently, it is worth noting, Kabat-Zinn feels that "secular" is not quite the word or concept for describing the stance of the MBIs (or at least of MBSR). He finds that the word suggests a secular-sacred split, when he wishes to convey both—"in the sense of both the Hippocratic Oath and the Bodhisattva Vow being sacred, and the doctor/patient relationship and the teacher/student relationship as well" (2011, p.301).

To articulate an ethic based on distinctly Buddhist concepts or that uses specifically Buddhist language, then, would run counter to the concepts and practices that have, in smaller or larger part, fueled the growth of the MBIs. Cullen (2011), in speaking of an ethic for the interventions as a whole, not exclusively focusing on teacher–participant relations, is clear on this: "It is of critical importance in most mainstream settings that a single set of ethics is not imposed, as this can both create conflict with different faith traditions and bring an association of religion into a setting where this is inappropriate and threatening" (p.189). She notes further that, "Interestingly, many participants in MBIs report a deeper connection to their own faith tradition, and its attendant moral code, after completing the program" (p.189).

Jon Kabat-Zinn himself (2011) is reluctant to explicitly articulate an ethic for MBSR or the MBIs, preferring to allow it to be expressed

implicitly by individual clinicians/teachers in their day-to-day interactions with others and themselves. This "silent witness" of the ethical is, in a way, how the community has been engaging the subject for decades.

Making an Implicit Ethic Explicit

I believe that there is, indeed, an implicit ethic—or at least an *ethos*—that is manifested in the MBIs. When the teacher is competent and the unique nature of the pedagogy that allows teacher and participants to be together in a "not separate" way is at work, something ethical happens. It is a process of co-creation.

I also believe that there is much to be gained, for teachers and for supervisors and trainers of teachers, in making this ethic explicit. By taking a fresh, mindful, and critical look at what is already there, I hope to offer concrete guidance and tools for practitioners. Further, I hope to contribute to whatever resolutions to the MBI community's two urgencies may be possible, addressing the need to define mindfulness and to ensure the competence and ongoing development of the essential resource, teachers.

This is not a summary dismissal of Buddhist ethics (any strand), or the medical ethos, or professional codes. Certainly they bear heavily on what will follow. I simply wish to avoid substituting them for, or reading them back into, an experience that is by definition and personal trial unique in each moment. As Jon Kabat-Zinn (2011, p.297) puts it, teaching in the MBIs is not ultimately about maps, but rather about "the territory of direct experience of the present moment and the learning that comes out of it." Therefore, any mapping that I do will be in a tentative, to-be-tested-and-considered mode. I will not say, "This is it," but, rather, "I am here." Such an approach inevitably inquires of others—my fellow travelers in this field—"Where are you?" It is my dear wish to enter into such call and response with the community.

THE SPIRIT, NOT THE LETTER

As this essay progresses, I trust and expect that the spirit of friendship that is central to Buddhist social ethics and, indeed, the totality of its religious life will be evident. You won't be seeing doctrines or terms (map quadrants or town names), yet I believe that the spirit pervades certain ways of thinking and problem solving evidenced in what we have traversed so far. Four stand out for me, and may shape the ongoing exploration.

First is the use of negative constructions to indicate valued ways of acting or intending. Not only are the precepts mostly proscriptive rather than prescriptive, but the Buddha also points to positive character traits or virtues with negative formulations, naming "diligence" as "non-carelessness," or "love" as "non-hating." It is the possible contribution of this to non-striving by individuals and non-competition in the community that intrigues me. I am suggesting that the "non-" constructions do not so much point to a particular way of acting or being ethical, but, rather, define a space in which there are nearly limitless possibilities for ethical action and being.

Second, the development of the rules for the community in a pragmatic, trial and error fashion fits with the charge to attend to the territory of direct experience of the present moment. Gombrich (2009) notes that every rule for the monks and nuns (compiled in the *patimokkha*) "is framed to meet a particular situation that has arisen; and the first offender, the person who occasioned the creation of the rule, is not guilty, because the rule did not yet exist to be broken" (p. 173). The reasons for the rule are always the same, and boil down to the protection, convenience, and growth of the community, the moral purity of the members, and the good of non-believers. Moreover, when a new situation arises that can be resolved by contradicting an existing rule, that's precisely what the Buddha is willing to do. Minimal ethical proscription is based upon the requirements of the moment rather than some grand theory, and may be superseded when required for resolution in a different context. There is, again, a sense of generating a space of nearly limitless freedom to act ethically.

Third, the Buddha's refusal to name a successor and his charge for members of the community to take refuge only in him or herself

and in the *dhamma*, and his charge to the Kalamas to experiment—to "taste and see" for themselves, as we might put it in the West—imply an open space of freedom. The attitude that hierarchy is to be eschewed, that each person's experience has value, and that the way to the good life will be revealed through experience connects with my experience as a teacher in the MBIs.

Finally, the discourse of interdependence that characterizes contemporary expressions of Buddhism reflects a turn to the relational, reflecting the group focus of the pedagogy of the MBIs. Further, the pluralism of the spiritual and cultural influences on the development of the interdependence discourse parallels the pluralism of the MBIs themselves. This reinforces their "secular" position, and turns much of our cultural heritage into paths toward practice—offering participants many ways to connect to the practice.

Moving Toward a Deeper Understanding of the MBIs

I hope that it appears to you now that the question of the ethical in the MBIs is very much alive, if not pressing. What's required as we go on together is a deep enough understanding of mindfulness and its pedagogy to begin to reveal the character and qualities of the ethical in the MBIs. In Part II, which follows, I will describe how the practice and experience of mindfulness shape the ethical relationship in the MBIs. In Chapter 3, I'll describe the shape of the underlying curriculum for the MBIs, and how the curriculum itself contributes to the ethical realm. In Chapter 4, I will survey the basic skills and actions of the teacher—the essential pedagogy—and the central role that the practice of the pedagogy plays in an ethical view of the MBIs. With this as background, in Part III, I will identify the elements and build a theoretical model of the ethical space in which teacher and participants all relate, and in Part IV, I will apply the model and theory to the relationship of teacher and participants, and, as well, apply them to the twin urgencies of the MBI community: to define mindfulness in the most useful and helpful way for both research and teaching, and to ensure the recruitment and ongoing development of high quality teachers to meet the growing demand for these programs.

Where Something Ethical Happens

"So, maybe we can try doing something together to help make sense of all these words we've been saying about mindfulness," I say, as I start rooting around under my chair. There are 20 of us sitting in the circle. There are 19 very different folks, older and younger, from a variety of neighborhoods in the city and its suburbs, who had their own reasons to sign up for the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course that's starting tonight. And there's me, the teacher, who at the moment is having a little trouble getting raisins out of the box and into a bright orange plastic bowl. Successful at last, I turn around and hold out the raisins. "I have here a bowl of objects. You may think you know what they are. You may be saying to yourself 'Oh, goodie!' or 'Oh, no!' You may think you know everything you need to—and more—about these objects. I'm inviting you, however, to put all your preferences, prejudices, and prior knowledge aside, and see if you can have this experience, now."

I start the bowl and its clashing pink spoon around the circle. "Working together with your neighbor so you each get three objects in your hand—or maybe four. It's not easy, is it? Then closing your hand over them. Not peeking. If we were artists, we'd try to bring a 'fresh eye.' If we were Zen monks, we'd hope to have 'beginner's mind.' Me, I ask the children I do this with to pretend they're alien scientists from a galaxy far, far away."

Working slowly, we encounter a single raisin through each of the senses. Beginning blindly, participants call out with their voices what they learn through their fingers. "Sticky." Nods evident around the circle. "Soft," then, "Hard." A list develops as different participants contribute, "Rough… Slick…

Oval… Pointed… Flat…" I observe aloud that, "Raisins and people are all so different, there are always more and more right answers." We smile at the courage of the one who says (slowly) "malleable." She doesn't know what it is that she's squeezing so hard.

Then on to the sense of hearing. Laughter at the very idea of holding the object to the ear. But could there be sounds? Indeed, with coaxing and tests of malleability, a chorus of snaps, crackles, and pops arises, accompanied by memories of childhood breakfast cereals and Saturday cartoons. We reflect on how easily we travel in time: away from the present, where our object is.

Only then do we look. Eyeing all three (or possibly four) objects, we notice differences in color and texture, as well as wear and tear. Someone wants to switch their old for a new one, and so we notice judgments and attraction and aversion. And I wonder, "Is it possible to suspend all that and just stay interested in what we've got right now?"

We move the object towards the nose, where descriptions like musty and sweet quickly give way to similes: "like a very old book," "like my grandfather's pipe," and (inevitably) "like a raisin!" How poor and ultimately frustrating our language is. Categories and analogies, abstractions and clichés simply can't convey the true liveliness of this experience. If full communication is anywhere, it's in the face, voice, posture, and gestures of the participants.

As the object rests between the lips and then comes into the mouth, complexity skyrockets with the rush of saliva. Noticing size, weight, temperature, texture, all amplified on the tongue. Adding taste, and the interaction with smell. Discovering— and resisting—urges to bite, chew, and swallow. Generating awareness of time and desire. And from the first jaw-tensing bite-down, noticing the suffusion of sweetness and the shifting of textures, until the whole process of swallowing, from tongue, to throat, to—how far can you feel it?—the depths of body awareness.

Reflections on my simple question—"How was this for you?"—scatter light around the subject of mindfulness. Says one, "I thought it was really stupid. I was really judging. But once I let go and went along, I saw that you can have a mindful experience with every little thing, and that every part of everything is pretty incredible." Another says, "I can't believe I just spent that long eating one raisin. I never pay attention like that—but it would sure change things if I did." And, of course, "That was the best raisin I ever ate!" With the reply, "The raisin wasn't special, it was you—you made the difference," and nods and smiles all around the class.

Definitions of Mindfulness in the MBIs

The raisin exercise presented in the vignette above, an eating meditation, is an iconic module in the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) curriculum, and is therefore present in many of the interventions developed on that armature, including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), mindfulness-based relationship enhancement (MBRE) (Carson, *et al.*, 2004, 2006), mindfulness-based eating awareness training (MB-EAT) (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999), and mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting (MBCP) (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010), to name a few.

The vignette above, which is different for participants in each of the thousands of times it is evoked in classes around the world, is a way of pointing towards the definition of mindfulness—or, rather, the range of definitions—that are current in both the scientific research and the pedagogy of the MBIs in their broadest classification. The practice of mindfulness meditation requires some definition to emerge before or during instruction; and certainly any research involving mindfulness must have a definition as a reference for theory. As well, my essay into ethics requires at least a felt sense of mindfulness that may be elaborated through more concrete reflection. The vignette will serve, then, as a touchstone for the value of the different definitions that I will present in this chapter, which is information required to understand the descriptions and discussions of the MBI curricula and pedagogical practices that follow in Chapter 4. It is the intent of these two chapters of Part II to describe the MBIs as they are

experienced, and from that description to begin to identify the actions and qualities that contribute to the unique character of relationships in the classroom, which are expressed as the ethical space that I will ultimately delineate and model for theoretical and clinical application.

To begin, I will present the four definitions of mindfulness most current today, which are used inside four different discourses that comprise or influence the research and pedagogy of the MBIs.[8] They are (1) the version within the scientific research discourse of the MBIs, (2) a version arising within the discourse of social psychology without influence from Asian meditation practices, (3) the versions arising from "Buddhist roots" in the Romantic-Transcendental discourse of Western Buddhism, and (4) the version located in the broad biological, brain-based discourse that includes neuroscience, human development, and attachment theory.

I will describe each of these versions in some detail in the first half of this chapter. Taken together, they will provide a platform for understanding the MBIs with enough rhetorical and theoretical depth to begin to bring into focus the ethical dimensions of the practice and the pedagogy. Once I establish that platform, I will overturn it by proposing a new perspective and definition that emphasizes the primacy of the relationships that comprise the MBI group or dyad. I

8　In cultural and critical theory, the term *discourse* is most often associated with the work of Michel Foucault. We might loosely translate his use of the term as referring to a particular worldview or way of knowing established in a time and place. For example, what might be known and said in a university chemistry lab is very different from what might be expressed in the laboratory theater. And both would know and say precisely the right thing if the police arrived. Foucault's work identifies the socio-cultural mechanisms through which discourses are formed and controlled— by which one comes to know what may be "legitimately" known and expressed. A major mechanism in forming discourses is exclusion; that is, making certain subjects illegitimate or taboo, dividing the "rational" from the "irrational," and willing toward a truth. Once formed, a discourse is controlled from inside through such mechanisms as privileging particular texts and developing layers of commentary on them, and through rules, definitions, techniques, and instruments to define specific disciplines (say medicine or psychology) and boundary out other ways of knowing and speaking (Foucault, 1972, 1981; Lock & Strong, 2010). Ultimately, it's about power. Some discourses have voices that dominate, while others are effectively silenced.

will use this new relational perspective and definition throughout the rest of this chapter—and this essay—to develop a theory and model of the ethical space of the MBIs.

A Scientific Definition

In the empirical research discourse of the MBIs, a key theoretical enterprise has been to define a single account of mindfulness, which would offer unity and direction to researchers and clinicians. Any such undertaking is enormously problematic, as many who have made or reviewed attempts attest (e.g., Allen, *et al.*, 2006; Baer, 2003; Bishop, *et al.*, 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2004; Grossman, 2008; Hayes & Wilson, 2003; Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Shapiro, *et al.*, 2006), and despite the added complexities of challenges and critiques from Buddhist teachers and contemplative scholars (e.g., Rapgay & Bystrisky, 2009; Rosch, 2007; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, and the entire special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* they introduce).

The wellspring of the defining work within the discourse of the MBIs is the statement (never meant as definitive) from Jon Kabat-Zinn that mindfulness is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (1994, p.4), and others like it, such as "the intentional cultivation of non-judgmental moment-to-moment awareness" (1996). Those three elements of intentionality, present-centeredness, and absence of judgment were more than influential.

The first attempt was a two-part definition, omitting the element of intention (Bishop, *et al.*, 2004). The next iteration found all three elements present (Shapiro, *et al.*, 2006). It posits three axioms: intention, attention, and attitude (IAA) as simultaneously manifesting elements of the formal or informal practice of mindfulness. The axiom of intention actually overflows the implications of the Kabat-Zinn versions; Shapiro suggests that intention involves not merely a decision to attend to experience, but a personal vision or motivation for mindfulness practice. Such a vision has been shown to shift over time, and presumably through experience, from immediate needs for health and wellbeing to broader exploration of and even liberation of the self. Attention refers to two different capacities—both sustained

and flexible focus from moment to moment—that are cultivated explicitly in the MBIs through a sequence of formal mindfulness practices that early emphasizes sustained focus and later opens to emphasize flexibility. The axiom of attitude pushes well beyond the denotative meaning of non-judgment to comprise the connotations of acceptance of and kindness towards one's own experience that are salient in the discourse of the pedagogy of mindfulness.

These three axioms come together to actuate a shift in consciousness, a new relationship of self and world, identified by Shapiro, *et al.* (2006) as a meta-mechanism they call *reperceiving*—the awareness of an observing consciousness that is both *a part of* and *apart from* the experience. In the context of an MBI class, this is often expressed in such statements as, "I am not my thoughts, or "I am not my pain." The scientific discourse on meditation, going back at least to the 1960s, highlights this same shift (for a review, see McCown, 2004), offering many terms, including *de-automatization* (Deikman, 1966), *de-habituation* (Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1973), the *observing self* (Deikman, 1982), and *decentering* (Safran & Segal, 1990). Kabat-Zinn (2005) uses the phrase "orthogonal rotation in consciousness" to describe this shift in which "everything old looks different because it is now being seen in a new light—an awareness that is no longer confined by the conventional dimensionality and mindset" (p.350).

If we read this definition back into the vignette of the raisin experience, it's clear to see. My little prelude to the experience included the elements on which the three axioms rest, and reperceiving is implicit in every move. For example, as the class participants overcame their giggles and silliness about "listening" to the raisin, they began to appreciate what can only be considered "intention." They specifically chose to turn towards their experience, as odd and off-putting as it was. This turning towards what is already there in awareness—for better or worse—is the central motion in mindfulness practice. And they didn't just note the "sound" of a raisin; they noted the thoughts and feelings that came along as well. The opportunity was there for them to be absorbed in their experience and to observe it simultaneously. There is even a hint of the kindness and acceptance implicit in the "attitude" axiom; for instance, the participant who noted that when she let go of judging, "every part of everything is pretty incredible."

A Western Social Psychology Definition

In the discourse of contemporary academic psychology, there's a definition of mindfulness that arose from the study of its opposite, mindlessness (Langer, 1989). The doorway to this defining duality was through experiments demonstrating the ultimate costs of mindlessness. For example, in one study (Langer & Rodin, 1976; Rodin & Langer, 1977), seniors in a nursing home were either encouraged or discouraged to make simple choices: one group selected a houseplant for which they were expected to care and were presented with other daily decisions about their lives as well, control group members on the other hand were simply given a plant, for which staff cared, and were not expected to make daily life decisions. The group that cared for plants and made choices were in better physical, mental, and emotional health than the others after 18 months—in fact, their mortality rate was less than half of the control group's rate. It is evident that the decision makers had to consider and act, which are central notions in what Langer eventually framed as mindfulness in opposition to mindlessness (but neither term is used in the papers about the studies).

I describe Langer's conception of mindfulness as "Western" because it arose without particular engagement with Asian meditative traditions. I also think of it as Western because rather than seeing it as meditative and inward focused, I can describe it as active and externally focused. Put another way, you overcome mindlessness by changing how you think about what is "out there" in the world. Langer (1989) uses the term *premature cognitive commitment* to explain that mindlessness comes from *already* knowing. So, mindfulness comes from *not yet* knowing—from a process of what Langer calls drawing novel distinctions.

Consider a little scene in which a mindless attendee of a formal banquet confronts some playful situations suggested by W.H. Auden (1970): As his wineglass is filled with coffee, our man begins to feel a bit disturbed. When he looks at his place setting for the prime rib dinner and sees scissors instead of a knife he is horrified. Things are not in their proper categories. Rules have been ignored. This is not how *his* world works!

How different his experience would be if a note on his banquet invitation had said: *We are trying new ways to improve your formal dining experience. Please notice as many of the small and large changes we have made tonight, and be prepared to join a dialogue about them after dinner.* He might have fun, making novel distinctions that keep him in the present moment, make him more aware of the arbitrary nature of categories and rules, and help him better define the subtleties of context and others' perspectives.

The instruction in the raisin experience to encounter the "unknown" object for the first time put participants at a banquet of their own, for which they had the helpful note on their invitation. They drew novel distinctions, and certainly found that the already known was already gone. As I suspended their use of vision and asked for descriptions through touch or listening, categories and rules changed. What's more, it was fun! It helped make mindfulness more psychologically available for the participants: "Hey, I can do this!"

This definition makes a pedagogical point in the MBIs very clear. Langer (1997) says that when we learn something *conditionally*— as a fact or rule that fits every context—we will use that learning mindlessly. That is we will not be engaged in the unfolding of the present moment. MBI pedagogy—particularly in its use of language (see McCown, *et al.*, 2010, for a detailed discussion)—ensures that participants experience and learn from the curriculum *unconditionally*. By avoiding imperative commands (Not "put three raisins in your neighbor's hand," but rather, "Working together with your neighbor so you each get three objects in your hand—or maybe four"), offering permission for a broad latitude of experience ("Raisins and people are all so different, there are always more and more right answers"), and being open to outcome ("How was this for you?") the teacher points to potential for something entirely new to happen, or for new applications to arise in a different context or from another perspective.

An "Eastern" Definition

Kabat-Zinn speaks of this background and its expression within MBSR (and by extension the MBIs) as a "universal dharma framework," noting that it is "not different in any essential way

from Buddhadharma" (2011, p.296). Kabat-Zinn suggests that for a teacher in the MBIs knowledge of this framework is, to put a fine point on it, required (Kabat-Zinn, 2010). Essentials such as the four noble truths and the eightfold path, the three marks of existence, the four foundations of mindfulness, the five hindrances and five aggregates, and the four immeasurables, are useful for navigating the territory of one's personal and one's classroom experience. He also presses for deeper learning within a very particular Buddhist tradition (and therefore a specific discourse), as well as academic study of the "Buddhist psychology" of the Abhidharma.[9]

When I earlier considered the applicability of Buddhist ethics to the MBIs, I rehearsed much of this material. It merely stands to recall in a few sentences the noble truths, the hallmarks of existence, and the immeasurables, before continuing with the four foundations of mindfulness, an additional scheme that very much contributes to the structure of the pedagogy and curricula of the MBIs.

The four noble (or ennobling) truths, remember, can be thought of as an iterative process: to fully know *dukkha* (suffering) leads one to fully know that it arises from *tanha* (craving), then it is possible to fully know the experience of *nirodha* (ceasing of craving), and this ceasing must then be cultivated by following *magga* (the noble eightfold path). The fourth truth of the path ends with meditation practice, and so sends the practitioner right back to the process of knowing suffering. This idea of coming to *fully know* an experience is inherent in the raisin experiment—like it or not, find it silly or serious, the encounter between the raisin and the class reveals much about the object and the ones turning towards it.

The three hallmarks of existence—*annica* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), and *anatman* (not-self)—describe how the world of our experience is entirely contingent on the conditions of the moment. And, in fact, they go further to notice that "I" am also

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9   I find this valorizing of Buddhist theory and the demand for practice and retreats within specific Buddhist traditions to be extremely problematic for development of teachers. Such moves subvert the creation of an ethical space in several different ways, as I will show as this essay unfolds.

contingent—there's no permanent, unchanging me. In the language of the raisin experience, it's the question, "What is this object, really?"

The four immeasurables, *metta* (friendliness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity) are virtues cultivated in formal meditation practices and in daily life. Let's step beyond the raisin here (although we do care for ourselves and each other during the experience). There is evidence emerging in studies of MBIs that it is participants' capacity to cultivate self-compassion that helps them avoid relapse into depression (Van Dam, *et al.*, 2011). Further, researchers posit that simply the embodiment of these virtues in the teacher makes self-compassion possible for participants (Feldman & Kuyken, 2011; Kuyken, *et al.*, 2010).

And so, on to the four foundations of mindfulness. These are presented in an early Buddhist text, the *Satipatthana Sutta*, which is a privileged Buddhist text in the discourse in which the MBIs are located. Mindfulness translates the Pali term *sati*—as in *samma-sati*, the right mindfulness fold of the eightfold path. *Sati* may have originally denoted "remembering," with connotations that led Western Buddhist scholars/translators towards terms such as "self-possession" or "mind development" (Batchelor, 2004; Dryden & Still, 2006; Nyanaponika, 1965). Intention, attention, and attitude are hovering in the background.

As presented in the *Satipatthana Sutta* (e.g., Analayo, 2003), the first foundation is mindfulness *of body* and sensation, particularly of the breath, which can calm the body-mind and open it for further exploration. The second is mindfulness of *feelings*, which may be identified as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, and then simply observed as they arise, stay, and pass away. Third is mindfulness of *mind*, or mind-states, such as distraction, concentration, or one of the three poisons (greed, hatred, ignorance), which can again be observed as impermanent. Finally, mindfulness of *dhammas*, or mind objects, refers to categories of factors that affect the quality of meditation practice. These are the canonical points for navigating meditative experience, including the five hindrances (to concentration or insight), five aggregates (that confuse us with the sense of a permanent "I"), six sense-spheres (the five senses plus the classifying, interpretive mind,

helping to create an observing "I"), the seven awakening factors (mind-states that lead to liberation, which include mindfulness!), and the four noble truths.

Just to put the raisin brand on all four foundations, in the vignette, body sensations are central to investigating and eating a raisin, while feelings of "I do/don't like this raisin" arise instantly. The mind-states of concentration and distraction are easily observable, requiring me to call participants back from memories and tangential thoughts. Finally, for *dhammas*, we could consider for example that the five hindrances of doubt, restlessness/worry, sloth/torpor, aversion, and sensual desire are indeed easy to locate, even in eating meditation.

A Definition from Neuroscience

A detailed consideration of the neurobiological studies relating to mindfulness is certainly beyond the scope of this essay, as interest is extremely high in this area and understandings change so quickly. However, teachers in the MBIs may deliver the basic information to participants through an interactive model, which requires just a few minutes. This is the "handy" model of the brain as presented by Daniel Siegel (2007, 2010)—the pun (wait for it) is his. In the classroom, it plays out something like this:

"There's a really easy and helpful way to understand what's happening with the brain when you feel stress, and how mindfulness helps. So, holding up your hand like this," I say, extending my open palm towards the group. "This is your brain. It's a handy model of it. (Groans around the circle.) Your forearm is your spinal cord, and the line at the base of your palm where the thumb folds in marks your brainstem, which is unconsciously scanning all the time for threat or safety. Your thumb—fold it in across your palm—is your limbic system. The first knuckle is your amygdala, which detects and processes fear and anxiety. The second knuckle is your hippocampus, responsible for memory. There are more structures in the limbic system, but this is what you need to know. Let's say, you reach out and touch the burner on the stove. That sends the amygdala into threat and alarm mode.

And the hippocampus says, 'I'm going to remember never to do that again.' Helpful, no?

"So, now, close your fingers down over your thumb. The outside of your fist is the neocortex, the newest part of the brain. And the newest of the new is right where your fingernails are—the prefrontal cortex, the part that makes us human. Here's where you'll find logic, language, and the capacity for empathy. Look…and sense…closely at the ends of the two middle fingers. They connect the brainstem, the limbic system, and the prefrontal cortex. When that area is working, when we're paying attention, using logic and language and empathy, the brain is integrated, and the limbic system is calm.

"Then, let's add a threat—something someone says that threatens your ego, for example. Here's what happens. The amygdala and brainstem go into alarm, and—lift your fingers straight up—you flip your lid. Now, the prefrontal cortex is off-line, unavailable. You don't make so much sense with logic or language, and you're not about to be empathic or compassionate with those around you. Maybe you can see those things, when you think back to a time when you were really upset.

"This is when mindfulness comes in handy. You need to bring your prefrontal cortex back on-line. And the fastest way to do that is to become curious—to turn your attention to what's happening right now, particularly in the realm of body sensation. As the prefrontal cortex is activated, the activity in the amygdala falls off, and you begin to come into balance. That's really our practice, isn't it? We turn our attention to what's happening in the moment, in the body and mind, and often, we get this side effect of feeling calm.

"Here's the best part, the handy model is a practice in itself. If you've flipped your lid, you can watch and feel yourself make the model—turning the thumb in and wrapping the fingers around—which brings your attention to body sensations and begins to engage the prefrontal cortex…and reduces the reactivity of the amygdala. Then maybe you can turn towards the emotions of the moment."

The reduction of reactivity in the limbic system described above has long been remarked in research on meditation (e.g., Davidson, Schwartz, & Rothman, 1976; Schwartz, 1975; see McCown, 2004,

for a review). It allows the meditator more easily to be open to moment-by-moment experience. What's more, this openness seems to extend beyond formal meditation practice to become a trait, a capacity in everyday being in the world. Studies are showing that mindfulness practice is associated with structural changes in the brain. Long-term mindfulness practitioners' brains are thicker than those of controls in areas responsible for sensory, cognitive, and emotional processing (Lazar, *et al.*, 2005). MBSR participants who reported reduced levels of perceived stress in just eight weeks showed reduced gray matter in the right amygdala, the area in which negative affect and reactivity are inhibited by the engagement of the prefrontal cortex as described above (Hölzel, *et al.*, 2010). And not only do MBSR participants have smaller amygdalae, they also have more gray matter in brain areas associated with learning and memory, regulation of emotion, internal representation of the self and the capacity to conceive other perspectives (Hölzel, *et al.*, 2011a).

A leading neuroscience research team has attempted to integrate the rampant empirical findings of their discipline into a theoretical framework within the discourse of the MBIs. The team (Hölzel, *et al.*, 2011b) suggests that mindfulness meditation affects participants through four mechanisms of action: regulation of attention, awareness of the body, regulation of emotion, and change in perspective on the self. These four mechanisms are evident in the vignette of the raisin experiment. Participants' attention is regulated around the raisin; as they voice what they are noticing, they maintain a shared focus, and, if they slip away, the teacher calls them back. Awareness of the body is the central exploration; methodically, participants connect to each of the senses in turn. Regulation of emotion flows from the curious attention on the body (engaging the prefrontal cortex); for example, participants overcome the silliness of listening to the raisin by actually doing it. Perspectives on the self changed just in the few moments of the practice; "I was really judging. But once I let go and went along, I saw that you can have a mindful experience with every little thing."

Turning Definitions Upside Down, or Inside Out

The four definitions above are all closely related in a particular way: they are lodged in discourses that privilege individualism. Within each discourse, only one definition is active, and each individual teacher, clinician, student, or patient is measured in their practice and understanding against that standard. Thus, the overall view is that each individual learns mindfulness for herself or himself, and any benefits produced accrue to that person alone. Even though scientific studies report on differences between the "MBSR group" and the "control group," they are conceived of as an aggregate of isolated individuals.

The concept of the co-creation of mindfulness by participants and teacher, promulgated by my colleagues and me (McCown, *et al.*, 2010), effectively turns individualist assumptions and conceptions upside down and inside out. Co-creation suggests that the processes, states, and traits associated in other discourses with mindfulness "inside" the individual also may be seen as developed and expressed within the relationships of the group. They are therefore conceived of as located in a space accessible to all. For use in pedagogical thinking and theorizing, we developed a description of co-creation that uses the discourses of the MBIs and of neuroscience, particularly interpersonal neuroscience. We made it apparent that we did not prefer the "science" description to possible descriptions from other discourses, such as those of anthropology, sociology, phenomenology, communications theory, philosophy of consciousness, or even ethics. We simply believed that the materials for and process of building that description were (and are) more likely to be acceptable to teachers within the MBIs if they come from the familiar discourse.

This conception of co-creation not only moves what was considered to be inside, outside, it also softens the hard boundaries of the different definitions of mindfulness above. When we look at co-creation, we see within the relationships of each particular class or dyad, a myriad of different "working" definitions of mindfulness arise, shift, and change with each new experience and its attendant communication around the class—whether in words, gesture, posture, facial expression, or affect. "What is mindfulness?" is a question that

is continually answered and immediately renegotiated.[10] Therefore, as I have suggested elsewhere (McCown, in press), a teacher would benefit from knowledge of a wide range of definitions, discourses,

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10 I see the definition of mindfulness as being continually negotiated by the teacher and participants, in secular and vernacular terms—in their own language, gesture, posture, and expressions, entirely naive regarding Buddhist philosophy or psychology. So, my approach here is very different from the ongoing intellectual enterprises in the MBIs to build theories based on Buddhist psychology. Certainly, such undertakings may be valuable in the larger academic and clinical context, but I cannot see how they are pragmatic for either the research or teaching requirements of the MBIs. In this, I believe I am in alignment with critiques of the MBIs from within Buddhist culture. For example, Maurits G.T. Kwee (e.g., 2010a, 2010b, n.d.) suggests that depths of Buddhist meaning are being lost through the reduction to short courses given in secular language in health care settings. He proposes that what is needed is to teach the broader and deeper contexts of Buddhist practice, to ensure that the fullness of the *dharma* is transmitted. As the MBI theorists insist on a Buddhist identity for the MBIs, such critiques have significant validity, and I resonate with them. Further, I resonate with Kwee's point that insisting that using the language of Buddhism in theory about the MBIs may feel to those within Buddhist cultures as "a kind of colonial or arrogant expropriation" (n.d., p.10). In honoring these critiques, and adding my own, I am working in this essay from a position that is, in a sense, the reverse of Kwee's. I believe that we lose something within the MBIs by scrambling to frame what we are doing as Buddhist practice. Stepping away from a Buddhist identification may actually better serve our theorists, researchers, and clinicians. In the MBIs, we are simply practicing *our own pedagogy*—turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment in a friendly way. This action could be identified within the contemplative practices of a variety of religious or even philosophical traditions, or none at all. We are practicing our pedagogy while talking about the experience in the vernacular, without preferring any particular conceptualizations. An MBI class spends 27 hours (or less) together. That is far too little time to spend learning a highly sophisticated philosophical or psychological system such as Buddhism, even considered broadly. It is far more pragmatic to assume that what a participant gets from being in an MBI group is simply what they get, within the shared horizon of meaning of the group, and within their own histories of meaning making. This is the position that interests me. As I have experienced in my teaching, priests, say, bring the practice into their way of being, rabbis, likewise, and nontheistic thinkers, too. The language that participants use, and the styles of thought that they apply, are always their own.

and dimensions of mindfulness. Each different attempt to define mindfulness from within a particular discourse, such as those above, offers unique nuances of language and perspective that can be vital in helping a teacher (and, thereby, participants) navigate the emerging experiences and understandings of a class session.

The following working definition is the one my colleagues and I (McCown, *et al.*, 2010) developed as *a* way (not *the* way) to describe co-creation—and the space where it happens. With this in place, I hope to begin to show why this space of co-creation is the space of the ethical, and why the search for an ethics of the MBIs must begin not with a definition of mindfulness, but rather with a description of its pedagogy—which I will undertake in Chapter 4.

A Definition for Co-Creation

It took nearly 30 years, but a significant study was finally done that looked at the effects of the group itself on participants (Imel, *et al.*, 2008). Through multi-level statistical modeling, the researchers were able to gauge how much the 600 participants, in 60 different groups, differed in symptom change from pre- to post-intervention, adjusting for pre-intervention severity. They calculated that the group effect, with any effect of the teacher factored out, accounts for seven percent of variability in outcome. To put that number in perspective, the fabled therapeutic alliance in psychotherapy, the most significant predictor of outcomes, accounts for about five percent of variability (Horvath & Bedi, 2002), so the group effect is even stronger. In other words, the "co" in the co-creation of mindfulness and its working definition is quite powerful. Experienced MBI teachers would have predicted such a finding, as participants regularly refer to the sense of support of the class, note that practice is often easier and "deeper" in the presence of the others, and acknowledge gratitude for the presence of relative strangers. Put another way, the experience of the prologue happens all the time.

Key to the "science" description of co-creation is the action of mirror neurons in the brain (Gallese, *et al.*, 1996), by means of which we inwardly sense, represent, and track the actions and intentions of

others (Gallese & Goldman, 1998). Evolutionarily, such mechanisms may have developed to optimize group behaviors such as hunting, gathering, and collective protection (Cozolino, 2006).

When you witness another's pain or joy, you literally feel it played out in your own sensations. In the interpersonal neuroscientific account above, what's happening is activation of the brain's "resonance circuit" as Daniel Siegel (2007) calls it. Described by Carr *et al.* (2003), this circuit carries the first sense of the other's movement or expression from the mirror neuron system, which "tries it on for size." The mirror neuron system then sends that information to the superior temporal cortex to predict the sensory consequences. The information is next routed through the insula to the limbic system, which defines its emotional content. Finally, it returns back through the insula to the prefrontal cortex where the information is interpreted and attributed. When the circuit is complete, you know how the other feels because you have felt it too. If you've seen something as simple as a friend catching their finger in a drawer or door, you know that you truly share their pain. We likewise share smiles, laughter, and relief—the full range of expression.

Siegel (2007) posits that this interpersonal resonance circuit also works *intra*personally in the process of meditation. Meditators attune with their own intentions as to the actions of another person. For example, as the intention to breathe out coincides with the fact of breath going out, and does this again and again, the resonance circuit is completed over and over, creating an internal resonance. The meditator attunes to herself with positive emotion in the same way that an infant and caregiver attune to each other in the development of secure attachment. This winds up with the same mechanism posited in the neuroscience definition above. At the end of this circuit, the prefrontal cortex is called on to interpret and attribute feelings (essentially to label them). This activation inhibits activity in the amygdala, which reduces negative reactivity (Creswell, *et al.*, 2007; Lieberman, *et al.*, 2007).

So, here's the scene: The class has been in a formal meditation. Many people are "resonating with themselves" and feeling some equanimity or even something akin to happiness, which is reflected

in their postures and expressions. (In fact, there is evidence (Choi, Karremans, & Barendregt, 2011) that meditators are perceived as happier by observers!) As the practice ends, everyone eventually looks up and looks around the circle a bit.

Let's pause for a moment, with participants taking in the sense of the space they share, which includes each other. Now let's add Stephen Porges' "polyvagal theory" (1995, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009) of regulation of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). This too has scientific explanatory power for understanding the effects of mindfulness on the group. The theory is grounded in the evolution of the ANS in vertebrates: three phylogenetic stages are expressed as three subsystems, which are linked to three behavioral strategies for adapting to the level of threat in the environment. The strategies, in order, are *freeze*, a response to catastrophic threats to life; *fight/flight*, a response to danger and challenge; and what Porges calls *social engagement*, a response to the sense of safety.

Freezing is a reptilian strategy associated with the subsystem of a primitive, unmyelinated vagus nerve that reacts to threat by significantly slowing the metabolism—the protective drama of "playing dead" that is harmless for reptiles, but drastic and potentially deadly in itself for mammals. Fight /flight is the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis "stress response" that tunes the metabolism for combat or active avoidance. Social engagement, associated with the newer, myelinated vagus nerve, responds to a sense of safety by slowing the heart, inhibiting sympathetic nervous system reactivity, and dampening the HPA axis response. And here's the social part, the new vagus nerve also regulates the muscles of the face and head for social engagement. The eyes open a bit wider for seeing and meeting the eyes of the others, and through the same neural pathway the inner ear also tunes to the range of the human voice in anticipation of communication. The muscles of the face gain the needed tone and capacity for nuanced expressions. The muscles for tilting the head allow telling gestures. And the muscles of larynx and pharynx take on tone that allows subtleties of sound and speech. Further still, the social engagement response releases oxytocin (the "love hormone" of birthing, nursing, and pair bonding), creating an openness to approach and embrace.

Now we can better describe the group effect—what happens when we end the pause and the participants look around the circle. Porges (2003, 2004, 2009) suggests that we are continually scanning for risk and safety through *neuroception*, a subcortical and thus unconscious process. When we encounter familiar or friendly faces, voices, gestures, and postures, our social engagement response begins, shifting our disposition towards openness, which in turn may promote a sense of safety for others—and changes in their expression, posture, and openness through their social engagement response. That response may travel throughout the group in a recursive and self-reinforcing way—amplifying the possibility of approaching what is present in the experience of the moment.

Even in the raisin experience, this shift towards social engagement can be seen at work. Picture the unconscious (subcortical) responses around the room as participants notice suffusions of sweetness, say, or recognize "that every part of everything is pretty incredible," or exchange nods and smiles as that possibility strikes them. This space of meeting is filled with potential. As the curriculum unfolds over time and familiarity with the others and mindfulness, the space may become increasingly expansive. The key to the existence and quality of this space is not, then, the practice of mindfulness by individuals, but rather the practice of learning mindfulness by the whole group together. This may sound odd or confusing. But by sharpening the definition of a practice, my insistence on the importance of teaching and learning will become clearer.

Not Mindfulness, but Its Pedagogy, Is the Practice

For those bathed in the discourse of the MBIs or of many of the spiritual traditions that are Romantically-Transcendentally allied to it, the word "practice" connotes a specific spiritual technology. Ask someone, "What's your practice?" and you will not hear, "MBSR," "Buddhism," or "Christianity," rather, you'll be told something like, "the body scan," "Vipassana," or "centering prayer." I have doubtless used the word in just this way many times thus far. But for the undertaking that follows, I want to be clear that I mean something

different, something larger that fits this essay's purpose. I am adopting Alasdair MacIntyre's (1981) definition of a practice, which he developed in support of his larger enterprise of understanding how the ancient ethical concept of the virtues could be applicable in our own historical moment. He sees virtues as qualities that are developed through involvement with a practice, and are then established within the individual practitioner. My undertaking and my view, however, are qualitatively different. I wish to investigate the teaching of the MBIs as a practice, to see what might be revealed by that perspective. I am, of course, also interested in the qualities or "virtues" cultivated in the process of a practice, which in a relational view may not be located *inside* but rather *in between* practitioners. Virtues as I consider them are accomplishments of the group—creating and sustaining a first- or even a second-order morality. Upon reflection, MacIntyre's definition seems easily adaptable for my project.

For MacIntyre and me, then, a practice is a

> *coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended. (2007, p.187)*

In fact, Macintyre notes that for the ancient philosophers, the precise activity that I am concerned with—creating and sustaining a community—was considered to be a practice. Crucial terms within the definition are "goods internal to the practice," and "standards of excellence."

The striving for excellence within a practice generates goods that are either external or internal to it. External goods are recognizable outside the practice, and do not rely exclusively on the practice for their creation. Internal goods can *only* be achieved through the practice. To help clarify this definition, consider the practice of professional baseball. For those who achieve excellence, the practice can result in an outrageously large salary, local acclaim, or national recognition. These are among baseball's external goods, since they could be derived by

other means, not necessarily through baseball, not necessarily even through a practice. Among the goods internal to baseball, by contrast, would be the ability to regulate one's mind, body and emotions when facing a 95-mile-per-hour fastball or after giving up a homerun pitch; the moment-by-moment unselfish awareness of the game situation that produces an effective pitch, swing, catch, or anticipatory strategy; or the ability and opportunity to shape a child's life in the special way that the relationship of ballplayer and fan allows. The full panoply of internal goods of a practice can only be recognized and described by one who is experienced in the practice. In a practice such as painting or medicine, or even professional baseball, the good might be defined as *living a particular kind of life* in pursuit of excellence.

As to standards of excellence, they are the gateway for such goods. If you don't take in the practice's current understandings and ideals and work with and through them, you are not truly inside the practice. For example, if your stance and swing are not effective, it doesn't matter how well you regulate yourself as that fastball reaches the plate—you're not a ballplayer. A willingness to learn the rules and techniques that define the practice at the given moment, and to work with them to reach excellence, is required from the start. Yet, as a look at the history of any practice will show, rules and techniques change over time, or suddenly, as practitioners who reach or redefine excellence influence the practice. Consider the dramatic changes in the practices of art and medicine over the last hundred years, brought about from inside. There's a powerful point to be made here. External goods go to individuals to become personal property, and, in fact, may often leave less of such resources available for other practitioners—money, status, or access to power. Those goods are the objects of competition. Internal goods, however, are shared goods, available to all those inside the practice, not just to the pitcher, the painter, or the pediatrician, but also to the kid in the bleachers, the aesthete at the gallery opening, and the patient's parents. As internal goods accumulate, the practice just gets better, deeper, and richer (in a non-financial sense).

Internal goods can be achieved, says MacIntyre, because individual practitioners acquire *within themselves* special qualities of

being—*virtues*—that must be present for success in the pursuit of excellence. MacIntyre points to virtues of justice, courage, and honesty as essential for sustaining a practice. A relational way of seeing/saying this is to note that first order morality is in effect among gathered practitioners. Actions that might be interpreted as lapses in justice, courage, and honesty simply would be unintelligible actions within the practice together; relationships would become unworkable, the pursuit of internal goods impossible. The special qualities or virtues described by MacIntyre as belonging within individual practitioners, might be described alternatively as characteristics of the coordinated actions born and borne in the relational space of gathered practitioners. The relational space, it could be said, holds the potential for justice, courage, and honesty in the actions of practitioners. Practitioners behave as they do not from inner "virtue," but rather from their embeddedness in relationships that require "virtuous" actions and responses to maintain them. Such a view moves us away from the free-agent ethics of a virtuous practitioner, burdened with doubled responsibility for her own actions and those of the individuals in her care. Instead, we may begin to see first or second order moralities distributing the responsibility (read "ethical burden") for maintaining the relationships, and coordinating the actions among all those gathered.

This way of seeing/saying the ethical, of generating and sustaining intelligibility within relationship, is what interests me in terms of the practice of MBSR. It appears to me to offer unexplored routes for addressing the urgencies of the MBIs, to provide a focus point for developing an ethic for the MBIs, and to promise greater clarity in my attempt to describe the pedagogy of the MBIs as a practice for developing second order morality. For this essay to unfold such potential, I need to find a way to see/say what the MBIs call teaching or pedagogy in a way that clearly engages the ethical. Each account I offer must not only elaborate the differences of the relational view, but also must provide enough detail, enough sense of the actual experience of the MBIs, to bring the reader into the spirit of the practice, at least at the level of a class participant—the kid in the bleachers, so to speak.

Producing Moments of Mindfulness

Viewing the MBIs through MacIntyre's description of a practice necessarily identifies mindfulness as the *end* or *product* of the pedagogy of the MBIs. The pedagogy is then necessarily identified as the *practice*. Just as portrait painting is a practice that produces sketches, studies, and portraits, or baseball produces at-bats, innings, games, series, and seasons, so the pedagogy of the MBIs may be seen as a practice that produces moments of mindfulness. This distinction offers a shift in perspective of enormous magnitude. I'd like to just suggest the implications, and then consider them in depth.

First, the pedagogy of mindfulness is not the exclusive domain of MBI teachers, rather it is shared with all participants—a class (or dyad) is a *gathering of practitioners*.[11] The gathering then is engaged in the practice of co-creating mindfulness, an iterative, evolving process. Experiences of moments of mindfulness—sometimes, but not always, produced in formal meditation practice—are the central "texts" of the classes. As participants share their experiences, by giving accounts and clarifying them through dialogue with fellow practitioners (predominantly mediated through the teacher), the entire group

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11   I am adopting the term *gathering of practitioners* to denote those involved in a practice in a single location for a specific duration. As I trust will become evident, the gathering generates the space where something ethical happens. That is, an ethical space is formed when practitioners gather together for the purpose of a practice. The words *gather* and *together* etymologically carry an ethical charge, derived as they are from roots meaning to unite, join, assemble (Proto-Indo-European (PIE): *ghedh*; Old English (OE): *gaderung*; Old High German (OHG): *be-gaton*), and suggesting companionship and kinship (OE: *gada*; OHG: *gataling*), as well as conveying goodness and excellence (OE: *god*, Middle English (ME): *good*; OHG: *guot*). Recalling that ethics and morals (*ethos/mores*) are the salutary customs and manners of a people, the words gather and together seem fit terms for this essay. I use the term *gathering of practitioners* and related locutions to contrast with the more commonly used term *community*, which quite often is not a space-time entity in which human goods may be generated and shared in meaningful relationships but is an abstraction based on shared interests and values in which no face-to-face relations are required. Thus, the community of the MBIs is all the distributed practitioners who may never have met, while an MBSR class, say, is a gathering of practitioners.

may move towards a new and more nuanced understanding of and capacity for mindfulness.

In the relational view, co-creation of moments of mindfulness not only happens when practitioners are gathered, but also when each is meditating in solitude. The voices of teacher and other participants are present and productive in both contexts. This is, first, a concrete fact, as teachers in the MBIs guide meditation in class sessions and provide participants with recordings to guide the daily formal meditation "homework." This is also a more abstract fact, as participants dialogue about the class experience with each other and the teacher in class, and those dialogues may be recreated or may influence the unfinished dialogues of thinking when participants are alone.

Moments of mindfulness are the ends and products of the actions of the gathering of practitioners, together and alone. Moments of mindfulness are unique. They are portraits, or baseball at-bats. They are entirely contingent upon the context and qualities of experience available in the moment. There is no one "true" experience or definition of mindfulness. There is, rather, an infinite number of unique experiences or definitions, shaped by the language, gesture, comportment, as well as the assumptions, intentions, and dispositions of those at work in the moment. And, in fact, the gathering of practitioners will have many moments and definitions throughout their time together. They may start from simple spoken-written words, such as Kabat-Zinn's formulation, or from sketchy instructions, as in the mindful eating of a raisin. Then, through dialogue, experience, and being together, they may move to more nuanced and inflected verbal and tacit understandings, which will be endlessly elaborated, enlarged and revised across the life of the group—and, if they stick with it, the life of each practitioner.

The products of the MBIs—moments of mindfulness—are both recognizable and contingent, shaped by common views or ways of talking about mindfulness known to the teacher, but more by the particular experiences of the participants in each unfolding moment of the curriculum.

To investigate the ethics, then, it is imperative to investigate the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs. In Chapter 4, which follows,

I undertake this investigation with an eye to the ethical, and apply a relational lens. This investigation promises to identify the qualities of the relational space created by the pedagogy. Those qualities will not be couched as prescriptive—neither as methods and means nor as rules and principles for the ethical behavior of teachers and participants. Rather, the qualities will be presented as solely descriptive, offering an understanding of the experience of the space for teacher and participants. If I am successful in this description, the presence of the qualities would be identical to the space. That is, their absence or withdrawal would mark the absence or collapse of the space. Critically, the qualities would be discrete and interrelated. That is, they would not overlap, yet the presence of one would make the presence of another (at least one other) possible. A successful description, then, would suggest a model that could guide further exploration of the ethical space.

Investigating the Curriculum and Pedagogy

I have shown that the co-creation of mindfulness in a gathering of participants and teacher(s) begins at the outset—the moment that the pedagogy is engaged. Just how speedily and thoroughly this happens is illustrated in the raisin experiment, an early, iconic module in the curriculum of the MBIs. The educated observer would be able to identify dimensions of a number of different established definitions of mindfulness in the gathering's dialogue around its experience of raisin moments. As the gathering encounters each succeeding curricular move or shift in experience, through each class session and from session to session, the observer would notice the shifting and tuning of implicit and explicit definitions. Many such shifts are generated relationally, in verbal and non-verbal dialogue in the moment; yet, shifts are no doubt associated with the content and structure of the curriculum, as well. A brief recounting of basic curricular modules and moves will be of value, then, in identifying unique qualities that help comprise the ethical space of the MBIs. I will look first at the MBSR curriculum, then at how the MBSR curriculum has been stripped down and used as an armature to build other MBIs.

Defining the Metastructure of the MBIs

MBSR is the generative model from which many newer MBIs have been (and are being) created. A class-by-class overview of the eight-week, nine-session MBSR curriculum presents a list of meditations,

experiments, and exercises that are repeated, often in the same order, in other MBI curricula. The outline below describes each class session and its theme, with a look at the learning opportunities for participants and meditation practices typically introduced. The themes and practices are reinforced and built upon in each succeeding week.

Session One

Under the theme, "There is more right with you than wrong with you," participants find that it is possible to turn towards their difficulties and that the MBSR program provides a supportive environment for this work. They find that awareness of the present moment—of body sensations, thoughts, and emotions—is the foundation, because it is only in the present that one can learn, grow, and change. Formal didactic presentation on "What is mindfulness?" Experiences include the raisin experiment, a meditation on awareness of breath, and the body scan meditation, in which participants notice "how it is" in each part of their body in turn, nonjudgmentally.

Session Two

The theme of "Perception and creative responding," shows participants that how they see (or don't see) what is happening in their lives determines how they will likely respond. Exercises in perception followed by dialogue illustrate that it is possible to see differently—that things are not necessarily what they seem. The body scan meditation is reinforced. Sitting meditation with focus on awareness of breath is introduced, which is a practice of focusing attention on the breath and, when the attention wanders, bringing it back—again and again.

Session Three

With the theme, "The pleasure and power of being present" participants begin to explore how the immediate assignment of pleasant or unpleasant labels to experience is limiting. A formal dialogue around the moment by moment unfolding of pleasant events in the body, mind, and emotions helps deepen understanding and present moment awareness, while potentially revealing that it is

possible to have pleasant moments in the midst of crisis or pain. The body scan and sitting meditations are reinforced, and mindful yoga, a practice of bringing nonjudgmental attention to the moving of the body in simple standing and lying down postures, is introduced.

Session Four

"The shadow of stress," as a theme explores the ways that mindfulness may reduce stress reactivity and its effects, and suggests that there are more effective ways of responding. A formal dialogue around unpleasant events again works to deepen present moment awareness, while potentially revealing that labels of pleasant and unpleasant can shift and change. Formal didactic presentation on stress physiology. Body scan and mindful yoga are reinforced, sitting meditation expands focus from awareness of breath to body sensations and sound.

Session Five

Participants are "Finding the space for making choices," as the theme puts it. The focus of experiential activities and dialogue is to show how mindfulness can shape perception, appraisal, and choice in critical moments. Participants find the possibilities of observing thoughts as events in the mind. The learning is that "You are not your thoughts." Mindful yoga practice is reinforced, while sitting meditation expands to include attention to whatever is in the awareness in the moment— "choiceless awareness."

Session Six

The theme is "Working with difficult situations" and the participants are experimenting and engaging dialogue about recognizing their automatic patterns of relating, finding options to those patterns in stressful situations, and staying centered in body, mind, and emotions. Formal didactic presentation on mindful communication. Sitting meditation (choiceless awareness is reinforced). Walking meditation, attending to the body's movement when walking, and even attending to the environmental context of walking, is introduced.

All-day Session

For this day of practice in silence, participants are invited to "Dive in!" and cultivate mindfulness over a seven-hour period. This may reveal participants' habits of mind, deepening self-knowledge. It also allows participants to keep their experience in awareness for a longer time than ever before, so that insight into the impermanence of pleasant and unpleasant body-mind-states. All meditations from prior sessions are reinforced, and two new ones are introduced. The mountain meditation is a guided imagery practice in which the sitting body is imagined as a mountain that is able to sit quietly through the storms and glories of days, years, and centuries of weather acts as a metaphor for mindfulness meditation practice—and life. Lovingkindness meditation is a practice of offering well-wishes to self, loved ones, and eventually the entire world.

Session Seven

Through the theme "Cultivating kindness towards self and others" participants continue to work with interpersonal communication skills and to experience formal meditations to help develop a disposition of lovingkindness so that it becomes more available in meditation practice and in daily life. Sitting (choiceless awareness) and lovingkindness meditations are reinforced.

Session Eight

Participants are helped towards the ending of the course with the theme "The eighth week is the rest of your life." In meditation practice and dialogue, they consolidate what they have experienced in the course, and "say goodbye" to the group. They are offered a range of resources for continuing and supporting their ongoing learning and meditation. Body scan, sitting (choiceless awareness), lovingkindness, and mountain meditation are reinforced.

MBSR as an Armature for the MBIs

Looking out over the MBIs derived from the MBSR model, there is a great deal of similarity among them. The curriculum unfolds in much

the same way, regardless of the target population. The similarities from MBI to MBI can be mapped to an overarching "metastructure" of the MBSR curriculum.

My colleagues and I have proposed a model of this metastructure that acknowledges the pedagogical logic of MBSR and reveals the *teaching intentions* underlying the curriculum. We oppose these to typical *learning objectives*. Teaching intentions are not pressed on participants, but rather held lightly by the teacher so that the curriculum becomes contingent upon the unfolding co-creation, and all involved are invited to respond. We have described this structure of intentions as the *empty curriculum* of the MBIs. Implicitly and explicitly it has proven to be useful in the alive moment of teaching and in generating critique, improvement, and innovation in course structure and materials.

In Figure 4.1 each intention appears in a defined bar. It is more helpful, however, to imagine the entire graphic as a spectrum, with the tones of the bars blending together. Particular names of intentions therefore are transitory. Only in this fluid mode can the intentions be overlaid on the ever-changing experience of co-creation across an eight-week course.

| Experiencing New Possibilities |
| Discovering Corporeality |
| Cultivating Observation |
| Moving Towards Acceptance |
| Growing Compassion |

Week 1   *4*   *8*
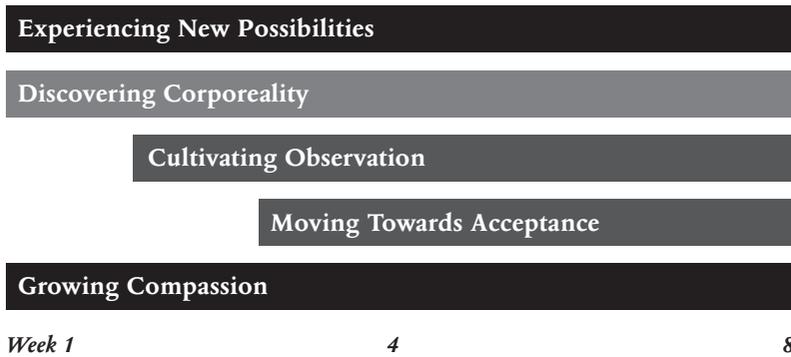
Figure 4.1 A spectrum of teaching intentions derived from MBSR

The horizontal structure of the figure shows the relative timing of the intentions across the 8-week curriculum. The vertical structure suggests that the central intention of the curriculum, cultivating observation, which allows moving towards acceptance, is bracketed and supported by the immediate and ongoing intentions of experiencing new possibilities, discovering corporeality, and, particularly, growing compassion.

EXPERIENCING NEW POSSIBILITIES

Consider the raisin. In the first encounter with the curriculum, participants' habitual worldviews are destabilized. Another example: the gathering of participants in MBSR includes people with an indefinable range of medical, mental health, and self-diagnoses. The very fact of this gathering amplifies Jon Kabat-Zinn's statement, often quoted in MBSR: "as long as you are breathing, there is more right with you than there is wrong, no matter how ill or hopeless you may feel" (1990, p. 2). Participants who are tightly identified with their diagnoses suddenly find themselves in a situation where their diagnosis holds no real interest. Frightening or freeing, this is almost certainly a new experience. The idea that habitual frames of reference are available for reflection and reconsideration runs through each class session.

DISCOVERING CORPOREALITY[12]

Contemporary psychology and culture valorize the cognitive domain. Direct experience of affect and body sensation, in Hamlet's phrase, is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." In a counter move, from the first moments of the first class, MBSR participants are invited to experience the body sensations, emotions, and thoughts that are present in the moment. The body scan meditation, in particular, and subsequent dialogue around participants' responses to it, helps participants to disembed their immediate experience from their stories about the

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12 In the book *Teaching Mindfulness* (McCown, *et al.*, 2010) and other presentations that my colleagues and I have made of the teaching intentions, we have referred to "discovering embodiment"; as I have continued to consider the meaning and actions associated with MBI pedagogy, I have found that our use of the term embodiment is confusing in that it is often used in the MBI community to refer to the teacher's living forth or living out of mindfulness. In this case the term is used to differentiate from "modeling," which suggests a less existentially committed way of being. I have therefore adopted the term *corporeality* to avoid confusion in pedagogical contexts in the community. I find *corporeality* to be helpful in pointing to awareness of the body as key to the pedagogy of mindfulness. I mean the term to denote body awareness—interoception, proprioception, and the kinesthetic sense—a connection to the life of feeling and to the feeling of life. Also, there is (for me) kind of a fun pun (corpus-reality) insisting that that the body is a reality to be discovered.

experience. They learn to separate anticipation, opinion, memory, and continuing narrative from what is happening in the moment.

Across the entire eight weeks, direct experience and dialogue return patiently and persistently to sensation and away from the cognitive domain. Participants have the opportunity to move from the known to the not-yet-known. For example, the teacher may invite a participant who is feeling strong emotion to drop the story in which that response is "appropriate" and simply be with/in the body sensations of the moment, without judgment. This exploration helps to deconstruct the fixed idea or label of, say, anger, as the participant discovers that the bodily sensations arising in the moment are energetic—and maybe even pleasurable! The situation cries out for reframing.

CULTIVATING OBSERVATION

The realization of a capacity to observe the experience of the moment without being lost within it—whether it is a body sensation, a thought, or an emotion—dawns for some participants earlier than for others. In the formal practice of both the body scan and sitting meditation in class two, for example, the teacher may emphasize working *with* rather than *against* the "wandering mind." That is, participants notice when they are paying attention to something other than the chosen object—a part of the body in the body scan or the breath in meditation—and then choose to return. In that process, they discover the observing consciousness that does the noticing. And, just as important, they notice that the space in which the observing takes place is vast, is none other than their awareness, is in fact their whole world.

MOVING TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE

This is not merely a function of the reduced reactivity of the brains of the individual participants, it is also supported by the authentic presence of the teacher and the co-created mindfulness of the group, which can hold the individual in a way that maintains the stance of lowered reactivity in the face of aversive sensations, thoughts, and emotions in the moment. The root of this is in the emphasis on non-judgment, which flowers into "an affectionate, compassionate

quality…a sense of openhearted, friendly presence and interest" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p.145, quoted in Shapiro, *et al.*, 2006).

GROWING COMPASSION

Compassion can be conceived as both centripetal and centrifugal within the class (or dyad). That is, in early classes, many participants may find help with suffering by drawing compassion towards themselves from teacher and group, a centripetal motion, while others may find that compassion is hard to accept for themselves and may find help by offering compassion to others (often trying to "fix" them) a centrifugal motion. In either case, compassion is flowing in two directions in the group. It is not until later in the curriculum that a formal practice of compassion is introduced. This most often happens in the full-day session in which participants have been steeped in silence and meditation, and thus intra- and interpersonal resonance can foster the vulnerability to allow such practice. Formal wishes for happiness, safety, wellbeing, and ease helps many participants explicitly link their personal practice to the relational dimension. They discover the potential impact of their individual transformations on their families, social circles, and workplaces; their awareness of political, social, and environmental situations; and on their religious and spiritual lives. Compassion shows its centripetal and centrifugal power to them.

Qualities Revealed in the Curriculum

I have recounted, above, both the week-by-week detail of the MBSR curriculum and the larger motions of the curriculum of the MBIs to help clarify the inherent qualities of the co-creation of the pedagogy within the gathering of participants and teacher. While I am building towards an understanding and even a model of the ethical space of such experiences, it is worth taking stock of the qualities that so far have been revealed or implied. I have identified four, which are listed below, and which I will elaborate as I build a model.

Clearest is the quality of *corporeality*; the curriculum consistently turns participants towards what the senses offer in the present moment, trading habitual cognitive understandings for direct experience.

The second quality is related—*contingency*; things are not what they seem for participants, not even a thing as simple as a raisin, and participants are not what they seem to themselves, even the sense of self can be seen as contingent.

The third quality that is demonstrated concretely in the curriculum and its motions is *friendliness*; participants find that it is possible to befriend that which is alien and painful in moment-to-moment experience.

The fourth quality is not so much a presence as an absence; its importance becomes clearer within the pedagogy of the MBIs, yet the curriculum would be entirely different if it were not informed by what I think of as *cosmopolitanism*. I am not referring to a particular stance in moral philosophy (e.g., Appiah, 2006), although a general spirit is evidenced; I mean to invoke, rather, an attitude of openness to the many possibilities in creating meaning from the moment-by-moment experience of the pedagogy of the MBIs. That is, in the curriculum, no particular interpretation or meaning for a participant's experience is imposed or assumed—either in the way that the course is framed, in course materials, or in the recommended activities in the class sessions. Participants are free to ascribe meaning to their experiences, or not, within or outside any spiritual or philosophical tradition.

These four qualities—corporeality, contingency, friendliness, and cosmopolitanism—seem to inform the ethical space of the co-creation of mindfulness. I am highlighting them here for use in Chapter 6, in which, when we reach it, I will be able to build a model of the qualities of the ethical space.

While the curriculum is a steady, structural influence on the qualities of the ethical space, the pedagogy of the MBIs with its dynamic nature is far more important. As I've defined it, the pedagogy involves the contingent actions of a gathering of participants and teacher. It is co-creation. Yet, for the sake of clarity, and because, ultimately, the understanding and model of the ethical space will be of most interest to teachers, and to trainers and supervisors of teachers,

in the following section, I will describe the pedagogy from the teacher's point of view. I trust that this description will reveal further qualities that contribute to the ethical space, and that, therefore, may contribute to the model towards which I am aiming.

Describing the Pedagogy of the MBIs

The shorthand statement in the community about the pedagogy of the MBIs is this: "Ultimately, it is the depth of your own personal commitment to learning, growing and healing—as well as a dedication to the well-being of others—that will contribute most to your integrity and effectiveness as a teacher" (CFM, 2012). As Jon Kabat-Zinn puts it, "the teaching has to come out of one's practice" (2010, p.xviii). As described in Chapter 1, this view is most profoundly assumed in MBSR and the interventions mounted on its curriculum, while other interventions are less insistent upon this point. The importance of this is typically described as the teacher's "embodiment" of mindfulness, to emphasize its authenticity as opposed to a performance of "modeling"— "the teachers themselves are in the mode that participants are being invited to experiment with" (Crane, *et al.*, 2010).

To help define who may have this capacity for embodiment and, indeed, who may enter teacher training programs at various levels (CFM, 2012), the MBI community refers to the number of years of commitment to daily formal meditation practice, and to the amount of intense retreat practice (regular silent retreats of five days or more within a limited range of Buddhist traditions). At the same time, the community admits that, past a certain point, duration and intensity of meditation is not the sole critical factor in teacher development. Practitioners with five years of meditation experience have excelled in the teacher's role, while candidates with 20 years of experience have been found incapable of such work (e.g., Santorelli, 2001b).

From the vantage point of my concern with co-creation and the ethical space, I see the community's discourse around the "person of the teacher" as problematic. It suggests a motion from the "inner life" of the teacher outward to participants. For example, in reflecting on this issue, Crane, *et al.* (2010) note:

> *The depth of experience that teachers have in exploring* their own personal process through their mindfulness practice and through other personal development processes *is thus held to be directly related to their ability to "meet" the participants in a mindfulness-based class in this radically new way, thus creating a space in which participants can inquire into the actuality of their experience with compassion and free from the constraints of the inevitable ideas that arise about what could or should be happening. (p.78; my emphasis)*

Such emphasis on "ongoing self-inquiry and inner work" (CFM, 2012) is typical of the community's understanding and practice. They consider that teachers do their inner work and therefore can "hold the space" for participants. This view privileges the teacher's actions and presence, and minimizes the participants' contributions to the co-creation of mindfulness and the ethical space. It supports a Bodhisattvic or Hippocratic approach to an ethic of the MBIs, in counterpoint to the relational approach that I am advocating.

If I shift the view, without denying its value, I can see the teacher's duration and intensity of meditation practice as key to the relational approach. In this view, moments of mindfulness (experienced alone or in a gathering) are products of mindfulness pedagogy. That is, developing teachers begin by experiencing the co-creation of mindfulness and the ethical space as participants. As they comply with the community's insistence on daily meditation (most often alone), their teachers and fellow participants are inevitably inherently a part of their learning, knowledge, and experience of mindfulness. Sitting alone is identical to sitting together with the learning community, as the community, of the teacher's teachers and students are shaping influences on each moment of the turning towards and being with/in experience that is mindfulness meditation. It is valuable for teachers to cultivate that.[13] Further, it is extremely

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13 This raises some significant questions about opportunities for retreats and other extended or community practice for MBI teachers. The Buddhist retreats currently being pressed on developing teachers by guidelines promulgated through the UMASS Center for Mindfulness (CFM, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2010, 2011; Kabat-Zinn & Santorelli, 2012) can perhaps be

valuable for teachers to immerse themselves in a living (external!) community of participants, which is fulfilled by the wise emphasis on retreat practice in teacher development. Teachers learn a great deal while steeping in the co-created space of a gathering, because their experiences of its dimensions and qualities are available for them to study on both an intellectual and affective level. What is the space like? What factors contribute to its presence or absence? What are its effects? Most important, of course, is for teachers to steep in their own co-created spaces, to learn about the ever-changing, surprising, ultimately unknowable world in which they work—to feel what is there in the gathering. Class-by-class, teachers feel their way into the pedagogy, into the experience of co-creation. This has more impact on the development of a teacher than any other possible activity. To understand the ethical space, an understanding of the pedagogy is required. I shall describe its attitudes and actions—its skills—next.

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seen as congruent with the pedagogical aims of MBSR and the other MBIs. Yet remember that the MBIs comprise influences from different strands of Buddhism, from the romantic-transcendental discourse, and from other traditions as well, so strict Buddhist teaching may not entirely align. Even more pointedly, Buddhist retreats do not result in co-created space with the same qualities as the MBIs; in fact, they cannot result in such because the curriculum, pedagogy, and intention are by their nature different. Cullen (2011) describes differences between typical Vipassana Buddhist style retreats and a retreat led by Jon Kabat-Zinn and a founder of MBCT, John Teasdale, with a Buddhist teacher included as well. Her comment that Kabat-Zinn and Teasdale joining the participants for meals in the dining hall was "a powerful expression of the democratic and non-hierarchical spirit of MBSR" (p.192) is telling. Outside of retreat times, MBI teachers often find it difficult to locate groups with which they can sit regularly. The lack of secular venues for regular mindfulness meditation is a problem for teachers and graduates of MBI courses alike; many locales even lack the preferred Buddhist groups, or have very limited choices of traditions to choose from. If teachers are to deepen their understanding of the co-created space of the MBIs, they must have the chance to steep in it, which calls for MBI-style retreats, and MBI-style meditation groups. Despite an obvious lack of resources for such undertakings in the MBI community, these issues must be addressed if the number of competent MBI teachers is to grow to keep up with demand.

The Pedagogical Skills

With the primacy of ongoing experience as backdrop, I can now turn to the skills or actions of the teacher in the MBIs. My colleagues and I identified four core skill sets, which look entirely different in the style of each teacher, yet which seem to contribute to the unique qualities of co-creation in a gathering, as I shall explain. The four skills are: stewardship, homiletics, guidance, and inquiry—opaque words, perhaps, yet the importance of the actions is very clear.

The four skill sets are interrelated. Stewardship involves a set of skills that include the other three, as I will show. Further, as the unique vocabulary of the particular gathering is co-created, with specific figures of speech and rhetorical turns, both homiletics and guidance reflect these usages. In another relationship, the dialogical understandings developed in the group through inquiry inform homiletics and guidance. Of course, all four skill sets are dependent completely upon the teacher's ever deepening experience of the qualities of the co-creation of mindfulness and the ethical space.

STEWARDSHIP

Those who gather to practice the pedagogy of mindfulness are precious and must be cared for. Everyone who comes together shares the sufferings and joys of the human condition and the intention to explore his or her own direct experience. No one knows what will come of such explorations, neither the explorer, nor the teacher, nor the other participants. All are equal and whole. As I will describe further in Chapter 6, a sense of mutual well-wishing may develop. The words my colleagues and I chose in our description of the qualities that the actions of stewardship generate and sustain were "non-hierarchical" and "non-pathologizing"—key words, as I shall show.

The word "steward" itself means "guardian of the meeting hall" in Old English. It captures the basic action—protecting the space of the gathering—and highlights how ordinary and humble are the services rendered. Ensuring as much comfort—heat, light, safety—as possible in the meeting place. Setting up chairs, typically in a circle. Making sure all participants are inside the circle—together. Undercutting any sense of hierarchy, the sense of anyone, even the teacher, having a

preferred seat. Ultimately, stewardship is turning participants towards each other, rather than towards the teacher, by asking them to dialogue in dyads and small groups, in which all are equal, and by establishing that there are no right answers—and no one to supply them.

The stewardship of the circle is stewardship of the co-creation of mindfulness and the ethical space. It is not fragile, yet it may often be tested by the environment, dramatic distractions, or emotion or conflict within the gathering. In such situations, the teacher's tool of stewardship is mindfulness meditation (formal or informal) itself—particularly the motion of turning towards aversive experiences, or letting go of attractive experiences when they pass. In a simple example, an outside distraction, the teacher can call participants' attention to the distraction, reinforcing the essential move of "turning towards" aversive experience. If the distraction is continuing—say, a series of fire engines passing with sirens in the street—the teacher can (in good voice) ask the group to "drop in" to meditation and to pay attention to what is in their awareness moment to moment. When the distraction has passed, the group can be engaged in dialogue around the experience. In effect, this is "normalizing" the experience by making it simply a part of mindfulness practice.

HOMILETICS

Just as steward is a highly descriptive word, the word homiletics is also charged in ways that help convey qualities of the pedagogy of mindfulness. Its Greek root refers to friendly conversation, suggesting dialogue within a group that has assembled to talk together. The skill, therefore, is not in lecturing, but rather in engaging and responding. To honor the process of co-creation by not assuming an expert stance, the teacher draws as much didactic material as possible out of the group itself. Santorelli (2001a) notes:

> Importantly, rather than "lecturing" to program participants, the attention and skill of the teacher should be directed towards listening to the rich, information laden insights and examples provided by program participants and then, in turn, to use as much as possible these participant-generated experiences as a starting point for "weaving" the more didactic material into the structure and fabric of each class.

Participants' experiences, as they express them in the gathering, become "texts" at the center of a dialogic exploration—the living pedagogy works with these texts as a classroom teacher might work from written works. This democracy of texts—every participant is a respected author—reduces the sense of hierarchy and intensifies the sense of friendliness in the gathering. Even when the curriculum requires the teacher to deliver specific information—to describe the physiology of the stress response, for example—the teacher finds ways to invite participation and conversation. By investigating participants' responses to an imagined scene, such as being stuck in traffic and late for a meeting, the required points arise naturally from the participants—increased heart rate, faster and shallower breathing, greater muscle tension, heightened perception of threats, and so much more. Also, the often commented upon use of poems, stories, and children's books (e.g., Baer & Krietemeyer, 2006; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002) in the MBIs helps to defuse the sense of the teacher as expert. The wisdom of a poem is not the teacher's wisdom, it is shared wisdom available to all, and the gesture of such sharing is friendly.

GUIDANCE

The ways that the teacher uses language in guiding meditation, and the reasons for that language, permeate participants' experiences of the MBIs. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2004) has analyzed the use of language in guidance and developed a particular style meant to support mindfulness teaching and to get around resistances—particularly to authority— that many participants may have. He identifies four problems that can be introduced through verbal and non-verbal communication, and that can "generate resistance" in participants, or "create more waves in the thought structure": (1) striving, as in "if you did this long enough, you'd be better"; (2) idealizing, as in "I know how to do this and I'm going to teach you"; (3) fixing, as in the implication that something is wrong with you that meditation is addressing; and (4) dualism, as in language that suggests that there is an observed and an observer.

He further notes that nobody likes a command—that the teacher should instead make suggestions. A typical direction outside the MBIs might be "Breathe in," to which a participant might be inclined to

say (rarely out loud!) "How dare you tell me what to do." An MBI teacher might put it, "When you're ready, *breathing* in…" By using the present participle instead of the imperative, the teacher subverts any implied hierarchy, and, as well, eliminates the subject-object distinction, locates experience in the present moment, and may even question the solidity of the self—"Who is doing this breathing?" The skill of guidance ensures that each participant feels free to have his or her own experience, not what the teacher or group requires.

The other important dimension of guidance is the connection of the teacher to her own experience of the meditation while speaking. Guidance is not performance; rather, it is the teacher using her own moment-to-moment experience as a connection to the environment in which the meditation is unfolding. She uses herself as a sensing instrument, while allowing for the infinite range of potential subjective experiences of the participants. Concretely, she connects to events in the environment—construction sounds outside or inside, hallway happenings from rumbling carts to whispered conversations, even the vagaries of heating and air conditioning equipment can bring participants closer to their experience.

Perhaps the most important guidance is the specific meditations provided as audio recordings for participants to use between classes. Here, the spoken language must carry the entire experience. Each practice will be heard many times, so the content must have many layers of information to be discovered on repetition and to support the ongoing learning by the participant. The sense of allowing any experience must be intensified beyond even the freedom in classroom guidance, as contexts will be different in the home context and over the weeks, months, and even years of use of the recordings. Most important, the sense that the practice is a living event unfolding in the moment must come through—beyond all the scripting and preparation.

INQUIRY

Saki Santorelli, credited by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2011, p.302) as "contributing profoundly" to the development of inquiry, states: "It is recommended that a significant amount of time in each class be

dedicated to an exploration of the participants' experience of the formal and informal mindfulness practices and other weekly home assignments" (Santorelli, 2001b). This does not refer to a general dialogue with the full gathering. Rather, this is a teacher–participant dialogue that inquires into a particular participant's subjective experience—his or her knowing in the moment. Such dialogue may bring tacit knowing into language, allowing further investigation of a different type.

From the teacher's perspective, inquiry is a collaboration in which both parties work from a "not knowing" position and remain open to outcome. There is nothing to be fixed, changed, or transformed—only recognized and known. The teacher is offering friendship, as Stephen Batchelor, in a Western Buddhist context, from the perspective of the participant, describes it:

> [Such] friends are teachers in the sense that they are skilled in the art of learning from every situation. We do not seek perfection in these friends but rather heartfelt acceptance of human imperfection. Nor omniscience but an ironic admission of ignorance… For true friends seek not to coerce us, even gently and reasonably, into believing what we are unsure of. These friends are like midwives, who draw forth what is waiting to be born. Their task is not to make themselves indispensable but redundant. (1997, pp.50–51)

The teacher's friendship, expressed as genuine curiosity and a willingness to accept whatever comes is expressed in the kinds of questions that guide inquiry. They are extremely simple, as in, "How was it for you?" On reflection, a participant offers a tentative response, which is met with further open-ended exploration—"Can you say more about that?" The process requires reflection and an engagement with language that helps the participant towards greater understanding. For instance, following a body scan, a participant noted, "I feel more connected somehow." "More connected to what?" asked the teacher. A reflective pause led to, "More connected to myself and my family and other people…" And after further, longer reflection, what came was "really, though, connection to myself, that's the bigger change." Maybe that's no shattering revelation, yet that participant located some new

facet of experience. What's more, as other participants followed the process, they engaged in their own "unfinished" dialogues, finding whatever they found. Inquiry is shared work, which no one owns or controls.

Qualities Revealed in the Pedagogy

Within this description of the pedagogy of the MBIs, particularly in its essential skills, I believe I have identified, again, the four qualities previously described as inherent in the curriculum: corporeality, contingency, friendship, and cosmopolitanism. Each is demonstrated in the actions and attitude of the teacher, so the pedagogical view helps refine their definitions. I have also identified three further qualities that appear to be related directly to the pedagogical practice itself, regardless of particular curricular content. These are most easily indicated with the type of negative constructions that I find appealing in Buddhist discourse, because they don't define a specific way of acting, but, rather, with negative construction define a space of possibilities for ethical action and being. These three qualities of the ethical space are *non-pathologizing*, *non-hierarchical*, and *non-instrumental*. Below, I will review and expand on the first four qualities, and then describe the three new ones. As I undertake these thicker descriptions, I trust that I will begin to clarify and offer insight into the ethical space that it co-created in the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs. What will follow from these descriptions, in Part III, is an exploration of how these qualities interact with each other and an attempt to integrate them to build a model that describes the ethical space.

Corporeality

Of the first four qualities, corporeality has the most immediacy in the pedagogical undertaking. With the skill of stewardship, the room is prepared for a gathering of bodies; it matters how the room and its details feel and look—comfort and safety are primary considerations. As well, the tool of the steward in preserving the co-creation of mindfulness is mindfulness meditation itself. When the teacher (as steward) asks the distracted group to "drop in" to meditation and

notice the sounds and sights of the distraction, as well as the feelings generated in the body, the experience is corporeal—a key to emotional regulation, as I've discussed. With the homiletical skills, the teacher creates opportunities for exploring the experience of the moment—through body awareness—which then become texts for dialogue. In the guidance skill, because the immediate access to present moment experience (mindfulness) is through body sensations, the teacher continuously points towards, and even offers clues for and examples of how it may feel. Remember, the teacher is using her own body awareness to generate the words she speaks in guidance. Inquiry, with its simple open-ended questions, often returns to the sense of how it is now in the body. As I have described it above in discussing pedagogical skills, inquiry is a collaboration to bring what is tacitly known into language. The process is making sense of feelings by using language.

Contingency

The quality of contingency also plays throughout all of the pedagogical skill sets. The simplest of stewardship acts, such as adjusting a thermostat or asking for quiet outside the door, highlight contingency for participants. Such moves may be successful in increasing comfort in the room—or not. In either case, participants are working with contingency. And this is true of any stewardship action. Homiletics depends upon contingency for its character and success; it is friendly conversation generated by ideas or experiences that are alive in the gathering. Even the sharing of a set piece, such as a poem or children's book, when arising within the homiletical conversation, is contingent. When planned ahead, there is a distancing aspect of "performance"; the power is in spontaneity. Guidance, as I described, comes from the teacher's own experience in the moment. It is a subtle—and sometimes blatant—illustration of how context influences us. Inquiry might be defined as a dialogue that tracks the changing experience of a participant. How is it now? and now? are key questions. The answers are unpredictable, sometimes unwanted or uncomfortable, yet always contingent, which is the point.

Friendship

As it was revealed in the curriculum, the quality of friendliness appeared as quite concrete. That is, by turning towards experience participants find it is possible to befriend whatever is arising. In the pedagogy this concrete quality sublimes—instantly changing from from solid into vapor—and pervades like a perfume the entire context of the gathering. The turn towards experience results in discovery of a capacity for holding that experience, of being with it. This is the model for the relationships founded on the most basic stewardship move: putting everyone in a circle and leaving no one out. Homiletics works the same way; what is in the gathering is what is worth talking about; even the use of poems or stories is a turning towards something shared, wisdom that no one claims yet all are privy to. Guidance, particularly the enduring recordings, is a gentle but relentless call to meet the experience of the moment, which may result in befriending. Inquiry is that same call and invitation. A participant is held in the attentive quiet of the group; she is allowed to meet her experience, while others meet their own. The befriending is both pointed and pervasive.

Cosmopolitanism

This fourth quality was an absence in the curriculum. Now with the understanding of the pedagogical skills and actions, it shifts from pure absence to a noticeable structure of acceptance in the gathering. In homiletics, for example, there is no right answer. A poem might take a particular stance—theistic or nontheistic—or might belong to a specific spiritual or philosophical tradition from anywhere in the world. It is never presented as an answer, only as an object for reflection. Guidance employs language that is very wide; allowing every possible experience and interpretation. Cosmopolitanism is most clearly revealed in inquiry, where the meaning of a participant's experience is spoken by the participant, witnessed by all, and commented on or corrected by none. There is no one right way to be with or to understand one's experience. Such understandings and meanings may be stated with explicit reference to any expression of spirituality or religion, or there may be a more implicit reference.

In the definition of spirituality I prefer—"an individual's struggle to come to terms with his or her humanity" (Isanon, 2001)—it is not a special way of being or acting, it is, rather, how we all find ways of going on in our lives.

Non-hierarchical

This is the first of the three qualities that only become evident through the pedagogy. The suggestion is that all participants are equal and that the teacher, while she has a function of offering structural help for the gathering, does not have a superior understanding of anyone's experience in the moment. She can help to explore, but will not offer commentary or fix or change anyone. This is clear in the stewardship moves: no head of the circle (think of King Arthur's Round Table); the main tool is for all to turn towards their experience in the moment. In homiletics, participant experiences are the texts; the teacher knows some facts, perhaps, but interpretation is up to participants. Poems and other written texts, as I've explained, actually avoid imputing wisdom to the teacher. Guidance is simply an offer—"If you'd care to…" or "Perhaps noticing…"—never an imperative. And in inquiry, of course, the participant decides to explore his experience or not, and if exploring is offered the freedom to stop at any moment.

Non-pathologizing

Here, again, clarity comes fast. In the opening of a class, in the circle that makes equals, no one is required to speak about their reason for taking the class, unless they care to. Diagnoses, difficult life situations, are simply how it is, simply experiences to be turned towards and explored. The teacher in stewardship mode voices these ideas early and often: Kabat-Zinn's iconic, "as long as you are breathing, there is more right with you than there is wrong," or the instruction that "no one here needs to be fixed." Homiletics may include such messages often. Guidance allows participants to have *their* experiences; there is no failure, nothing is wrong. There is just noticing and learning to be friendly and be with whatever is happening—the good, the bad, and the ugly, as it is often stated. Inquiry is not in search of

distress; in fact, in skillful teaching, positive experiences receive as much attention as the aversive ones.

Non-instrumental

This has to do with the intentions behind the meditations offered in the class, and the specific instances offered by the teacher—perhaps as stewardship, in turning participants towards a distraction, or perhaps in inquiry in returning a participant to immediate experience in the body. The intention is not to change or fix anything, rather it is to explore, to learn, to see what may be noticed and known. The fact that things do change, or that participants experience insight or resolution is outside the actual undertaking. It is, in a sense, a side effect of meditation, just as relaxation is a side effect, not a promise. Again, as with the prior two qualities, this is spoken aloud.

Toward a Model of the Ethical Space

These seven qualities are not random. They relate to one another, although they do not repeat each other. I assume that there is a structure to the ways that they relate, and that I may be able to understand and work with that structure, which may suggest directions for the model of the ethical space towards which I am progressing.

It appears to me that the last three qualities I've discussed—non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental—have a close, interlocking relationship, and are related to the teacher's actions. The interlocking nature is clear: if you pathologize, you raise yourself up in the hierarchy; if you raise yourself up, you grant yourself power to pathologize or act instrumentally; and if you act instrumentally, you are, of necessity, both pathologizing and raising yourself up in the hierarchy.

The other four qualities I've listed above seem to concern the entirety of the gathering. Corporeality, contingency, and cosmopolitanism are experienced by all. However, friendship may be the most pervasive quality. It binds the gathering in a way that makes it possible to sustain the practice of the pedagogy. Understanding this is a driving force in elaborating the model, which I will attend to in Part III, by attempting, in Chapter 5, to define the shape and texture, so to speak, of the

ethical space, as I present many layers of descriptions of analogous spaces, before, in Chapter 6, essaying to build a fully dimensional model of the ethical space.

Dimensions of a Model of an Ethical Space

Participants are talking in dyads about their experiences with the sitting meditation we've just completed. Their low voices are mostly murmuring. As I look out over the room, their engagement is palpable. And varied. I absorb, in a slow sweep of my head, locked eyes and twinned smiles, closed-eye pauses and motionless listening, sadness and solicitude, the leaning-in of quiet laughter, a tentative touch of hand to hand. My own experience of the moment is like that of one of the angels in Wim Wenders' film Wings of Desire, *perched above the city, listening watching, simply present. I suspect there will be much to be said in the big group. I say, "Finishing up your conversations and coming back into our circle."*

They acquiesce slowly, but the dyads part and turn, participants pulling chairs into something like the circle in which we began the evening. They are primed and rehearsed, in a way, for this question: "So, what did you discover that you'd like to talk about?" There is quiet for some time. I drop my shoulders and lean back, not forward. There is nothing now for me to do or say.

Bruce is still smiling. "This was the best meditation I've had so far," he says. "Really?" I ask, "How do you know?" He's quick, "Because my mind was just so quiet and my body was so relaxed." I ask, "And how is it when you check in, in the present moment?" With a grin, "Just ducky." So I ask what meditation is like when it's not so ducky. "Well," he says, "my mind is all agitated and I have trouble sitting still." I ask how he handles that, and he's matter-of-fact: "I just notice that my mind is racing, and I keep coming back to feel my breath and my body." I suggest that that's precisely our practice, to know how it is in the

moment and simply be with it. I push a little bit, "So, every meditation is a good meditation, right?" He hasn't lost his smile. "I know what you're saying," he says, "but I've got to say I still have a preference." Laughter of recognition around the circle, which finally subsides into silence.

"My legs have just been agony for me," Susan says quietly. She has spoken of this before, and the surgeries she has had, and the surgery that is scheduled for the last week of our class. "This pain is just too much sometimes, and I can't just be with it, let alone be friendly. I can distract myself with the breath sometimes—that worked a little tonight—but I don't think I can be mindful at all."

"Susan?" I ask. "How is the pain right now?"

After a moment of checking in, she finds, "It's not screaming, but it's definitely there." "Would you be willing to see if you can work with this mindfully? At least to explore the possibility for a moment or two?" No pressure from me, as she knows. She's said no before.

"I can try," she says.

I look around at the now serious faces, moved by Susan's disclosure. I say, "This is how it is for all of us at one time or another—maybe right now for you too. Seeing if you can be present to what happens for you, as we make this exploration." I turn to Susan. " So, just bringing your attention to your breathing right now."

Her hand goes immediately to the top of her chest, her throat. "There's a tightness, a pain, here in my chest."

"OK, so can you bring your attention to that feeling? Does it help to hold your hand there?"

"Yeah, it helps. A little comfort for myself… sympathy even." Quiet breathing. The room quiet. Then, "I think I'm just really tired of living with the pain I'm going through, but I don't want to give in."

"What you're doing right now, turning towards your experience, isn't giving in, at all, Susan. It's sort of the opposite. It's showing up. It's being right there in your life."

"OK." Very tentatively.

"So, do you think you can check in, just for a moment now, to how it is in your body?"

"My legs hurt."

"Both equally?"

"Well, the right one much more, actually."

"So the left one's not too bad?"

"Actually, it's pretty good."

"Can you describe how it is in the right leg?"

"Right now, it's kind of like ginger ale bubbles breaking. But sometimes it's like it's on fire—too much to stand."

"But not right now? It's not too much to stand now?"

"It's just that it's so constant; always there. That's why I can't stand it."

"So that's the story, the thoughts that you have? 'This never goes away;' 'I'm always in agony;' 'I can't stand this'?"

"That's my story," trying a wry smile.

"If you turn your attention towards the legs in this moment, what do you find?"

A pause to study. "It's still fizzing. And that's scary. I'm afraid it will get worse."

"So, fear is here now?"

Susan nods.

"And where does the fear show up in your body?"

"Everything tenses up…back, shoulders, neck…look, I'm making fists."

"And the leg?"

"Faster fizzing…hotter…It's getting worse." Pitch and volume rising, "I don't want this… It's not fair…" Her face is down and her fists are up.

"I get that. And so do other folks. I see the nods and expressions around the circle…"

She looks up.

"Susan, I understand that you want to push this pain away, to get rid of it. Right now, though, it's here, and so are you. I'm just suggesting that maybe you could try a new approach. Not giving in, but opening up a little bit," gesturing with thumb and forefinger together, "a smidgen, to the sensations in your leg, to your fear, your anger, the tension in your body—to whatever it is that's here." Turning to encompass the circle, "And whatever is here for you, as well, is your own undeniable experience. How are you meeting it? Pushing away? Or opening up? And how does it feel, either way?" We sit quietly together for a minute, 60 seconds or so, which is a long time.

I turn towards Susan. "What are you noticing?"

"Well, I unclenched my fists," a little sniffing laugh. "That's different. There's less tension in my shoulders and back. I'm aware of my legs. I'm aware that I could tell myself how awful it might be."

"But you're not doing that?"

"No, I'm just noticing that thought. There's more going on somehow than just me and the pain. I feel, I don't know, bigger."

"Susan, it takes courage to do what you've done—to open up to pain, to make room for what you don't want. I think we all feel that. I see the nods and faces; the folks here with you know how courageous you've been." We all look around. "Let's just sit together for a while," I suggest, in the quiet of bodies already compliant. Sparse guidance, long pauses: "Bringing the attention to how it is in the body as you check in…what qualities show up for you?… Aware of the process of thinking, and how that is… And noticing emotion, mood state, how it feels in the moment." Extended silence. Into the stillness, I drop a question. "Is there anything to say about your experience right now?" Words and phrases occur around the circle. "Empathy." "Bravery." "Togetherness." "A sense of understanding." I probe—"What is understanding like in the body?" After a searching pause comes, "Like breathing out…like rest…"

Describing How an MBI Gathering "Works"

In the prologue, I offered a vignette that attempts to convey a sense of the state of the gathering of participants and teacher at end of an MBI course—a savoring of, a lingering within, the co-created space. Working from this sense, in Chapter 1, I explored the MBIs, their essential character and their burgeoning appeal and growth within medicine and behavioral health care, and noting the urgencies of the MBI community, in which a theory of the ethics of the MBIs ran third to two other issues—defining mindfulness, and ensuring quality in training the many teachers required in the dramatic growth. In Chapter 2, I addressed the potential approaches to ethical that were assumed in the community of the MBIs, and suggested that this essay might inquire about one that has not yet been proposed: that an ethical theory resides in the pedagogy of the MBIs itself.

The vignette of the "raisin experience" described in Part II is meant to capture the genesis of the co-created space of the MBIs— suggesting that the qualities of even an early moment of mindfulness are aligned with those of the latest moments. Thereafter, in Chapter 3, I recounted the description or definitions of mindfulness that are current within the MBIs, and proposed that this essay would adopt a description of mindfulness as being co-created by the teacher and participants. Chapter 4 pressed this idea further, suggesting that it is not the individual participant's formal or informal "practice" of mindfulness meditation that should be the focus of inquiry, but, rather, the focus should be on the pedagogy effects the co-creation

of mindfulness within the group. So, the focus became the actions of the gathering, as manifest in the curriculum and recommended pedagogical approaches of the MBIs. As I presented these, I noted the unique qualities that arise in an MBI gathering, and suggested that they may help to define the ethical space in which the pedagogy takes place. In fact, I suggested that we might identify the ethical space with the qualities arising from the pedagogy, which is the burden of this chapter.

In opening Part III with the vignette above, I'm attempting to capture the central gesture of the pedagogy, the definitive move of the MBIs. This might be stated as the teaching intentions of *cultivating observation* and *moving towards acceptance*, which in the vignette and in the language of classroom pedagogy would be intentionally turning towards what is happening in the moment, and being with/in it—in a friendly, accepting way. Bruce, in his breezy expression, did that central work just as clearly as Susan, in her more hard-fought work. There is no preferred or more profound mode of meeting experience. Ducky or dismal, participants discover that they can be with how it is. They discover this in the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs, in a gathering of teacher and participants, in the co-creation of moments of mindfulness in the ethical space.

Mapping the Work of the Gathering

As I've noted, even when the participants are doing their homework alone,[14] they are in the gathering. Or, to be glib, the gathering is

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14 In the MBIs that include formal meditation, meditation at home is considered an integral part of the course, a fact continually emphasized to participants. The standard MBSR curriculum asks participants to commit to about 45 minutes a day of formal homework. However, the average practice time reported by participants, depending upon the specific form of meditation, rarely approaches the requested commitment; instead, records of either sitting meditation or mindful movement show 16 to 20 minutes per day, while for the body scan records show 31 to 35 minutes per day (Carmody & Baer, 2008). In non-standard MBSR curricula, less commitment is required—ranging from 15 to 35 minutes (Chang, *et al.*, 2004; Reibel, *et al.*, 2001; Jain, *et al.*, 2007; Rosenzweig, *et al.*, 2003; Roth & Calle-Mesa, 2006). Yet these curricula provide health and mental health

in them. Consider the few minutes of Susan's dialogue with me. As Susan chose to turn towards her experience, I suggested that participants could turn towards their own experience of the moment, which for some may have been as audience, and for others may have been working with pains and fears, however big or small, of their own. Their work was bringing their attention to what was happening in the moment, which included not merely the exchange between Susan and I, but their own unfinished dialogues (thinking) and their unspoken yet somehow communicated support of Susan.

It is this co-created space, with a unique character defined by the entirely contingent responses of teacher and participants to the present moment, that comes home with them. It is the space in which they take on their homework. It is an accomplishment that belongs to all and to each.

If I am to clearly, meaningfully, and movingly express this space, logical starting point is a survey of descriptions of analogous situations that have been proposed by others in other discourses and from other perspectives, which I will provide below. It will include an elaboration of the neuroscience and attachment theory models sketched previously, as well as analogous concepts from moral

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outcomes consistent with those of the standard curriculum. Some reports show no significant correlations between participants' reported durations of homework and their outcomes (Astin, 1997; Carmody, *et al.*, 2008; Davidson, *et al.*, 2003; Dobkin & Zhao, 2011; Greeson, *et al.*, 2011), while others find correlations between homework time and specific health outcomes (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Speca, *et al.*, 2000). Dobkin and Zhao (2011) review the mixed findings and note the anomaly, suggesting that, "Perhaps other aspects of the program (e.g., group discussions, instructor training) underlie benefits observed" (p.23); Vettese, *et al.* (2009) note that, "Until an experimental approach is taken to explore the effects of clients' home practice, it will be difficult to disentangle practice effects from other active program components, such as the mindfulness program itself, and other group-related factors" (p.221). My colleagues and I (McCown, *et al.*, 2010) have suggested that duration may not be the best measure for "compliance," in that a moment of mindfulness is outside time, in a vertical, rather than horizontal dimension. I am offering a suggestion that the co-creation—the pedagogy, the being in the space—is the signal accomplishment, whether it "goes home" with participants or not.

philosophy, anthropology, education, and communication. While the model of the ethical space that I ultimately build in Chapter 6 may not rest solely on any of these particular descriptions, these biased maps, they each capture important features for navigation, and so contribute to the recognition of the space we move within.

Description One—A View from Neuroscience

I referred to neuroscience constructs in the last chapter, in presenting the relational sense of the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs. I wish to revisit this discourse to look explicitly at a description of a shared relational space that is a close analog to the space created via the pedagogy of the MBIs. The "in-house philosopher" of mirror neuron theory, Vittorio Gallese (2003, 2006), proposes that when people intentionally come within close proximity to each other a shared manifold, or "we-centric" space, is immediately created. This does not require conscious cognitive effort, and does not depend upon distinctions of self and other. Gallese (2003) describes it this way. He notes that infants a few hours after birth imitate facial expression, and that caregiver–infant activities are mutually coordinated from those early moments even though the infant has no sense of selfhood or otherness. In the process of maturation, humans develop the capacity to take perspective, to discern subject and object, self and other. We learn to perceive our world and others in a fine-grained way, through the senses and through language. Gallese suggests (2006) that we come to possess (or be possessed by) a self-centered perspective that creates a gap, what he calls an epistemic gulf, between self and others. Traditionally that gap is seen to be bridged cognitively, by folk psychology or some theory of mind. For Gallese (2006), however, shared neural states make a nearer bridge—immediate participation in the other's corporeal experience creating a we-centric space—for getting the sense of the feelings and actions of others.

Description Two—Expanded States of Consciousness

As another view of shared space, from a discourse of human development research, we can consider a model of dyadically

expanded states of consciousness (Tronick and Members of the Boston Change Process Study Group, 1998). Based in systems theory, this model sees individual humans as self-organizing systems that take in new information and make new meaning, thus moving towards greater complexity and coherence. The capacity for an individual to make meaning is limited, but is enhanced by connecting to another to form a dyadic state of consciousness. Infant and caregiver dyads are perfect illustrations of how each person's sense of the world and its possibilities can expand (Ham & Tronick, 2009; Tronick, 2007). To illustrate, consider an infant so young that she cannot sit up and therefore cannot use her arms or hands to communicate by gesture. However, the caregiver, by giving the infant postural support in response to the infant's communicative expressions of frustration, scaffolds the infant's ability to use gestural communication. The scaffolding "controls" the infant's head and frees the infant to control her arms and hands. Through this process of providing the regulatory input, the now-sitting infant's brain assumes a new and different organization with greater coherence and complexity that is much beyond the infant's endogenous capacities to organize (Tronick and Members of the Boston Change Process Study Group, 1998).

In the infant–caregiver dyad, then, the infant's gestures are "an emergent property of the dyadic system" (Tronick and Members of the Boston Change Process Study Group, 1998, p.296). The action could not take place without the expansion of the states of consciousness of both. The benefits of mutually expanded states of consciousness can be seen in adult relationships, say, between client and therapist. That dyad can access an increased repertoire of tools and processes for making "age-possible" meanings, including the sophisticated language and symbolic systems of their culture, and the richness of nonverbal communication (Tronick, 2003, 2007). The meaning is negotiated, as Stern (2004) suggests, in the present moment. It's a messy process: the dyad creates meaning through failures and repairs, and through repetitions with inevitable small variations: "[O]ut of the recurrence of reparations the infant and another person come to share the implicit knowledge that 'we can move into a mutual positive state even when

we have been in a mutual negative state' or 'we can transform negative into positive affect'" (Tronick, 2003, p.478).

The model of this process seems expandable beyond the dyad into the gathering. There is not only the meaning Susan and I, or Bruce and I made in dialogue, but all the meaning generated in those moments throughout the gathering.

Description Three—The Silence of Dialogue

As in the other descriptions above, we may consider transformation or expansion of consciousness as relational. While it is often considered that such effects take place through spoken language, Martin Buber, in his 1929 essay, "Dialogue," vividly describes an entirely silent, and profound, interchange.

> *Imagine two men sitting beside one another in any kind of solitude in the world. They do not speak with one another, they do not look at one another, not once have they turned to one another. They are not in one another's confidence, the one knows nothing of the other's career, early that morning they got to know one another in the course of their travels. In this moment neither is thinking of the other; we do not need to know what their thoughts are. The one is sitting on the common seat, obviously after his usual manner, calm, hospitably disposed to everything that may come. His being seems to say it is too little to be read, one must also be really there.* (Buber, 1947, pp.4–5)

The analogy to the MBI classroom is inviting. It points to the mystery that participants may not speak at all in class sessions and still find benefit from being with each other. Buber's "The one," in his being "really there," is turned towards his experience of the moment—has made the central move of MBI pedagogy.

> *The other, whose attitude does not betray him, is a man who holds himself in reserve, withholds himself. But if we know about him we know that a childhood's spell is laid on him, that his withholding of himself is something other than an attitude, behind all attitude is entrenched the impenetrable inability to communicate himself.*

"The other," has a way of being that makes that turning towards difficult, and makes the communication of the experience of the moment, therefore, impossible. Yet, there he sits near one who is connected to the moment—and to him.

> And now—let us imagine that this is one of the hours which succeed in bursting asunder the seven iron bands about our heart—imperceptibly the spell is lifted. But even now the man does not speak a word, does not stir a finger. Yet he does something. The lifting of the spell has happened to him—no matter from where—without his doing. But this is what he does now; he releases in himself a reserve over which only he himself has power. Unreservedly communication streams from him, and the silence bears it to his neighbour.

In this moment, something has happened; it is not a coincidence that the one and the other are physically proximate, yet nothing causal is implicated. In fact, what seems most active in the space between is the silence.

> Indeed it was intended for him, and he receives it unreservedly as he receives all genuine destiny that meets him. He will be able to tell no one, not even himself, what he has experienced. What does he now "know" of the other? No more knowing is needed. For where unreserve has ruled, even wordlessly, between men, the word of dialogue has happened sacramentally.

Further, the sense of sharing, of equality, or lack of hierarchy, at least, is salient. There is a kind of spiritual friendship that is not on display, but rather so deep within the relation as to escape any telling.

Description Four—Liminality and Communitas

An anthropological view of the shared space of the MBIs could start with Arnold van Gennep's 1909 concept of rites of passage, the rituals that attend transitions in social status, say in politics or religion (van Gennep, 1960 [1909]). There are three phases: (1) separating the "passengers" from their current status; (2) entering a "liminal" (threshold or boundary) time and space in which passengers have an ambiguous identity; and (3) re-entering the society with a new identity. It's the

collective experiences of the passengers during the liminal period that offers a view of the co-created space of the MBIs, and it is Victor Turner's (1969) extension and elaboration of van Gennep's concept that makes sense.

Many participants come to mindfulness-based groups when they are in crisis, making a transition. Perhaps an illness or a loss marks them. Certainly, they are suffering. So, they choose to be passengers in a gathering. The gathering is liminal—participants' roles and positions in the outside world don't matter. In fact, what is more likely is that participants will connect to similarities of their suffering—they "tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism" (Turner, 1969, p.95). This is characteristic of what Turner calls *communitas* or an *anti-structure*—in which participants are together in a "'moment in and out of time,' and in and out of the social structure" (1969, p.96). The communitas of the liminal phase is in counterpoint to the *societas* or *structure* of "business as usual" in the dominant culture. The contrast of the two ways of being together is brought into high relief in the context of MBI courses offered in hospitals or other institutional medical and mental health care settings. In an environment where expertise and knowledge are of the essence, MBI participants are invited to put aside diagnoses and prognoses, and to take up a stance of not knowing. Instead of faith in science and technology, they are asked to believe in themselves—their own moment-by-moment experience.

Description Five—The Zone of Proximal Development

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, working in the 1930s but only well known in the West since the 1970s, took what is essentially a relational approach to childhood education. He suggests that the "higher functions," such as conceptual thought, first happen between the child and another person, and then become possible for the child alone. Vygotsky considers this a process of internalization. He also noted a difference between learning and development. Children can exhibit skills or solve problems in the presence of adults that they cannot do or solve on their own; they have learned, but they have not yet reached the new level of development. He defined, then, a *zone of proximal development* (ZPD): "It is the distance between the

actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p.86).

What is important about this for the purpose of this essay is the relational nature of learning that it defines. It is a collaborative process for children to develop the levels of understanding of those around them—the culture in which they are located. What is most important for us is that the collaboration must be unique for each child, each learner. The learner's needs in the moment cannot be decided beforehand, but only in the actual meeting of persons. "The learning… develops in non-instrumental ways particular to the people involved, in collaborations arising from within their resourceful attunement to each other" as Lock and Strong (2010) note in stretching the zone for use with adult learners in contexts such as psychotherapy. Think of Bruce and Susan; even more, think of the participants learning along with either or both of them.

"Zone" and "proximal" for Vygotsky might be seen to refer to an abstraction—a distance between one level of development and the next. Nevertheless, the spatial, indeed, geographic metaphor is implicit (in the Russian terms too). The ZPD can, of course, be seen concretely as about a real space, a room, even, and human nearness, guiding hands.

Description Six—Enskillment

Tim Ingold (2008) rebels against the term "socialization," used in his home discourse of anthropology for teaching and learning. He insists that humans are not changed through learning from biological raw material to some finished state, but rather that learning is never finished and remains forever biological and social. He prefers the term *enskillment*, and uses a helpful illustration for his preference—learning to make an omelette. Because every egg is different, there's no one right way to crack it. One learns the feel for it under guidance from someone who does know. And one learns in the spatial, physical context of a kitchen. He insists that one doesn't bring knowledge "in" from "outside", but rather one grows into knowledge as a result

of joint activity. Any knowledge belongs to the whole system—the relationships and the actual space in which it all occurs. As Ingold puts it (2008, p.116) "you only get an omelette from a cook-in-the-kitchen."

The parallel of "hands on" pedagogy with the MBIs is not precise; certainly, however, it is a compelling way of talking about how what is known tacitly can be continually rediscovered among people in a specific time, place, and setting. As Ingold puts it (2008, p.117), "The minds of novices are not so much 'filled up' with the stuff of culture, as 'tuned up' to the particular circumstances of the environment. It is this tuning that enables them to make their way in the world." For this essay project, it is the sensuous nature of the activity, the unrepeatability of the process of *enskillment*, and the site specificity of it that is so compelling. Site specificity is a particularly important characteristic. In the MBIs, participants are challenged to repeat the meditations they have learned as homework every day. As part of this, they go home and try to recreate a set or setting analogous to the classroom—control of light and sound, finding a straight-back chair, or purchasing yoga mats and even meditation cushions (if they learned sitting meditation on the floor). Often a neat relationship is revealed as participants discuss their success in doing the homework: the further the home setting is from the class setting, the more difficult the participant finds it to do the homework.

Description Seven—The Situation of Joint Action

John Shotter has been concerned for decades with the question of *how* we create the ways we are together—that is, the processes of social construction. He locates these processes in the continuous hubbub, chaotic flow of moment-by-moment life in which we are embedded. This shared background, this *ethos*, is vastly overlooked and underexplored. It is useful in thinking about the particular ethical space of the MBIs.

Shotter calls his notion of the "how" of social construction "joint action" (1984). He has elaborated the description over the years (e.g., 1993, 2008, 2011), adding particularly the insights of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bahktin and the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Via Bahktin comes a dialogical structure for

joint action, in which our actual spoken words to and from one another are responsive to our interlocutor and the moment of speaking; that is, what is spoken is shaped by what has come before and what is needed or anticipated (Shotter, 2008). Merleau-Ponty thickens the description further, with a chiasmically intertwined structure, through which we make sense of where we are and what is happening not by intellectual or cognitive processes, but by the capacity of our living body to pull together all the different channels of our perceptions and action tendencies to orient us in the present moment (Shotter, 2011).

Joint action is an ontological process. By the time they part, all the participants in joint action "will have come to embody different ways of perceiving, thinking, talking, acting, and valuing" (Shotter, 2008, p.37). Each will have become a new *kind* of person, perhaps with a changed social or personal identity label. After joint action with music teachers and/or a band, one may be a musician, or after joint action with an MBI gathering, one may be a meditator and/or a less-reactive, more accepting parent, spouse, or leader.

Shotter (1992, 2008) finds at least three features that are important to recognize in joint action as a "how" for social construction. First, joint action does not derive from the intentions of particular participants, but rather in the exchanges among them. What arises is nothing that could have been predicted. As such, participants find themselves in a "situation" that is specifically their own. Second, the situation is related to, or points to, something beyond itself. It is not closed, but rather seems to be open to and actually invites actions by the participants. Third, the invited actions by the participants within the situation continue to flow and to establish the situation as a particular world or reality. This world/situation, then, is dialogically structured, which is to say, it is organized moment-by moment. It is built of responses and anticipations, of the spoken and unspoken, of sensuous perceptual experience, and of feelings. Important for this essay are Shotter's (2008) insights that the unique features of a situation are non-locatable—distributed across all participants—and, further, that they are found neither inside nor outside the participants, but are rather located "in that space where inside and outside are one" (p.39).

This is a way, then, of seeing the MBI gathering of participants. They sit together, mostly in silence, and yet, something happens. It may happen in the silence, or during and within an audible, focused, sustained exchange, such as that between Susan and me. Shotter might be writing of such a moment here:

> [W]e cannot prevent ourselves from being spontaneously responsive to events occurring in our surroundings; we react to them and to each other's activities bodily, in a "living" way, spontaneously, without our having first "to work out" how to respond to them. But more than simply responding to each other in a sequential manner—that is, instead of one person first acting individually and independently of another, and then the second also by acting individually and independently of the first in his/her reply—the fact is that in such a sphere of spontaneously responsive dialogically structured activity as this, we all act jointly as a collective-we. (2011, p.58)

None of these Maps Are the Territory

These seven different views offer explanations of something like a shared ethical space, and are useful and generative of further explanations within their particular discourses. I'm not proposing any of these as specific answers, however. It may be best to think of them as ways of seeing and speaking, as metaphors, as aesthetic tools for glimpsing that which is difficult to perceive or epitomize. My hope is that—stacked one upon another as they have been—they will serve to provide an overall sense, feel, or tendency for my specific task of describing the ethical space of the MBIs.

Certain of these views may capture the imagination—they are very seductive in a way that I fear could be destructive of my undertaking. I mention this for my own sake, as a reminder, and for the reader's sake, to maintain perspective. It is not difficult to see these views as *explanations* of what happens in the co-created space of mindfulness pedagogy. Once that move gets made, however, a view is no longer a tentative description, but rather a resource for action. That is, if I can see an explicit or implicit process at work in the view, I could try to use it to create a particular effect that I prize. I could get what I

want. I could make an ethical space appear! This runs counter to the pedagogy of the MBIs, as Jon Kabat-Zinn warns in his consideration of the neuroscience models of resonance (2010, p.xviii):

> *Importantly, such resonances are not something one attempts to bring into being. That would be tantamount to forcing or seeking a particular effect, and thus, an attachment to a particular outcome. The desire to bring about an effect is a trap that, if one falls into it, belies one's understanding of mindfulness and the work in the first place, and potentially betrays it as well as yourself and your students, at least for that moment. Of course, we all have fallen into that trap at one moment or another, and hopefully, we learn from such moments as we grow into becoming good-enough teachers.*

Of course, such attempts also run counter to the spirit of my undertaking.

This is not an essay into the creation of effects. It is not an attempt to reduce neuroscientific, psychological, anthropological, or even social constructionist accounts to produce a stepwise process for MBI teachers to apply to ensure their own and their participants' proper ethical performance. It is not an attempt to *do* anything at all. Rather, it is an opportunity to notice what is *already there* in the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs by a gathering. The work, in a sense, is to discover, discern, and, most important, to *trust* the ethical space of the MBI gathering.

A Review of the Relational View

My objective is to describe, not prescribe an ethic: to appreciate rather than to apply. If this sounds rather disengaged or uncommitted, it may be helpful to review and reinforce the overall discourse in which the ethical exploration that this essay is unfolding. That is, the discourse of relational being, which I am contrasting with the individualistic discourses that dominate the clinical and research enterprises of the MBIs.

The contrasts are dramatic *bounded being* with *relational being*, of *causality* with *confluence*, and of *ethical action* with *first and/or second order morality*. The first item in each pair represents the common contemporary view, while the second item in each is the alternative

with which this essay is concerned. A review-overview of these contrasts may be helpful as I prepare to build a model of the ethical space of the MBIs within the discourse of relational being.

The Bound

Bounded being (Gergen, 2009) describes the sense that we have, in contemporary Western culture, of being autonomous individuals accountable first to ourselves, and then (often grudgingly) to individual or corporate others. The way this shapes who and how we are cannot be overestimated. Consider. I have my own thoughts, intentions, loves, and hatreds, and make my own decisions, to fulfill my own life. I conceive of others in this same way. There is a boundary around my being. I may allow or find a way to let some of what is "inside" make its way out towards others, yet I am deeply aware that I am ultimately unknowable to them, as they are to me. This is a view that gives preference to the heroic individual. It has spawned cultural glories, great works of art, powerful political ideas, profound intellectual achievements. Yet, its spawn includes, as well, a culture of loneliness and isolation, of destructive competition, of private gain at the expense of the common good. It is not that bounded being must be eradicated, but rather that it must be seen as just a view—to which there are alternatives.

Concepts of causality and voluntary agency are compelling from the view of bounded being (Gergen, 2009). If we can understand why people do what they do, we can predict, control, and change behavior. If we can identify causes for negative actions—say, peer pressure, economic stress, a mental disorder—we can address them and change outcomes; likewise, if we identify causes for actions we'd like to see more of, we can work to build up such conditions. Not hard to see much of social science this way. If our answer to "Why did she do that?" is voluntary agency, we also maintain the sense of bounded being. She made that decision herself, on the inside. We can put something in there to fix her: a virtue, a belief, a pharmaceutical.

Ethical action in a world of bounded being, then, is about the dispositions, deliberations, and deeds of the individual. And of individuals in a group. So we look to leverage causes and agency, to train up a child in the way he should go, to inculcate virtues,

to obey commandments, to establish rational yardsticks for moral measurements, to summon the better angels of our nature, and still, there is the morning news. Certainly, again, there is heroism and beauty inherent in the moral philosophy of bounded being—the inspirations of saints and healers, and the heartrending poetry (for such stories and thinking are far from prose) of those who have wrestled their ways to goodness across the centuries. Yet, as Gergen (2009, p.356) notes, "With each invitation to be thoughtful, caring, or compassionate, and with each reminder to 'do unto others…' we are simultaneously informed that we are separate, and that our natural instinct is self-gratification."

The Unbound

An alternative to the view that I act from an inner, preexisting me, that I have an untellable inner life, is to relocate those things to the site of their co-creation, which is in relationship. Given the power of the tradition of bounded being and its saturation of our ways of speaking, it is hugely challenging to be clear about the unboundedness of relational being. My understanding was abetted by Gergen's (2009) discussion of how he chose to continue to use language in the traditional, seemingly confusing way, as he explored an alternative view. He notes that he does not define relationship as persons coming together, because the idea of separate persons itself can only have arisen in relationship. Our language of nouns and pronouns and transitive verbs, however, militates against this understanding. When we say (to use one of Gergen's examples, p.xxvi) "He invited her" or "she treated him nicely" we have already created bounded beings acting from inner intentions. In fact, we can't even say the word "together" without joining already separate entities.[15] Eschewing Heideggerian hyphenation or Derridean erasure, Gergen asks the reader to see the

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15 And so it is for me. Take, for example, my use of the term "gathering"; it is meant to overturn "bounded" language as much as possible, as its ethical resonances suggest something other than a collection of atomized individuals. Successful or not in that suggestion, it is at least a placeholder as Gergen has it.

language of bounded being as a placeholder—holding out a place in which to realize that the bounded can be seen as unbound.

Living Confluence

Outside bounded being, causality and agency are no longer compelling forms of explanation, no longer a basis for prediction and control. Gergen (2009) replaces causality and agency with *confluence*, a form of life in which the participants are mutually defined (read "participants" as a placeholder!). A session of formal meditation in an MBI class, for example, mutually defines meditators who are sitting still and quiet, and a teacher who is speaking words of "guidance." As the meditation confluence ends, a new confluence may form as meditators become dyad partners and speak aloud to one another, in the same spacious, curious, and non-judging manner that the teacher may inquire of participants' in-the-moment experiences in the confluence of the plenary group that will follow. There is no causality, nothing forces teacher or participants to do what they do; there is likewise no agency, no force inside compels them. What happens next in the class issues from the confluence of relationships in which, say, a plenary dialogue makes sense.

I would identify this concept of confluence with that of MacIntyre's idea of "practice," again reinforcing the distinction it helped me to make, that it is the *pedagogy* of the MBIs that must be foregrounded, not some individual mind-state of mindfulness. Call it confluence or practice, what gets pointed to is what makes sense, what is intelligible to the gathering. One might say that it is right, or righteous, or ethical-moral in the sense of *ethos-mores*—the "habits of a people."

Orders of Morality

Reflecting on *ethos-mores*, Gergen's idea of first and second order moralities flows naturally from relational being and confluence (Gergen, 2009, 2011; Gergen & Gergen, 2012). These orders can be abstractly defined. A group of people, in their structured relations, find that their practices (confluences) generate specific goods. When those practices are maintained, the goods are maintained; this is not a choice, but is an unspoken way of being. What we might think of as rules

within the group in its actions are largely implicit, and even explicit verbalization could not capture the "minute particulars" (using the poet Blake's term) of vocal tone, breathing, facial expression, gesture, or bodily disposition that add to the complexity of those "rules." To put it in the context of the MBIs, for a participant to have done something as silent and subtle as smirk while Susan and I were in our dialogue would have undermined the practice, collapsed the confluence, in a way that would have destroyed the good of the gathering in that moment. So, no one smirked. First order morality is as simple as that.

Conflicts—attempts to control, punish, "disappear," destroy the other—only arise when first order moralities meet. We get smirkers versus non-smirkers: "*They* must be stopped!" And, that means, of course, either or both *they*s. The hostilities bleed out over time and distance, because it is difficult to find peace when both sides know they are absolutely right and good.

A second order morality, then, would be the co-creation of a way for smirkers and non-smirkers to go on peacefully together—a way for a new first order morality to issue from the new relationships. Gergen (2009, p.364) states this as "relational responsibility," which is not care for self and other, but care for the totality of the relationships. How this might be possible must issue in practice, for this is all the theory that is sensible. I have stated from the outset that the pedagogy of the MBIs, as a practice, could be useful in co-creating second order moralities.

Going on Together

There is a hint at second order morality in what I've been attempting in this chapter. The stacked views and the recalling of the view of relational being have, I hope, all contributed to the reader's sensible understanding of the basic contours of the ethical space. In short, you are holding all of these differing views, from various discourses, within your understanding, which I suggest is corporeal—you have a feeling of the space. It is not, I trust, a space of turmoil and conflict, but, rather, more a space of feeling and knowing. Perhaps we may now go on peacefully together, into Chapter 6, to build a model of the ethical space of the MBIs.

Building a Multidimensional Model

I trust that the reader now has a sense, however fragmented, of the ethical space that arises from the co-creation of the pedagogy of mindfulness in the MBIs. It might be seen as identical to co-created moments of mindfulness, which are the product of the pedagogy. The ethical space might be seen as we-centric, shared expanded consciousness, silent *I-Thou* dialogue, a liminal moment of *communitas*, a zone of proximal development, a situated enskillment, a dialogically structured and chiasmically intertwined joint action, a confluence, a first order morality, and maybe a second order one, as well. I believe that I now have the material I need to articulate a theoretical model of the ethical space.

A few preliminary comments are necessary. I have allowed the ethical space, so far, to be interpreted as an abstract concept—a space of theory. It is that, and, it is *also* a literal space—a place, an actual location. I can't let that go unremarked, for moral and aesthetic reasons.

The moral reason is one of distance. Among my early forays into describing the ethical space, I considered that it was located in bodies in a shared space in the present moment. It could be classified, then, within the tradition of moral sentimentalism—the idea that empathic feelings shape our moral responses. I noticed that the Scottish Enlightenment sources all remarked on the power of proximity. Hutcheson states: "This *universal Benevolence* toward all Men, we may compare to that Principle of *Gravitation*, which perhaps extends to all Bodys in the *Universe*; but, the Love of *Benevolence*, *increases* as the

Distance is dimminish'd, and is *strongest* when Bodys come to *touch* each other" (quoted in Tronto, 1993, p.41; emphasis in original). Hume uses a metaphor of the size of an object diminishing by distance to say the same thing: "Sympathy, we shall allow, is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, section III, goodness/benevolence). Adam Smith describes the value of closeness, of presence, this way, "The mind, therefore, is rarely so disturbed, but that the company of a friend will restore it to some degree of tranquillity and sedateness. The breast is, in some measure, calmed and composed the moment we come into his presence. We are immediately put in mind of the light in which he will view our situation, and we begin to view it ourselves in the same light; for the effect of sympathy is instantaneous" (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.i.4.9). Of course, these philosophers saw it as their job to find a way to overcome this preference for closeness, to provide an encompassing ethics for those near and far. As a pedagogue, I simply wish to remark it, to suggest that the ethical space of the MBIs leverages the effects of proximity, and to remind the reader and myself that the ethical space of the MBIs is catalyzed by physical closeness.

To put a fine point on this power of proximity, we can turn to the discourse of neuroscience, and to what might be the least likely of the senses—smell. Smell identification correlates with empathy (Spinella, 2002), and researchers in Germany (Prehn-Kristensen, *et al.*, 2009, p.1) have shown that we can differentiate the smell of sweat generated in an anxiety-provoking situation from the smell of sweat from exercise. Humans not only recognize the smell of anxiety, but the smell appears to automatically recruit areas of the brain related to empathy, attention, and emotional control. So when we're in smelling distance of each other, the impulse for empathy is possible—particularly if we are practicing the central move of the pedagogy of turning towards and being with/ in the experience of the moment, which may provoke anxiety.

It is true that we may have an impulse to move away, to escape responsibility for being with the anxiety, the suffering—our own or that of another. In an MBI gathering, however, the central move of the pedagogy potentially holds us firm. Indeed, it recalibrates the situation,

as the gathering does not comprise individual agents; the teacher is just a part of the gathering, and the drive is not to fix, but to accept.[16]

The aesthetics of the space has to do with how the room is arranged—in a circle, more often than not. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard (1964), is struck by the consistency with which great thinkers through the millennia insist that "being is round." He considers roundness not as symbol or image, but as a phenomenological experience: "[I]mages of full roundness help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer an initial constitution on ourselves, and to confirm our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced intimately from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being cannot be otherwise than round" (p.234). Making circles is a rhythmic action through a session and across a course in the MBIs. Participants scatter around the room for lying down or moving meditations, or to speak together in dyads and groups, and then they reconstitute as a circle—come inside—making a continuous space in which the unique qualities of the pedagogy of the MBIs are clarified.

The unique qualities that I identified in Chapter 4 are emergent properties of the practice pedagogy of the MBIs in the gathering, not of some theoretical "mind-state" of mindfulness of individuals. Please remember that my discourse is (roughly) that of relational social construction. The task I have assumed is to describe the qualities that arise within the confluence of relationships that is the MBI class (room). Therefore, the qualities are not presented as either psychological constructs or as principles or foundations in an ethical

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16 Zygmunt Bauman, in *Postmodern Ethics* (1993), describes the tension as the aporia, or paradox, of proximity, noting that, "Since it is in the state of proximity that the responsibility, being unlimited, is least endurable—it is also in the state of proximity that the impulse to escape responsibility is at its strongest" (p.88). This tension is evident in Bauman's presentation of proximity as a space in which the worst is expected—an existential situation in which the demands on the *individual* are overwhelming and lead to flight, or even (and especially) cruelty towards the other. As the gathering practicing the pedagogy can be viewed and experienced as a confluence, rather than a collection of individuals, the tenor of the situation changes. Existential issues of the terrifying freedom of the isolated "authentic self" are softened, as described in the section below on "contingency."

theory. They are in no sense prior to the ethical space. They are, rather, landmarks, a way of navigating within the space. As with the teaching intentions presented in describing the pedagogy, they are demarcated based on my own and my colleagues' experiences inside the spaces of hundreds of classes, workshops, and retreats, and can be seen as temporary theoretical constructs awaiting revision through dialogue with the community. In an integrated model, they are meant to be immediately helpful to teachers, researchers, and theorists (of which we need more in the MBI community!).

I find it most sensible to describe a model constructed of equal and interacting qualities by classifying the qualities according to salience and accessibility in pedagogical practice: What do we notice in the room, the circle? What comes to us as teachers? This mode of discernment provides a model comprising three levels, or layers, or, perhaps, *dimensions*—a word that captures the fullness of the space.

First, the dimension of the *doing* of the practice is continuously salient. As teachers, we are also participants and observers; we notice the qualities of the actions of the co-creation of the pedagogy. These qualities are distilled from the five intentions of the curriculum and four skills of the teacher, resulting in (I hope!) a more elegant and mnemonic set of three Cs: corporeality, contingency, and cosmopolitanism.

Second is the *non-doing* dimension, which has the appeal of the negative constructions of ethical demands of early Buddhism with the lack of striving or competition. That is, you can't *not do* something better than someone else can *not do* it. No heroism, here— rather, a giving-up or giving-in to the gathering. The three *non-doing* qualities are wonderfully hidden in the curriculum and pedagogy of mindfulness-based stress reduction, the prototype MBI. However, the reverse of these qualities can, to greater and lesser extents, be seen in other MBIs, which is problematic, and will be addressed in Chapter 7. When the qualities are present, the space is non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental.

What's left is a third dimension comprising a single quality that fills all of the space of the others. It pervades them in every action, text, and encounter. This quality of friendship is both the promise and the fulfillment of the central motion of the pedagogy of the MBIs,

of turning towards present-moment experience and finding a way of being with/in it.

Although the exigencies of a printed work require me to present it as a flat, gray-scale graphic model, the model I am building is meant to express the subtleties of the relationships among the qualities within their own dimensions and between dimensions. Such, then, is the descriptive verbal work that remains. Conscious of the fact that all dimensions and qualities are evident simultaneously and without rank order, I will begin with the most easily perceived—the dimension of *doing*—exploring each of its three qualities and their interrelationship within the dimension.

DOING DIMENSION
Corporeality
Cosmopolitanism
Contingency
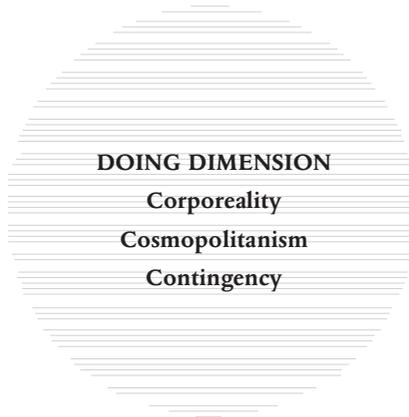
Figure 6.1 The doing dimension of the ethical space

This dimension comprises the basis of pedagogical action in the MBIs. The three qualities—the three "Cs"—are noticed and remarked upon by teacher and participants. They actually shape the spoken and unspoken work of the gathering, moment-by-moment.

The Doing Dimension

The three "C" qualities are concrete, linked to the actions of the pedagogy. Because they epitomize the teaching intentions and skills of the teacher, they are closely interrelated. For teachers and participants alike, to notice one quality is to bring the others into awareness as well, either immediately or in sequence as a process. That sequence could start with any one of them, yet, to unroll this idea most clearly,

I'll begin with corporeality, and see how quickly contingency and cosmopolitanism make their appearances.

Corporeality Is the Start

Mindfulness-based stress reduction is a flagship intervention in the contemporary manifestation of mind-body medicine (Harrington, 2008). By definition, then, body awareness is central to its curriculum and pedagogy. From within the clinical cognitive psychology discourse, the developers of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) came to understand this (Segal, *et al.*, 2002):

> We could see more clearly why MBSR used body-focused awareness exercises, including a body scan exercise that involved focusing awareness on each part of the body in turn, as well as stretches, mindful walking, and yoga. These were not simply added extras, but a central way in which a person might learn to relate differently to his or her experience. The MBSR approach allows participants to see how negative thoughts and feelings are often expressed through the body. These sensations, too, could be held in awareness and observed, not pushed away. Awareness of the effect of negative thoughts and feelings in the body gave participants another place to stand, another perspective from which to view the situation. This awareness discouraged avoidance of difficult or painful thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. Instead, it suggested a measured and reliable way of "turning toward" and "looking into" these experiences. It also suggested that breathing or a neutral focus on the body could be used as a base or center from which to steady oneself if the work of looking at one's experience became overwhelming. Both of these ideas seemed to have the effect of "leveling the playing field," so that any experience regardless of its valence or importance, was seen as worthy of the person's attention. (pp.60–61)

So the focus on body awareness in the pedagogy brings value in four ways. First, it has the potential to calm the body-mind complex, by reducing the reactivity of the autonomic nervous system—that is, the stress response. Second, it facilitates concrete demonstrations of the central move of "turning towards" experience and being with/in it. In fact, it shows turning towards as a transferrable skill that can be applied for sensation, thought, and emotion. Third, it suggests body

awareness as a steady center, a place to stand when turning towards. And fourth, it shows no preference for "valence or importance," which makes every activity, every awareness arising in the class or dyad a potential investigation.

The concentrative forms of meditation, which are used throughout the MBIs and across the unfolding of their curricula, turn the attention to simple body sensations, such as the breath. I have described the process in detail, in neuroscience terms, in Chapter 3. In short, when the attention turns to the breath, the prefrontal cortex of the brain is activated, which, in turn, reduces the activation in the limbic system— particularly the amygdala—and the corporeal response is to change from activation of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (fight or flight) towards activation of the parasympathetic branch (rest and repair). In fact, in Porges's model, the body's social engagement response is activated—there's a capacity for and a readiness to see, to speak, to listen, and, indeed, to embrace others. The presence of such calmness and connection is the body-sensation background to much of what happens in the gathering.

The concrete demonstrations have a strong impact on co-creation of the pedagogy in the gathering. A dialogue regarding body awareness is both thick and recursive. The continual referent is body sensation, so the spoken language is vivid and draws a bodily response from those hearing it. The speakers also gesture, which has been shown, in empirical discourses, to add meaning dimensions (e.g., Mol, *et al.*, 2012), vector attention (e.g., Hayes, Hansen, & Elliott, 2010), improve learning (Cook, Mitchell, & Goldin-Meadow, 2008), and increase salience of being "touched" and "moved" by the dialogue (e.g., Buccino, *et al.*, 2005; Pihko, *et al.*, 2010). The same effects are also described in a social constructionist discourse by Shotter (2003). Expressions and postures also flicker and change throughout the gathering, so all participants in the gathering are implicated in what Shotter calls joint action, as described above. Here is the thickness and recursion, as a dialogue about body awareness deepens body awareness in the whole of the gathering, brings the capacity for turning towards and being with/in experience into the knowledge base of all. Again, using Shotter's work (though all of the stacked descriptions

capture something of the process), through joint action, participants (placeholder!) gain a knowing of a "third kind"—neither theoretical nor technical, but rather social-corporeal—of the central move of the pedagogy. In the group, or when alone with the group within, that move becomes a possibility.

The body awareness that acts as a steady center, a place to stand when turning towards experience, deserves further elaboration. Alan Fogel (2009), within the discourse of interpersonal neurobiology, makes a helpful distinction about "embodied self-awareness," which "involves interoception—sensing our breathing, digestion, hunger, arousal, pain, emotion, fatigue and the like—and the body schema—an awareness of the movement and coordination between different parts of the body and between our body and the environment" (p.10). He notes that this takes place in the subjective emotional present, in which one feels the bodily experience of pain or sadness without judging or turning away. He opposes this to "conceptual self-awareness," which is the culturally privileged mode of thinking about the self, and the skills that that involves, such as "categorizing, planning, reasoning, judging, and evaluating" (p.11).

Fogel describes how this capacity for embodied self-awareness is honed (or harmed) through interpersonal relationships in the earliest years of life—sensing the difference between self and other when touching and being touched, for example. It can be expanded through the life course, or it may be constricted; one can learn to approach experience and the other in the fullness of embodied self-awareness, or one may learn to avoid, to suppress the sensing of flow of body feelings, undermining psychophysical health. Recovery logically comes through interpersonal therapeutic work in which another person helps one come into the emotional present to be with experience without judgment.

What is most useful for my essay here is the relationship of corporeality, one's connection to the flowing of sensations and feelings in the body, to the sense of self. To plumb a bit further into the neuroscience discourse, Antonio Damasio (1999, 2003) suggests that one's sense of self arises from the interoceptive sense of the body's physiological condition and ongoing responses to experience.

He notes that there are neural pathways dedicated to such corporeal information—they map interoceptive states and nothing else—and that these may be "the source of the sense of continuous being that anchors the mental self" (2003, p.227). Work of Bud Craig (2003, 2004, 2010), Hugo Critchley and others (2002, 2004) has focused on identifying the brain anatomy and the potential for intervention through mind-body therapies.

The MBI pedagogy maintains a focus on corporeality and thus on the awareness of self before it is elaborated (say, into something like Fogel's "conceptual self-awareness"). Any elaboration would be in language, in a person-to-person dialogue that categorizes, plans, reasons, judges, and evaluates, or in an "unfinished" dialogue of discursive thought that does the same. Rather than continue to elaborate a narrative of the self, which for many participants is a "story of my illness" or even a "tale of woe," an MBI inquiry, such as the one with Susan, stays with the corporeal feelings. As Susan began to see, and as was revealed in the shared experience of the inquiry in the gathering, the story is different from moment to moment. In fact, that there may be no unified story, but rather sense of self that is more fluid that might be supposed. Susan's story was that she was "always in agony." That story shifted as she returned again and again to how it was in the body. Saki Santorelli (in Horrigan, 2007, p.140) of the UMASS Center for Mindfulness describes this from the pedagogical perspective:

> When people realize that they don't have to be the way they think they are—as in, "That's just the way I am and that's the way I've always been"—they become more at ease… They can make choices not to react to a situation in the same old way because they are actually seeing more vividly these moments arrive. They are feeling directly the reactions occur, and then they are learning to step back and choose not to fall into their usual habits and patterns.

Participants step out of the story and into the flow of feelings in the body—whether the valence of those feelings is positive or negative, whether they are profundities or just passing by. With a fluid sense of self, the turning towards and the being with/in is easier; participants

can rest in Tronick's expanded awareness, Shotter's situation, the ethical space—observing and moving towards acceptance of whatever arises.

There is no glibness, however, in this openness to all that is based in corporeality. In the pedagogy of the MBIs the body is not something that necessarily does one's bidding. On the contrary, the pedagogy acknowledges suffering and dying to such degree that it resists any attempt at transcendence. The turning towards and being with/in such a situation is constitutive of a level of vulnerability in the gathering that is so high that all the interconnection to be found in the stacked descriptions of the ethical space is amplified exponentially. To contemplate such bodies and feel their feelings makes a space of universal connection. Santorelli (1999) illustrates this vividly when he describes telling an MBSR class—at their first meeting—that his mother has just decided to forego further treatment and will likely die within the next few weeks. "I decide that there is a rightness in all of us knowing this, up front" (p.46). He continues:

> *There is no melodrama in the telling. No pity in the listening. People say a lot with their eyes. Some voice their sorrow; others their gratitude. I have no sense of breaching some taboo professional code, implicitly demanding, by my position, center stage, "disclosing" inappropriately, or by implying that whatever they are going through pales in the light of my situation. On the contrary, I notice that the immediacy of life and death at the doorstep move us quickly beyond the domain of the personal into a common, universal knowing. It is palpable… It is here that our work together is being revealed. Some people speak gratefully about being able to somehow share in the living and dying of a parent. Others say they have never before spoken like this with a doctor in a health care setting. After a few minutes we move on. We eat raisins together, feel the ever-present, constantly changing breath in the belly, and begin listening closely to our bodies as we lie on the floor in the stillness of midmorning light. (pp.46–47)*

Corporeality is the unique quality that makes turning towards and being with/in *in extremis* possible for all. Sensation is only available in the present moment and thus brings one there, grounds a sense of self as a temporary platform for observation, and offers a flow of perpetual change even in the face of the intractable realities of suffering and death.

Contingency Comes in Quickly

It wasn't just early, it was right from the start that contingency made an appearance as we began to consider the quality of corporeality. There is nothing in the practice of the pedagogy so obviously contingent as the feelings in the body flowing and changing. Everything is in transition, all the time. The pedagogy of the MBIs presumes change. The language and structure of the curriculum emphasize this, as instruction from the teacher leverages a grammar and syntax that is specific to the MBIs. Participants are invited to join in the class activities with tentative phrases such as "If you care to," which highlight the contingent nature of participation. Also, use of the present participle, as in "Lifting your left foot," not only emphasizes choice in participation, but highlights, as well, the already ongoing, constantly changing nature of the MBI experience. Participants turn towards their experience with the expectation that it is already changing. The teacher's question, "How is it now?," repeated again and again in some way or other, reveals the temporary nature of any description, and thus the tendency of language to solidify and objectify what is always living and moving. So inquiry dialogues between teacher and participant reveal contingency: ducky or distasteful, whatever the participant discovers will soon be different, as Bruce and Susan demonstrate. Bruce's preference for pleasant feelings brings laughter because the gathering knows that those feelings won't last. Susan's desire for her pain to abate is actually frustrated by contingency. Over time and with attention, it does not change in the direction she would prefer or that the rest of the participants would feel is "right" or helpful. Instead, she feels it getting worse. Yet, as she watches (and as participants are privy to her experience), her entire disposition towards her pain—in body, thought, and emotion—does shift.

Such continual tracking of contingency is the anti-structure, the *communitas*, to put it in Turner's terms, of the gathering. The pedagogy, meaning both curriculum and skills, privileges spontaneity over prepared lessons; in fact, this is such a basic principle that my colleagues and I refer to the "empty" curriculum (McCown, *et al.*, 2010). Teachers follow the detours and byways of participants' experiences, giving the time up happily for experiences to unfold

as they occur in session. This means that the trajectory of each class is unique, which keeps the entire experience fresh for teachers and participants. As participants together and in "unfinished dialogues" spontaneously follow the vagaries of their attention, interests, and experiences, their sequential, sustained narrative ways of defining the self are undermined. This encourages an episodic or lyrical perspective on self-understanding (e.g., Strawson, 2004), which is reinforced and reflected in the use of lyric poetry as a teaching vehicle that is characteristic of the MBIs (e.g., Segal, *et al.*, 2002).

The sense of self and the change of perspective on it that the central move of the pedagogy brings are at the heart of the quality of contingency. What happens to the sense of self of participants as they attend to contingency—augmented by attention to body sensation— is of great importance, and should be described as clearly as possible.[17] Hölzel, *et al.* (2011b) note that little work has been done in this area,

17 It is important to attempt to see these changes in participants' self-perspectives from outside of the discourse of Buddhism and Buddhist psychology that the MBIs have embraced in addressing the current urgencies of defining mindfulness and ensuring thorough training of teachers. The temptation and implication of this embrace is to see the MBIs as providing "beginners' versions" of Buddhist practices, and to assume that continued practice, or more intense practice, would result in the outcomes seen in highly experienced Buddhist meditators—such as the kind of dramatic disidentification with the self or the development of high levels of compassion for self and world described variously in Buddhist discourses. The embrace of such a view by the MBIs is problematic. First, it is not necessarily accurate; as I've been stating, the MBI curriculum and pedagogy are not easily aligned with any particular strand of traditional Buddhism, and may be better understood as amalgamating the wisdom traditions (Rosch, 2007). Second, the MBIs present a "secular" face to participants (of which, more in the discussion of Cosmopolitanism), so there is no specified moral or religious motivation for dramatic overthrow of the self or development of supererogatory compassion. Third, and most important, is that in the MBIs there are no discussions about or descriptions of a Buddhist cosmology, worldview, or view of the self to vector the participant's efforts. Consider that in the MBIs there is no direct discourse about the nature of the self at all. The worldview of the MBIs that shapes the pedagogy is unique; I believe it is reasonably well described in the model I am presenting. It is by gaining a thorough understanding of what we already do, not by appealing to tradition for legitimation, that the community will begin to resolve its urgencies.

and review the empirical self-report and neuroscience findings on the change of perspective on the self that seems to result from MBI course participation. Qualitative data suggest that the capacity to observe (to be with/in) experience is developed over the eight weeks of the course, together with more positive self-concept and greater self-acceptance. Neuroscience findings suggest that the areas of the brain responsible for self-referential emotional and autobiographical processing, which seems to be the default mode, is less activated and actually may change in density in people with MBI training, and that other brain areas, such as those responsible for observation and analysis of interoceptive and other body-awareness information may be more activated in MBI participants. Hölzel, *et al.* (2011b, p.549) note that "data also suggest that increased body awareness might be closely related to changes in the perspective on the self," which reinforces the jointure of corporeality and contingency.

The quality of contingency, enhanced by corporeality, then, contributes to the ethical space, and its identity as first or second order morality. Gergen (2011) describes how it is difficult to grasp the full implications of such a situation in theoretical language, noting that it can be pointed to with sacred language and metaphor.

The shift of a sense of self is certainly a sacred theme. Within and outside religious traditions, there are descriptions that have resonance for the pedagogy of the MBIs. In fact, the value of a lyrical rather than a narrative description is instantiated in the style of teaching, which is far more apt to use a simple poem than an involved story to epitomize a teaching point. Some of the favorite (one might say, canonical) texts in the MBIs are drawn from the rich Sufi tradition. Rumi's (Barks, 2004, p.36) lines below are one such text that fits in here:

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase each other
doesn't make any sense.

Gergen (2009) turns to Christian theology for a metaphor—the *perichoresis* (literally "dancing around") of the persons of the Holy Trinity. As described by John of Damascus (*The Orthodox Faith*, 1.14), who elaborated the relationship, "they are inseparable and cannot part from one another, but keep to their separate courses within one another, without coalescing or mingling, but cleaving to each other. For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit: and the Spirit in the Father and the Son: and the Father in the Son and the Spirit, but there is no coalescence or commingling or confusion." With Pierre Hadot (2009), we can see the value of the ancient Greek philosophical exercise of the *view from above*, which is not simply an objective look, but, as he puts it, is "also to undo oneself from oneself in order to open oneself to a universal perspective…to become aware of one's belonging, not only to the Whole of the universe, but also to the Whole of the human community; to leave a unilateral view of things, to put oneself in the place of others" (p.169). Iris Murdoch, self-avowed Platonist (and knowledgeable about Buddhist thought and practice) describes the effect that an experience of beauty, natural or artistic, may have:

> *I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (1970, p.84)*

Murdoch terms this effect "unselfing" and describes the quality of the experience as altering consciousness "in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity and realism" (p.84). Of course, we could also use as a metaphor the not-self doctrine of Buddhism, *anatman*, which offers insight into the ethical space. Flanagan's (2011, p.126) description is succinct: "What the Buddha claimed was that seeing oneself in the right way, as *anatman*, would make craving and acquisitiveness easier to overcome and in this way make compassion to oneself and others easier to experience and act on."

As Flanagan notes (2011), it is quite possible to experience the quality associated with not-self without any interest in or commitment

to Buddhism. One can know what Murdoch is saying simply by being human in this world, not necessarily Platonist in the United Kingdom ("unselfing" is presented as an experiential state, not a doctrinal statement). Likewise, one can apply the view from above without a background in ancient Greek philosophy, or sense the movement of the Trinity's dance without studying Patristics, or lie in Rumi's field without knowledge of Sufism.

The quality of contingency, particularly as reflected in experiences of corporeality, suggests a continual openness, a vulnerability to the many layers of potential communication as described in the streaming of knowing from the one to the other in the dialogue described by Buber, or the chiasmic intertwining of the spontaneous, living, expressive, responsive activities of all the participants in the moment described by Shotter. Much of the observable description of the ethical space is available in just these two "Cs" of the three Cs that comprise the *doing dimension* of the model I am building. The final C, cosmopolitanism, is about making sense in language of the experience of the space.

Cosmopolitanism Ensures Meaning

How do participants make sense of experiences of changing, opening, softening edges—or any potential experience in the class, of whatever valence or duration? The position in the MBIs is quite clear. Referring specifically to shifting self-perception, Santorelli (in Horrigan, 2007, p.140) states: "My colleagues and I don't ever lecture about this or say this to people. *They* say it to us. They say things like, 'Who am I if I am now observing these things?'" These are subtle and potentially profound insights that, if uttered aloud, are handled carefully by the teacher—assisting in exploration of "what do you think?" Not providing answers or a particular viewpoint, but open to any answers or viewpoints of the participant. Not pushing for spiritual or religious language, yet aware of that as a possible frame.

Perhaps a quick if not concise definition of cosmopolitanism is the quality of *allowing meaning to emerge* for participants from classroom or "unfinished" dialogues. This generation of meaning has a spiritual

connotation for me. And the fact that it happens within a setting construed to be secular makes it all the more profound. It is what recommends the definition of spirituality I offered earlier: "an individual's struggle to come to terms with his or her humanity" (Isanon, 2001). It is, I believe, the same principle that animates Jon Kabat-Zinn's increasing dissatisfaction with the term "secular" to describe the stance of MBSR; he wishes for a word that could contain both sacred and secular rather than invoking a split between the two (2011).
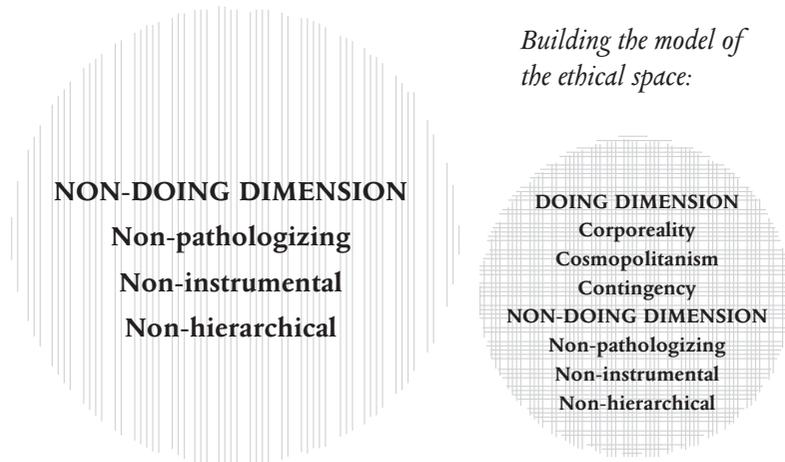
The empirical research addressing spirituality and meaning—the subject of the actions of cosmopolitanism—is thin in the literature of the MBIs. A recent meta-analysis of controlled trials found only five that measured aspects of spirituality (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). The results showed that MBSR significantly enhanced spirituality compared to inactive but not active control groups. There was certainly something to dialogue about, in the classes studied, although that impulse to talk may not be unique to the MBIs, it seems. The meta-analysis made use of data that defined spirituality from different self-report instruments, providing a broad, almost two-pronged, probe of the territory—the relationship specifically to a "higher power," and attitude towards present moment experience. A study of MBSR's effects on spirituality not included in the meta-analysis (Carmody, *et al.*, 2008) used a different self-report instrument that did not invoke a "higher power," but instead asked about relationship to "faith and beliefs" as well as meaning and peace, making it a broad construct akin to that proposed here. Results showed significant enhancement of spirituality, with greater change reported in the meaning and peace subscale versus the faith subscale. Of course, these studies have aimed to find correlations with medical and mental health outcomes. My intention here is simply to suggest that this is an area of import, and that how it is handled in the pedagogy is important.

The work of the postmodern theologian Don Cupitt (1999) is germane here. To understand the ways in which contemporary people frame their spiritual and religious concerns, he applied "ordinary language" theology, collecting and analyzing more than 150 English language idioms that use the term *life*. He hypothesized that such idiomatic expressions reflect the shifts in religion or spirituality from

the mid-nineteenth century onward—the beginning of contemporary modernism. What he found was that much of the population of the West (at least in the Anglophone countries), has come to consider *life* as the privileged religious object. We speak and think about the living of our lives as we would have about the state of our souls or our relationship to God a century or less ago. Consider funerals, for example. Before the 1950s, the expectation and experience of a funeral was to send the deceased into the hereafter, a better place, and to be reminded of our own mortality and relationship to a "higher power." From the 1950s onward, a shift began, treating the funeral as a "celebration of the life of" the deceased. It might be said of the deceased now that "she loved life." Phrases have become current such as "the sanctity of life," "the value of life," and "the quality of life," all of which might have been more direct about one's relationship with God in an earlier time. In the 1990s, what might have been the earlier admonition to "get right with God" found its perfectly pitched corollary in "Get a life!" The popular language has it that religion in contemporary Western culture has been *secularized*. Cupitt sees it in the reverse, that our ordinary life has been *sacralized*. This attitude is of considerable importance in the discourse of the mindfulness-based interventions, where, for example, Mary Oliver's poem "The Summer Day," with its final lines "Tell me, what is it you plan to do/ With your one wild and precious life?" is often invoked to begin or end a meditation. This is an opening to the cosmopolitanism of the MBIs. There is no wrong answer to Oliver's question. No meaning is presumed or assumed; no spiritual position is preferred.

This cosmopolitan quality of dialogue is demonstrated in teacher–participant inquiry and conversation in the gathering. It is likewise (and by example) encouraged within participant dyads and small group conversations. Of course, it also may become a quality of participants' "unfinished dialogue" of discursive thinking. It is a not-knowing position that can hold the vulnerability of corporeality and the openness and fluidity of contingent experience. It can hold the heaviness of suffering and death, the fragility of the sense of self, and the unassisted laboring towards insight. Cosmopolitanism's most glorious and mutual mark is that it can hold ever so lightly: as in the gathering's giggling knowledge

that, like Bruce, they all will feel *and lose* the sense of happiness, as well as in Susan's laughter through tears as she acknowledges that she can unclench the hold she has on pain, just a little.

Building the model of the ethical space:

NON-DOING DIMENSION

Non-pathologizing

Non-instrumental

Non-hierarchical

DOING DIMENSION
Corporeality
Cosmopolitanism
Contingency
NON-DOING DIMENSION
Non-pathologizing
Non-instrumental
Non-hierarchical

Figure 6.2 The non-doing dimension

This dimension is characterized by absences rather than actions. Participants may remain unaware on a conscious, spoken level, of these qualities for the duration of a course. These qualities do, however, shape the identity of the MBI teacher, and are therefore of considerable importance in the classroom and in considering teacher development.

Adding the Non-Doing Dimension

While the three Cs are qualities arising from things that the teacher and participants *do*, and are often initiated by application of a teacher's skills, the three NONs—non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, and non-instrumental—are absences, because teacher and participants *don't* put others in categories, *don't* take a place above others, and *don't* try to fix others. The NONs are related, in some very important ways, to the teacher's identity as a professional in the MBIs. One cannot be a teacher and a physician or therapist simultaneously. I will consider the tensions in teachers' professional identities in significant depth in Chapter 7. For now, it is enough to remark that the three NONs can be subverted when the teacher assumes a professional identity other than that of MBI teacher.

Here is a story that will certainly enhance the description of each of the NONs, and may illuminate teacher identity as an issue as well. At the 2012 International Scientific Conference on mindfulness, Zindel Segal, one of the developers of MBCT, described a moment in which he realized that the pedagogy of the MBIs was something far different than he could have possibly imagined. He was sitting in a class taught by Saki Santorelli. The gathering was engaged in dialogue about experience in the meditation that had been just completed. A participant Saki was talking to was in tears. Zindel described Saki's next move: "This woman, she was in tears, and he just left her there. He said, 'Thank you very much,' and moved on to the next person. And that is like the biggest clinical mistake you can make." Zindel then goes on to talk about how, at first, he and his colleagues in the development of MBCT were focused on the possibility mindfulness offered patients to step back, to distance from their thought process. Then, he noted further, "there was this other seed that we weren't fully understanding, that had to do with a more fulsome and much more…friendlier and inviting way of meeting aversive mental states" (Segal, 2012).

The three NONs are clearly demonstrated in this living description. The gathering sits silently with the participant in her grief and then moves on to whatever is next. The meaning, of course, is non-pathologizing, recognizing that her crying is how it is *in the moment*; she is not in the thrall of a disorder that threatens her ongoing wellbeing. Saki's offer of gratitude and disengagement is a non-hierarchical expression of the fact that the participant is the only expert on her grief, and that she can handle it. And, given that, the central move of the pedagogy, turning towards what is present, is not meant to fix her, but will simply bring her nearer to her experience. So, I suspect, Saki's identity as an MBSR teacher came into focus for Zindel in that one moment, when all the NONs were evident. The three NONs are, in fact, tightly integrated, and the absence of one assures the absence of the other two, as I suggested at the end of Chapter 4. To clarify this point, and to thicken the description of each within the model of the ethical space, I'd like to look at them one at a time, with openness to their simultaneity.

Non-Pathologizing, on Three Levels

There is one level on which non-pathologizing is central to the identity of MBSR, if not all of the MBIs. Kabat-Zinn, considering the non-pathologizing quality after more than 30 years of working with the intervention, says that:

> it can be felt in the way the instructor relates to the participants and to the entire enterprise. Although our patients all come with various problems, diagnoses, and ailments, we make every effort to apprehend their intrinsic wholeness. We often say that from our perspective, as long as you are breathing, there is more "right" with you than "wrong" with you, no matter what is wrong. In this process, we make every effort to treat each participant as a whole human being rather than as a patient, or a diagnosis, or someone having a problem that needs fixing. (2011, p.292)

Indicative of this "wholeness" outlook, MBSR is different from the other MBIs, in that it is designed for a heterogeneous population from all walks of life, with almost any medical and/or psychological diagnosis, or none at all. No one needs to carry their specific diagnosis into the class. In effect, all participants share the same one, the "stress" or suffering of the human condition. Further, MBSR is not positioned as a clinical intervention at all, but rather as an educational program. Participation is not about training yourself to remove something unwanted from your experience, but rather about learning to open up to all that you are from moment to moment—to live life to the fullest.

This level of non-pathologizing is distinctive to MBSR, making MBSR, at least for me, an epitome of the qualities of the MBIs. I will treat it that way, using MBSR as the sole object of my descriptions for this quality. All of the other interventions fall short. They are compromised by their focus on particular populations or conditions. The heterogeneity of the gathering may be a transforming factor of MBSR, because it directly undercuts the power of diagnostic discourses—whether of medical conditions or psychiatric disorders. Santorelli describes the advantage of heterogeneity:

> Medicine for the past 120 years has really developed tremendous acumen for the differential diagnosis. We give a single diagnosis and then we develop a single treatment modality to meet that diagnostic condition. In

the Stress Reduction Clinic, we have done it the other way around. We've said that instead of making the groups homogenous, we will make them heterogeneous. Why? If people participate for the same reason—say heart disease—well, that's what they have in common and where conversation will naturally gravitate. Sometimes this can be very useful, sometimes not. Conversely, if you have people in the room for 25 different reasons, their common ground becomes the work of developing their inner resources in service of whatever ails them. (In Horrigan, 2007, p.142)

By taking the focus off pathology, the MBSR gathering re-creates the participants, replacing limited identities with unlimited possibilities. All three NONs are evident in the little bit of description so far— there's no real interest in what's wrong with you; everyone's in the same boat (including the teacher!), and this isn't even a therapy, it's a chance to learn something new.

At a second level, non-pathologizing identifies an effect of MBSR on participants' subjectification of *themselves* to diagnoses. To understand the full effect, a little background is necessary. First, the diagnoses I'm referring to here are more importantly psychiatric diagnoses, rather than medical ones. Certainly there are folks with medical diagnoses in MBSR classes—chronic pain and other chronic health conditions are well represented, and outcomes in health-related quality of life are positive (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Carmody, *et al.*, 2008; Reibel, *et al.*, 2001; Rosenzweig, *et al.*, 2010; Roth & Robbins, 2004). As just noted above, the course helps by redefining participants through heterogeneity. And the central move of the pedagogy is useful in lifting the ongoing sense of an unchanging, tightly defined condition. Consider Carmen, from a class I gave, who has chronic back pain from several surgeries. She said that during the body scan she can be in her body without reacting to pain, but when she stands up afterward, the pain returns immediately, with great intensity. I asked, "When you end the body scan and you get ready to stand, what are your thoughts and feelings at that moment?" After reflection she replied, "That's a really good question…maybe I'm anticipating the pain and not giving myself a chance to see if anything is different…" She is giving up (or making space within) ongoing self-pathologizing. But it is the psychiatric diagnoses that

participants really hold themselves to, and it is especially instructive to consider this, because the majority of the MBIs address mental health disorders. It must be considered as well that participants with chronic illnesses often receive (or self-apply) psychiatric diagnoses to their *experience* of their medical condition.

Foucault (1973) provides a description of an almost imperceptible, subtle process. I have been using Foucault's idea of discourses throughout this essay. A particular discourse is not "the way things are," it is simply one way of talking, one way of knowing. A discipline, such as psychiatry or psychology, establishes power through its discourse, its system of knowledge, which in science means a system of classifications. The categories of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), about to enter its fifth edition, are a flagship for this. The expert knowledge represented by the DSM provides real power over people's lives and identities. We hand ourselves over to this system when we allow experts to observe, examine, and classify us, so that we may be treated and fixed—again by an expert. To receive a diagnosis is to be labeled nearly indelibly, to be made a subject of the discipline's power, to be subjectified, to use Foucault's term. We are captive to the power of the discipline. It is difficult to escape. We have neither the power nor the social position to reject a diagnosis once applied. Written down, it follows us forever. Once depressed, for example, we are "a depressive"—even when we are happy. What is most important for this essay is that we, ourselves, find the discourses of the disciplines so compelling that we adopt them. We describe ourselves and significant others in our daily lives as "depressed," or "anxious." We say, "I've got a little ADHD going on," or "That really triggers her OCD." Further, whether expertly or inexpertly diagnosed, we are nevertheless under surveillance: How's the depression? It seems like it's lifted, *but it may come back*. We are never free. And that surveillance is built in. Like prisoners, or production workers, or students, we are being watched, or we *may* be being watched. Foucault (1995) uses the image of the *panopticon*, a circular architectural ordering, originally for prisons, that allows an observer in a central location to see every inmate in the building, all the time. Since individual inmates never

know when they are being monitored, just that they may be, they take the effort on themselves.

> *He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; it inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (pp.202–203)*

This, of course, includes not merely subjection to the psychiatric discourses, but also to the myriad expert discourses of appearance and behavior within which we live. We are made and self-made subjects. This is the way of being that Foucault encourages us to resist.

The MBSR gathering is a site of resistance. The ethical space that is created is a counter-culture in which it is possible for participants to identify and experience other ways of being. Although it has been suggested that mindfulness meditation is aligned with self-surveillance (Gold, 2011), the co-creation of the pedagogy of the MBIs, the central move of turning towards and being with/in experience, seems to subvert it. Witness the freedom in Carmen's "maybe I'm anticipating the pain…"

At a third level, the non-pathologizing quality is revealed in yet another Foucauldian manner. We subject ourselves to discourses of power/knowledge, through examination and evaluation. A questionnaire can reveal if we are depressed, anxious, or even mindful, and, if so, to what degree. Our restricted leg movement can be measured, and progress or relapse can be judged. Whenever and wherever there is expert knowledge, we can be measured and placed as a point on a curve of normal distribution. We can be described minutely, compared to others, compared to past and future selves, and ranked, rewarded and punished. We can be given "exercises" to move us along the normal curve; we are never outside judgment.

Well, almost never. In the co-creation of the pedagogy of MBSR, judgment is negotiated away again and again—to turn towards and be with/in the present-moment situation requires it. This is illustrated most vividly in participant–teacher exchanges around meditation. "I can't do this right. My attention just wanders away, sometimes in

seconds after I bring it back," says the participant. Teacher's reply: "So how many times did you notice that your mind wandered?" Answer: "Hundreds." Comment: "Hundreds of noticings and turnings towards your experience—the breath—again. You see, you're doing it exactly right." Each self-judgment is met in this way, shifting surveillance into acceptance, measurement into relief. The moving meditation practice, sometimes referred to as yoga, holds an instructive ambivalence. Teachers leading it as forms to be duplicated, or participants framing it as such for themselves, turn it into an exercise in which comparisons rush along with each movement. When reframed as simply an opportunity to be mindful of the body moving—doing *your* yoga, as the teacher might say—surveillance, measuring, ranking are all subverted.

The quality of non-pathologizing at all three levels is a quality of freedom—from imposed identity, surveillance, or status.

Non-Hierarchical, like the Round Table

I return here to the circle as symbol and as place. The practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs is directed right from the start at dissolving the hierarchy of teacher and participant, and even of more extroverted and less extroverted participants right from the start. The non-hierarchical nature of the gathering in its circle is instantly shrouded by what my colleagues and I call the *MacDonald effect* (McCown, *et al.*, 2010). The reference is to a Scottish folk story in which the chief of the MacDonald clan arrives late at a gathering and sits simply where there is a space. Due to his status, he is invited to the head of the table. He does not move, rather, he clarifies: "Where the MacDonald sits *is* the head of the table." Participants inevitably assume that the teacher's seat is the head of the circle, with the implication that the teacher has the answers. The pedagogical practice is to diffuse the focus through the group and imply that participants are all sources of answers.

The pedagogy directs participants towards each other directly in the dialogue of the gathering. Teachers ask that participants speak to the whole circle, not just to the teacher, and reinforce this with nonverbal cues. A strategy used throughout the course is to have participants regularly explore dialogue in dyads and small groups; the

teacher is not privy to these conversations, although she may be a dyad partner if the numbers require it, reinforcing the non-hierarchical quality. As an aside, such usages and strategies work to shift the circle's potential from that of a Foucauldian panopticon with an all-seeing teacher to that of a perichoresis with many partners in the dance.

The non-hierarchical quality is also recognizable through the skills of the teacher. Kabat-Zinn (2004) has analyzed the use of language in the MBSR classroom and identified a list of difficulties that can be introduced through verbal and non-verbal communication. One of these he calls *idealizing,* and describes as an approach and tone of "I know how to do this and I'm going to teach you." Rather, the language of the pedagogy is of shared exploration: not, "I know," but "Let's try this together and see what happens." The central move of the pedagogy is the focus for all. The gathering does not "know" what will happen in the co-creation of the pedagogy; there is simply a turning towards and being with/in what *is* happening.

This leads to what might be considered in another discourse as "self-disclosure" of the teacher. It is simply part of the non-hierarchical quality of the gathering. The teacher's experience is implicated in the situation, the ongoing joint-action, to use Shotter's terms. Every moment is a moment of self-disclosure, for all. This may, of course be implicit or explicit. Remember Saki Santorelli's (1999) disclosure of his mother's pending death and the sense of it being held by the class. To further the exposition: "My mother died during the fourth week of class. Often, I felt deeply nourished by the caring offered, mostly in silence, by the patients, as if I were their patient. We were doctoring one another, each in our own prescribed ways" (p.48).

Santorelli finds this reciprocity to be of transformative potential for the practice of medicine. He considers mindfulness as a way of exploring the relationship of patients and providers, with a view that the two:

> *are not really different. They have different roles and providers have a certain kind of expertise that people who are in need want, but my experience is that it is equally true the other way around. Patients have their own expertise and that has a salutatory effect on me as their provider… there are hundreds of instances across 25 years of clinical work where I*

feel like I have been doctored by my patients just as they have felt doctored by me. My experience tells me that this is incredibly enriching because it points directly to the actuality that there is a bidirectional relationship that might be worth paying a lot more attention to… It has something to do with becoming a human being. (In Horrigan, 2007, p.143)

The discourse of reciprocity carries with it, still, a sense of caring and cared for, of tending and tending to—heroism, Bodhisattvahood, a strengthening of the sense of bounded being. This is not precisely the texture of the non-hierarchical quality. The texture does not identify specific exchanges, but rather the possibility of such exchanges. The texture is of the situation—Shotter's term, and yet referencing all the stacked descriptions of the ethical space. The life of the gathering might be described, as Shotter (1995, p.66) does, as proceeding:

on a moment-by-moment basis of embodied (or practical) responsive understandings, a structure of presumptions and expectations of a non-cognitive, gestural kind that unfolds in the 'temporal movement' of the speaker's voice…The very act of saying a word in a practical circumstance is a joint action: it is open to the influences of both past and present others at the very moment of its performance, and their influences may be present in it too.

The gathering, which is a situation of joint action, is thus a non-hierarchical kingdom.

Non-Instrumental, in a Curious Way

This quality is indicative of the radical nature of the MBIs, and follows logically from the quality of non-pathologizing. The practice of the pedagogy is not, Kabat-Zinn (2010) reminds us, "just one more method or technique, akin to other familiar techniques and strategies we may find instrumental and effective in one field or another" (p.xi). It is, instead, "a way of being, of seeing, of tapping into the full dimensionality of our humanity, and this way has a critical non-instrumental essence inherent in it" (p.xi). For him, non-instrumentality is a way of stating the basic orientation towards participants—no one needs to be fixed, because no one is broken.

Santorelli (in Horrigan, 2007) describes this quality in terms of a participant's inherent capacity for imperturbability and equanimity—for turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment.

> [I]t's already here in us. We just obscure it. If these…capacities…were not in us we couldn't practice them; we wouldn't have an internal reference point for learning to become familiar and intimate with these dimensions of being human. The meditation practice stands on this view. It's the non-instrumental *side of meditation practice—there is nothing that you have to work on. If you begin to be attentive then you begin to see those qualities within yourself. You see the way they are dormant or hindered. You see the way they are encouraged.* (p.144; emphasis in original)

Kabat-Zinn describes the quality of non-instrumentality as the unfolding of a path of nonattachment.

> This challenge we pose to our patients in the Stress Reduction Clinic at the very beginning, and with the introduction to the body scan meditation, or even the process of eating one raisin mindfully: namely, to let go of their expectations, goals, and aspirations for coming, even though they are real and valid, to let go—momentarily, at least—even of their goal to feel better or to be relaxed in the body scan, or of their ideas about what raisins taste like, and to simply "drop in" on the actuality of their lived experience and then to sustain it as best they can moment by moment, with intentional openhearted presence and suspension of judgment and distraction, to whatever degree possible. (2003, p.148)

The non-instrumental quality acknowledges and insists that we are the way we are in the moment, and that we can, in the central move of the pedagogy, turn towards and be with/in it.

The teacher's presentation of that central pedagogical move in the class is directed by the curriculum. The raisin, the body scan, and the other formal meditations are offered for themselves, as themselves. There is nothing to be gained, as is said again and again in the guidance. In the skills of the teacher, non-instrumentality shapes stewardship and guidance, as participants are invited, although never required, to engage in meditations; it shapes homiletics, as talks, even about research and outcomes, suggest but never specify what might be experienced; and, most important perhaps, it shapes inquiry in helping participants to
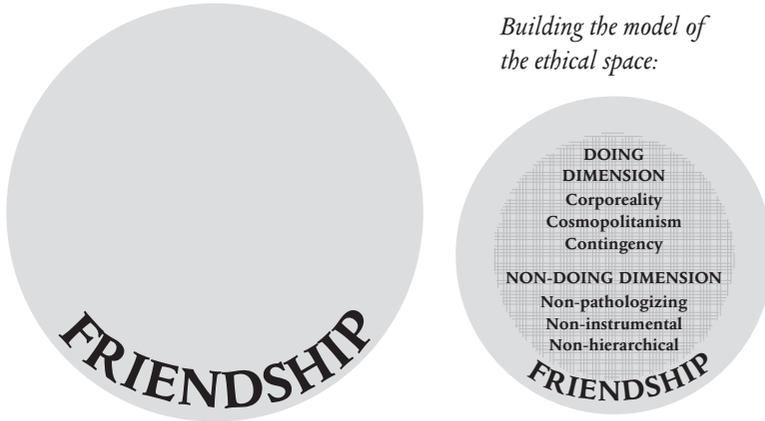
explore their experience as it unfolds in the moment—however it might be. Of the skills, inquiry captures the texture of the non-instrumental quality most clearly, in that it is a living out of a quality of absence that all participants can nevertheless observe. They can hold in awareness the teacher–participant dialogue and their own "unfinished" dialogue, noticing its fluidity and the failure of redirection to something better. Further, participants make the skill and the quality their own in their dialogues in dyads and small groups, acting in non-instrumental ways with themselves and each other. One of the key ground rules repeated as often as necessary in the gathering is "no fixing"—any impulse to give advice to someone else is instead seen as an opportunity to be curious about one's own experience of the moment.

In extremis, in limit situations of sadness or pain, for example, teachers and participants are challenged to stay with the central move of the pedagogy. Yet, as Rebecca Crane and David Elias (2006) note, the move can:

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

This is the product of the pedagogy, the moment of mindfulness, a co-created ethical space.

Turning towards and being with/in experience does not result in unconsidered acceptance, however. Implicit within the pedagogical move is also its obverse, making a choice to change what can be changed. Here the participant is engaged in another non-instrumental mode. That is, the teacher does not choose what the participant changes or how; the participant alone is responsible. For all, then, the non-instrumental quality of the ethical space has the texture of curiosity and fearlessness.

Building the model of
the ethical space:

**DOING
DIMENSION**
Corporeality
Cosmopolitanism
Contingency

NON-DOING DIMENSION
Non-pathologizing
Non-instrumental
Non-hierarchical

FRIENDSHIP

FRIENDSHIP

Figure 6.3 The final dimension of friendship

Friendship is the quality of the ethical space that arises from, pervades, and, in effect, epitomizes the other six qualities of the ethical space. It is, perhaps, the vehicle for the affective experience of the gathering.

Adding the Third Dimension

The teacher may discern the three Cs and three NONs. The Cs relate to actions of the teacher that are evident in the co-creation of the pedagogy, while the NONs describe the absence of actions or, better, the presence of a particular way of being. The participants, however, know simply the quality of the space overall—friendship.

Certainly, the other six qualities help implicitly in the discernment of friendship. Corporeality identifies responsiveness to others in the space—"We cannot prevent ourselves from being spontaneously responsive to events occurring in our surroundings," Shotter reminds us (2011, p.58). The actions related to corporeality help participants to recognize that they are "moved" (sometimes even calmed) by others. Contingency tracks the never-resting flow of experience. Participants are carried off in the speedy movements of the mind, and on returning again and again to the present moment may find the quality of friendship as a constant in the space. Cosmopolitanism is the freedom felt to be, think, say, and act as oneself in a gathering that suggests

relatedness. The three NONs *are* that relatedness. Without pathology, hierarchy, and instrumentalism, relations around the gathering are symmetrical; all are OK in their not-OKness; everyone is the expert on their experience; and no one needs fixing.

Of course, saying that relations are symmetrical suggests that individuals are equally wishing each other equally well, which describes friendship as conceived in the discourse of bounded beings. Yet my essay is about relational being, and thus I conceive friendship in a different register—as a quality saturating the situation, not a virtue residing in each person. It is not so much a way of "getting along" together as it is a way of "going on" together—to use the Wittgensteinian phrase that describes the emergence of the way out of difficulty in the joint action of the moment (e.g., Shotter, 2011). It is a knowing of a third kind, as Shotter (1995) calls it: not a theory, not a technique, but a knowledge that can only come *from within* the immediate situation, or, to use my placeholder, from the gathering.

Describing this quality of friendship in its "third kind" manifestation is a perilous undertaking. I am happy to be able to recount classic descriptions from other discourses, and then to transpose them to the relational being register. Two classic descriptions that recommend themselves are from the civilizations of Greece and India from the axial age, 800 to 200 BCE, in which singular wisdom arose roughly contemporaneously in different cultures with little evidence of common influence (Jaspers, 1953; for verifiable East–West influences, see McEvilley, 2002). Contemporary Westerners attempting to find an analogue for Buddhist ethics in Western philosophical systems have often turned to Aristotelian virtue ethics for it (e.g., Flanagan, 2011; Harvey, 2000; Keown, 1992, 1995; Whitehill, 1994). In the contemporary engagement with virtue ethics (e.g. MacIntyre, 2007; Nussbaum, 1986), the understanding of friendship, *philia*, takes a significant interest in the connection of friendship to the constitution of the *polis*, the city. So, descriptions of friendship as a virtue drawn from such sources already tilt past the dyad of friends towards the broadly social.

To start with Aristotle (1934), *philia*, friendship, is a mutual relationship between people who have good will for and wish and do

good things for the other, for the other's own sake. One may do this for reasons of pleasure, as in friends one cultivates because they are fun, for reasons of utility, as in friends one cultivates for advantages in business or politics, say, or as in friends one cultivates for reasons of their own goodness—as in, one loves them for who they are, their virtues, their being. The third is, for Artistotle, the perfect form of friendship. Here is a terse Aristotelian description of friendship:

> To be friends therefore, men must (1) feel goodwill for each other, that is wish each other's good, and (2) be aware of each other's goodwill, and (3) the cause of the goodwill must be one of the lovable qualities mentioned above. (1934, p.457)

Further, the well-wishing and doing is directly related to the type of friendship—pleasure friends make those wishes for pleasure, utility friends for utility, but perfect friends wish in a perfect, or, better, an unqualified way. And, in all cases, the well-wishing is out of caring for the other, not for oneself.

For this essay, I find that Aristotle's emphasis on friends "living together" points again to proximity as part of any description of the gathering. For Aristotle:

> It appears therefore that the company of friends is desirable in all circumstances…the society of each other is the most desirable thing there is. For (i) friendship is essentially a partnership. And (ii) a man stands in the same relation to a friend as to himself; but the consciousness of his own existence is a good; so also therefore is the consciousness of his friend's existence; but this consciousness is actualized in intercourse; hence friends naturally desire each other's society. And (iii) whatever pursuit it is that constitutes existence for a man or that makes his life worth living, he desires to share that pursuit with his friends…the friendship of the good is good, and grows with their intercourse. And they seem actually to become better by putting their friendship into practice, and because they correct each other's faults, for each takes the impress from the other of those traits in him that give him pleasure—whence the saying: "Noble deeds from noble men." (1934, pp.573–574)

In his discussion of friendship, which takes up two fifths of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, the most space devoted to any topic in the work,

Aristotle can be seen to be pressing a key element in his view of human flourishing, the highest good (Cooper, 1980). The point is that close friendships and shared pursuits are, in one way, a model for how citizens of the *polis* should relate to other citizens—in friendship. In a relationally sensitive way, MacIntyre (2007) suggests that friendships of this proximal, shared-pursuit type are the very stuff of which the *polis* is made. The city is a network of small groups of friends wishing and doing each other well.

In Buddhist sources it is possible to see that friendship, rather than compassion, is the paradigm for interpersonal relationships (Keown, 1995). In the Mahayana, as I've noted, the Bodhisattava, the heroically compassionate figure, uses the two summary virtues of wisdom and compassion to relieve suffering. It is easy to see compassion as a dominant virtue in this context. Yet, the earlier tradition does not sum up the virtues in this way, but rather spells them out, with separate practices to encourage them, such as in the four immeasurables—friendliness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*)—which Keown (1995) reminds us are cultivated to help overcome *unfriendly* attitudes. This suggests the differences and shadings necessary for the model I am building. Compassion is recognizing and wishing to end the suffering of others, which is certainly useful, but not all the time. Day-to-day, moment-to-moment proximal relations require something else. Hence Keown's (1995) preference for friendship as the paradigm for relating. Here, in the *Upaddha Sutta*, the Buddha himself rolls the virtues up into one—the life shared with friends:

> *Venerable Ananda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One, "This is half of the holy life, lord; admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie."*

> *"Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, and comrades, he can be expected to develop and pursue the noble eightfold path." (SN 45.2, in Thannisaro, 1997–2012)*

Keown (1995) suggests that it is when one views others as friends that one feels compassion for, acts helpfully towards, and wishes them well. Within the community, such a view is disseminated, and the mutuality of friendship—an Aristotelian parallel—is engaged. The sense of sharing is what underlies the Buddha's insistence that being together in friendship is not half but the whole of the holy life. In this way, friendship is revealed as central to the ethical life in Buddhism.

Aristotelian and Buddhist friendship are two ancient descriptions still capable of moving us today. They tilt towards the social, as I said. And yet, as descriptions, they maintain the bounded being sense of individuals acting out of inner dispositions and intentions. Is it possible to see friendship, a paradigmatic virtue for Aristotle and the Buddha, as a quality that participants in an MBI gathering experience in an ongoing way? Well wishes, well doings, willingness to be together— these certainly are present, in relation to the other six qualities. And there is one further point of "contact" with friendship for the teacher and participants to be noted. Within the MBIs, meditation on *metta*, often translated as lovingkindness, although my preferred translation is friendliness, is presented at least once to participants. It is becoming more prevalent to offer this traditional (or, sometimes, re-written and less traditional) meditation earlier and more often in the MBIs (Horrigan, 2007; Feldman & Kuyken, 2011; Kuyken, *et al.*, 2010). Participants connect quite readily to these well wishes that are offered to self, to others in the room, to loved ones (and not-so-loved ones), and ultimately to the world.

May you be peaceful and happy.
May you be safe from harm.
May you be healthy and strong.
May you live with ease of wellbeing.

The repeated phrases from the meditation impart a verbal texture to the quality that is already resonant in the room: friendship.

Figure 6.4 The three-dimensional model

Graphically, the completed model shows the interweaving of the doing and non-doing dimensions, and the pervasiveness of the dimension of friendship, which surrounds and infuses the work of the gathering.

The Model of the Ethical Space

This model is built of seven qualities considered as three dimensions.

The three Cs of the doing dimension describe actions arising within the pedagogy. They are moves that distinguish an MBI gathering from typical clinical or educational (health education or psychoeducation) interventions. Corporeality is, for many participants, a disruptively new way of engaging with their experience in the moment: "What does that feel like in your body?" is a question that may help to deconstruct the habitual ways of reacting—whether emotionally or cognitively. For the gathering, focus on the body often leads to a new form of freedom, new ways of responding (or not responding) to whatever happens. Contingency makes it manifest that change is not only possible but also inevitable. And cosmopolitanism is the acceptance of meaning as it emerges—there is no good or bad valence, no preferred structure for the understanding that emerges through experience in the gathering.

The three NONs of the non-doing dimension describe what is absent from the gathering. They are the qualities that make the difference between a clinician and an MBI teacher, a difficult but enormously useful distinction, as I shall show in Chapter 8, below. Non-pathologizing indicates the MBIs view of wholeness, of a space in which "as long as you are breathing there's more right with you than there is wrong, no matter how ill or hopeless you may feel" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p.2). So, non-pathologizing refers to a space in which diagnoses are not interesting, and in which participants may escape their self-subjectification to a diagnosis. There is also the sense in the space that no one is being measured, compared, and found lacking. Non-hierarchical refers to the epistemological condition of the gathering: in the practice of the pedagogy, no one knows anything of value until it arises in the moment, so all are equal in not-knowing. Teachers and participants are not really different in that respect— more evidence to intensify the contrast between clinician and teacher. Non-instrumental is a subtle distinction, as we are, indeed, engaged in a practice—of the pedagogy—in the context of a health care-oriented "intervention." Yet, the distinction can be made that the practice of the pedagogy is not presented as a technique or strategy for fixing self or others, but rather is a way of being—even a way of being fully human together. All are human; no one is broken, and the practice of turning towards and being with/in the present moment does not "fix" anyone or anything.

Finally, the third dimension, friendship, becomes available because of the other two dimensions. The three Cs guide the doing in the gathering, while the three NONs moderate the attitude of the teacher. As a result, the space may be perfumed, infused, with a quality of well-wishing. Friendship reflects, encourages, and preserves the full engagement of the gathering in the pedagogy, which is none other than mindfulness, none other than the ethical space.

Turning Toward the Challenges and Urgencies of the Moment
With this model in place, there's a chance I can talk about the workings or the applications of the ethical space of the MBIs with

some sensibility. The ethical space is all the qualities of this model, a theory, and it is also, concretely, a room and the people in it.

Of course, the ethical space is not "made up of" the seven qualities I've presented; they are simply attempts to bring into words the situation in the room. The seven qualities are a way of talking; the ethical space is a way of being together. The gathering represents a first order morality (Gergen, 2009), in which the ongoing ethical actions (which participants see as natural, not legislated) support the action of turning towards experience and being with/in it. Kabat-Zinn (2011, p.297) has spoken of how difficult this central move of the pedagogy is and how helpful the gathering can be:

> *It is a radical act, and huge amounts of support and guidance are necessary to keep the person engaged in such a practice, even for the briefest of moments at first, and this is why mindfulness-based interventions such as MBSR are delivered in group settings as "courses" over an extended period of time, for the purpose of letting just such a learning curve and a deepening of stability and insight develop in a context of total support which is none other than sangha.*

Sangha, of course, is the Buddhist term for the practitioner community—in which Ananda sat down next to the Buddha and opined about the sharing of the spiritual life.

The ethical space is a fact. It is an ongoing confluence (Gergen, 2009) or situation (Shotter, 2011) in which participants (placeholder!) already know what to do—a dance in which the choreography is spontaneous and everyone hits their marks. The space is ethical in the same way as perfect friendship or *metta* practice. In the gathering, when the qualities are evident, then, there is nothing for the teacher to do. The ethical is found in *being* mode rather than *doing* mode.

Yet, the ethical space can be disrupted. When any of the seven qualities is compromised, all seven of the qualities are compromised. The teacher is often a source of such compromise, because she has multiple, if not competing, professional commitments—tensions that are unresolved. In Chapter 7, I will consider these tensions between the teacher and the space, thereby exploring how the ethical space "works."

While that will certainly be a valuable exercise, it is not the greatest of the urgencies facing the MBI community. They are to define mindfulness, and to ensure the quality of teachers as demand continues to increase. I will consider these in Chapter 8, where this unusual perspective of relational ethics may offer fresh insight.

Finally, because the ethical space reveals itself to be helpful as a first order morality within the MBIs, perhaps it is possible that it can be seen and applied as a practice of second order morality, as well. It may be used to help establish and sustain relational responsibility within groups in which members are aligned with clashing first order moralities—that is, it may help to reduce conflict and make peace. I will explore this in the epilogue.

Always Room
for More Implications

Scene 1: *I'm looking at some big headphones, what a sound engineer would call "cans." The young man wearing them stands in the doorway of my office, taking in the room before meeting my eyes. "You must be Greg," I say, with good volume. Nods. "Greg, would you take the headphones off and come sit down?" He moves them off his ears and down onto his neck. From my seat at the far side of the office the sound bouncing from earpiece to earpiece is loud and clear. Greg seems frozen. I motion to a chair.*

He makes his way over, sits down. "I don't want to turn this off," he tells me in a voice that cuts through the sounds around his neck. "It's EMDR sounds. I listen all the time. It helps keep me calm."

"So, you're doing EMDR with your therapist, then?"

"Oh, no, I don't have a therapist. I'm working this out for myself. EMDR seems to help, and I'm really hoping that the MSBR class will help, too," he says quick and loud. Then, acting as he speaks, "I need to put the headphones on again for a minute." And closes his eyes.

We sit. When I see his eyes again, I ask, loud enough, I hope, "Greg, what's going on right now?"

"Oh, I was feeling really anxious and afraid I might have a panic attack, but I calmed down OK."

"So, you're hoping for more help with your anxiety?"

"Yeah, and my anger. I snap out a lot at my mom and my sister. And it gets me in trouble at work."

With that revelation, I make the decision that Greg will not be a participant in the upcoming class. Instead, I offered to do the MBSR curriculum with him individually.

Scene 2: *"I wasn't doing the practice," says Michele, with a mischievous edge to her voice. "It didn't seem that interesting. But I did have some thoughts I wanted to follow, so that's what I did instead."*

Michele had started class one by announcing that she is a psychotherapist who is taking the course to learn about MBSR. In a pre-class interview, I had asked her to leave her professional identity out, and to find some personal connection to stress reduction or self-knowledge to speak about. I had hoped that she would become part of the group. Now we're in class two, having a class dialogue about the sitting meditation we've just completed. I'm a little worried, and quite intrigued. "So you made a choice not to participate, not to join the rest of us?" I ask.

"That's pretty much it, yes," she answers.

"And how is that for you, right now?"

"What do you mean?"

"What does it feel like in your body to say that you decided not to participate?"

"Good, I guess."

"And 'good' feels like what?"

"Kind of sitting up straight and proud. I don't know, feeling uplifted, light?"

"Is that a common feeling for you?"

"No, not really." Silence and a spreading smile. "Maybe that's why I'm liking it so much."

"So, when you do the practice, which is what you and I have just been doing, there may actually be something useful to learn." Michele and I share a smile, a little pause, and I look up to move the gathering along.

Here are two scenes of no great moment. No huge moral dilemmas reveal themselves. Neither scene would occasion more than mild debate or desultory conversation. Indeed, it may be quite consistently this way within the MBIs; the ethical space is that strong. Yet, these scenes present precisely what is necessary in defining how the ethical space works. That is, they show its outside and inside.

With Greg, there was no ethical space of mindfulness in which to be. We were both outside it. I was never an MBI teacher, nor he a participant. I was pathologizing from the moment he kept his headphones on (and maybe before!). I was in full-cry social worker mode, trying to join him from a place above him, thinking of ways to fix him. I barely approached the three Cs. Yes, my friendliness was working, but we were far from friendship.

With Michele, tempting as it might have been to step out, I was aware that we were within the ethical space. I could have found a way to pathologize, which social workers can do. I might then have retreated to a knowing place from which I could try to fix her. However, I was able to rely simply on the central move of the pedagogy and the three Cs—turning towards the feelings in the body (corporeality), staying with the feelings (contingency), and allowing Michele to find her own meaning (cosmopolitanism). Certainly, I would not have predicted (or chosen) the particular experience and interpretation as it unfolded with Michele. Yet, surprised, somehow friendship arises and thrives.

CHAPTER 7

Putting First Order Morality First

Right from the prologue, I have identified the ethical space of the MBIs with Gergen's (2009, 2011) concept of first and second order moralities. As I have moved through a deepening description of the ethical space, it has served well enough to simply allude to the congruence of the space with the orders of morality. Now that I have arrived at a fully dimensional model of the space, however, it is time to detail the ways the orders of morality match the space, which I will undertake in this chapter. Through this exposition, I trust, will come clarity about teachers and participants being in and out of the space, as suggested in the vignettes above. Indeed, I trust I will be able to show how the ethical space of the MBIs is useful when considered as a first order morality in addressing emergent issues in the moment of the gathering in the classroom.

Later, in Chapter 8, I will engage the model of the ethical space in a different way, as a way of seeing, a new view for addressing the two urgencies of the MBI community: to define mindfulness, and to ensure excellence in teacher development.

Finally, in an epilogue, I will address Gergen's (2011) call to identify practices that may achieve second order morality, proposing that the pedagogy of the MBIs may be viewed as such a practice.

Let's begin by looking closely at the concept of first order morality, which will help us to understand how the ethical space may "work" for teachers in their practice of the pedagogy.

Bringing the Gathering Together

As I have described, in first-order morality, a group establishes a particular sense of the "good" through shared meanings and values (Gergen, 2009, 2011). This is the group's life, with implicit rules defining what is "good for us." And it is unthinkable, then, to step outside that good life together by breaking an implicit rule, because it would make no sense to the others. The example I offered in the prologue is that in an MBSR class it would make no sense to sing (out loud) during sitting meditation, because "that's just not what we do." The practices, and values, and unspoken rules of the MBIs certainly appear to make up a first order morality. They may make up a second order morality, as well. I will address that possibility later in this chapter. The question for now is, "What brings a group together to create a first order morality?" How are the bonds of the group created?

Gergen (2009) suggests that there are three ingredients to bonding that are worth study: negotiation, narrative, and enchantment. As I see them in the MBI context, some need to be moved into another register yet all are, indeed, important.

Negotiation

This is the "co-creation of shared realities, and the comfort, reliability, and trust that accompany them," according to Gergen (2009, p.175). This is easily seen in the pedagogy of the MBIs. From the start, participants are brought together through the central move of the pedagogy—turning towards and being with/in present moment experience. Right from the start, as I've shown, participants are offered freedom to choose how they will engage and respond; there are few expectations. The teacher spends a good deal of time at the opening of the class to impress participants with the need for confidentiality, with a resulting feeling of safety. This is reinforced by the positive physiological response (for many, if not most) to the early practices. This is particularly true of the body scan, which often results in deep relaxation and even sleep! Participants feel safe, are relaxed, and, with a very simply structured curriculum and a teacher who knows it well, believe that the time spent together will unfold sensibly. It is, perhaps,

the idea that the curriculum is solid and trustworthy that connects directly to Gergen's ingredient of negotiation. In fact, participants suspect this even before entering the classroom. Recommendations from physicians, from trusted friends, and the scientific evidence base all work together towards the comfort, reliability, and trust that comes alive in the space of the classroom.

Narrative

For Gergen (2009), this ingredient of bonding is related to changing the story of "me" into the story of "we." The main character must shift from a bounded individual to become the relationship—our school, our marriage, for example. Gergen calls the stories that make this shift "unification myths" (2009, p.177). He notes also that for the stories to have the bonding effect, the group must act in ways that make it real. A particularly strong way of acting is spending time together, even living together, as Aristotle noticed about friendship. The more time together, the more likely the bonding.

For the MBIs, we need to move to a different register to make sense of this ingredient, although the process of the ingredient remains valid. In the MBIs, as I've shown, the participants step out of stories and into the present moment in the practice of the pedagogy. The mode is not narrative but episodic or lyric. MBI classes don't so much have a story arc as a series of present-moment experiences, a series of songs that get sung. They are the songs of the gathering. Remember the experiences of Bruce and Susan: two very different songs, each experienced differently by the participants. Yet, every song is linked by the central move of the pedagogy. Perhaps that is the lyric version of a "unification myth" telling how "we can turn towards and be with/in the experience of the moment together." The participants and teacher surely act out that "myth" again and again, class after class. I think of them as meditating as a "chorus," and then singing individual lyrics in the dialogue afterwards. Along with the unification story/song, Gergen (2009) suggests that there is also a shift away from the "me" to make way for the "we." As I've shown, the practice of the pedagogy fulfills this as well, through the change in perspective on the self, as

described in the discussion of the quality of contingency in Chapter 3. What is most interesting in Gergen's (2009) description of bonding is his mention of time as a factor. Here, again, the register must shift, but the point remains. Rather than the duration of clock and calendar time, the horizontal dimension, the MBIs emphasize the moment of experience, the vertical dimension (see note 13). The ancient Greek distinction of *kronos*, for horizontal time, and *kairos*, for vertical time— the moment of opportunity, the *now*, is helpful. Experiencing *kairos* together might be thought of as lyrical moments, which may have the effect of bonding that Gergen notes.

Enchantment

For Gergen (2009) the critical ingredient for bonding is enchantment, by which he means a "sense of transcendent importance" that is given to the group. He suggests that there are many ways to invite enchantment, and that language, ritual, and emotion, are common and powerful ways. Language, as verbal support of the group's specialness, is ubiquitous: teams have their cheers, organizations their pledges, companies their vision and mission statements. Likewise, rituals such as anniversaries, commemorations, even happy hours, reinforce the significance of the group for its members. Emotions are, in Gergen's reading, socially constructed indications of the group's bonding— emotional expressions at meeting and parting and other transitions in group life indicate a deeper commitment than selfish convenience and opportunism.

Here again, shifting to another register brings this ingredient alive within the MBIs. With spoken language in the MBIs, both "I" and "we" are avoided more than invoked. However, if we consider the non-verbal language of the group, the move to a different register takes place. An unspoken sense of group cohesion comes through in the gathering, simply through the practice of the pedagogy. The stacked descriptions of the ethical space in Chapter 5 paint the picture well, as a we-centric, mutually supportive, proximal, site-specific, *communitas* generating, situation of joint action. There's magic in the "we."

Ritual is both subtle and group-conscious. MBI classes are usually opened and closed with a period of meditation, sometimes marked by the ringing of a bell. That is a "we" ritual in time; likewise there are rituals in space. When participants are scattered in the room, the teacher will call everyone back into the circle—a coming together enacted over and over again, bearing the meaning that we can't move on until we are gathered together.

Emotion requires an adjustment of register as well. Certainly the socially constructed forms of emotion that Gergen is suggesting play a role—particularly among the more extroverted participants in a class. Yet there is also a feeling tone in the body-mind complex that is generated by the facts of being together. I think of this in terms of corporeal investment. If I tried to name the feeling tone, I would choose friendship, in the way I've defined it in Chapter 6. I believe that the feeling tone that belongs to the quality of friendship is subtle, but also powerful, in its bonding potential. To attempt a verbal expression of it, here is a description from a pioneer of contemporary spiritual direction, Tilden Edwards (2010). The context is the end of a 45-minute group movement practice with music. The participants, who are maintaining silence, simply move as the music moves them: "Don't seek any particular kind of experience; just let yourself be alive in God, however that may be given," instructs Edwards (p.44). He describes the possible effects after the music stops:

> [Y]ou may find yourself feeling much closer to others in the group at the end. You may be vividly aware of the uniqueness of each person and yet feel a shared soul fullness. You may participate more fully in God's love for them, sensing their preciousness in God's eyes. Indeed you may sense in your own eyes seeing others more as God's Spirit in you sees them. You may find yourself wanting to hug them in a way you never before felt free to do or wanting to do. In all this you may taste spiritual community in a heightened way. (p.45)

If the reader can read "around" (or simply accept) the theistic language of this paragraph, there is here a description of the feeling tone of the space (which is the gathering). Another way of pointing to this feeling tone is through concepts of *home* from Robert Frost's poem,

"The Death of a Hired Man." The characters offer two definitions, yet for the full effect and understanding of the poem, both definitions must be held together simultaneously—they do not cancel but rather complete each other. The first is, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in." The second comes right on the heels of the first, not as correction but as addition, "I should have called it/Something you somehow haven't to deserve." For Aristotle and the Buddha, to be friends is to live together, which is to use language, ritual, and emotion to bond—in a feeling of community, of home.

So an MBI gathering is tightly bonded; the ethical space arises from that fact. Participants are fully immersed within a first order morality that they understand as friendship, which, for Aristotle, is the fullness of the virtues of character, and for the Buddha is the fullness of the holy life. It is important to state the content of this first order morality in such terms, because first order moralities insist upon actions in accordance with any goods constructed by the group. A tight-knit criminal organization would also be described as having a first order morality. It is, then, the specific qualities of the ethical space, which I have attempted to define through the model presented in Chapter 6, that recommend it as a complete ethic for those who practice the pedagogy of the MBIs.

Letting the Ethical Space Work

To say that an MBI gathering that is practicing the pedagogy of mindfulness is therefore fully immersed in an ethical space sounds like a tautology. In the practice of the pedagogy the gathering defines and generates its own goods, and participants and teacher cannot act otherwise than good and remain within the first order morality that is the ethical space. Within this mode of relational being, participants are not seen as autonomous moral agents choosing to do what is good and right. Rather, the gathering is seen as tending to itself, maintaining responsibility for the relationships that sustain it. Within the ethical space of the MBI gathering, all is mutual well-wishing—friendship and the six other qualities.

At the same time, MBI participants are *also* at times immersed in other relationships in addition to the MBI gathering: families, religious communities, teams, companies, and organizations, professions, and disciplines of nearly infinite descriptions. That is, as Gergen (2009) puts it, they are aligned with multiple first order moralities and can be seen as *multi-beings*. Those first order moralities may (and do) conflict and compete. Benign as the unique qualities of the ethical space of the MBIs may be, those qualities are not necessarily seen as goods within other relationships. And I, as an MBI teacher, say, may find myself aligned with a differing first order morality as an unusual experience unfolds within the gathering, as Gergen (2009, p.359) describes this position as a multi-being:

> *In every choice I am both moral and immoral. For every relationship of which I am a part, I am also part of another relationship for whom my present actions may be misbegotten. Because we are immersed in multiple goods we are potentially alienated from any activity in which we engage. We carry into any relationship—even those of great importance to us— the capacity to find its conventions empty or even repulsive. At every moment, the voice of the disapproving judge hovers over the shoulders.*

Here is the tension within the two vignettes above. With Michele, I remained immersed in the pedagogy of the MBIs, and, therefore, in the ethical space as first order morality.

With Greg, I found my allegiance to my relationships as a clinical social worker hovering over my shoulder, to use Gergen's phrase. I launched into a world of goods in which I identified pathology, placed myself in a one-up relationship to Greg, and began to consider ways to intervene to make a change in his way of being.

As a multi-being, one may align with a different relationship and different goods at different times. As Gergen (2009) suggests, this instability of allegiance may be seen as problematic; and yet, MBI teachers may also find this fact congenial to other facets of their professional multi-beings—as therapist, or nurse, or physician. When the teacher and participants are fully immersed in the pedagogy of the MBIs, the seven qualities of the ethical space characterize the relationship of the gathering, and the teacher's actions are fully

aligned with those unique goods. The teacher is a seamless part of the ethical space. However, when a participant aligns with a different first order morality while in the MBI gathering, the teacher may find him or herself responding by aligning with the ethics of a different professional allegiance. That is, the teacher may "step out" of the ethical space of the MBIs and align instead with the ethical code of a particular profession. The precipitating factor may be the actions of a participant (or participants) who is not reflecting the qualities of the ethical space, but rather is aligned with some different first order morality. The teacher may step out for reasons that reveal two different characters.

First, it may be that the teacher steps out because a participant appears to lack the capacity to engage the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs, and is aligned instead with a way of being that may threaten the gathering in some way. Such was the case with Greg, as a result of which I aligned professionally as a social worker believing that the possibilities for action and available ethical guidelines within that set of professional relationships would be more helpful to the participants of the MBI gathering for which I was recruiting. As noted above, in that alignment "outside" the ethical space, I overturned all three of the NONs, by setting my being as social worker above Greg, by seeking and identifying pathology, and by attempting to bring about a particular desired outcome. Greg did not join the gathering, and the incident was therefore opaque to the participants. However, if the same process had taken place in class—precipitated, say, by Greg "snapping out" in anger at a participant—it would in all probability have had the same result. I would have "become" a social worker and transgressed the three NONs. My actions would have been quite comprehensible as a social worker, protecting the gathering from the disruption and physical and emotional threat of Greg's angry outburst, and protecting Greg from its social, legal, and psychological consequences. Once aligned with the ethical code of a social worker, the principles of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in the USA—service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence—come into play to guide my actions. In this sense, I might consider

especially the social worker's primary responsibility to promote the wellbeing of clients (NASW, 1996). Also, for simplicity's sake, I have available within my social worker multi-being the generic principles of clinical ethics—autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001) for guidance as well. Within the discourse and discipline of this being of my multi-being, then, I noted, judged, and believed that I was doing "what needs to be done."

I must note at this point how significant it is to the tone and structure of this essay that I have gone this far without invoking the principles or foundations of ethical approaches. While it might be tempting to reach out to such principles as Beauchamp and Childress's (2001) to prove or demonstrate that the ethical space of the MBIs *really is* ethical, this has never been an intention in this essay. The ethical space is simply the way it is, in the moment, for the gathering—different for each gathering and changing as the gathering changes. There is no underlying foundation of principles.

The second reason for the teacher to "step out" of the ethical space and realign with another professional relationship may stem from the teacher him or herself lacking the capacity to continue the practice of the pedagogy in a particular encounter. The character of this stepping out is different than the first, in that the first impulse is to protect the teacher rather than the participants. Certainly this reflexive self-protection also protects the gathering—offering control in an ambiguous situation. In my inquiry dialogue with Michele, such potential for reflexive realignment was there for me. As she proudly described her non-compliance with the meditation I had just guided, I noticed certain temptations: wanting to know why she chose to act as she did, and wanting to know why she felt the need to announce it in the gathering. Further, I was aware of a desire to enter into discussion of the theoretical value—validity, even—of her "opposition" to the pedagogy. I was tempted to "talk her around." I could have transgressed any and all of the three Cs: abandoning corporeality to engage with ideas about "why"; negating contingency to push for a particular outcome; and ignoring cosmopolitanism to ensure that everyone would take home my pre-approved meaning. Such moves would have undermined the three NONs, and reduced

friendship to a non-reciprocal and possibly inauthentic friendliness. Of the multi-being that I am, I could have aligned with the professor being, the social worker being, the father being, maybe even the author and theorist being, preferring certain relationships and leaving the MBI teacher outside.

The actual inquiry dialogue with Michele, as described in the vignette above, was not some clever way of working with "all this" within the ethical space. It was not a way to "handle" something that was "going on" with Michele, nor was it a way to "deal with" something that was happening with me. We simply acted within the ethical space, which is identical with the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs. In that space, there were few choices but to turn to corporeality, to ask how it is in the body in the present moment. There was nowhere to go but along with the answers that arose, as contingent experience unfolded. And there was no particular meaning to take away, except what was made in the finished and unfinished cosmopolitan dialogues of the gathering.

It is important to notice that a teacher's "stepping out" of alignment with the ethical space to meet participants who are themselves differently aligned begins with a suspension of the three NONs, which leads to a correlated suspension of the three Cs. That is, pathologizing trumps corporeality, because investigating what the participant is feeling in the body is futile when a label has been applied. A hierarchical stance trumps cosmopolitanism, because the meaning of the emerging experience is decided by the teacher, not the participant. And instrumentality trumps contingency, because any shifts in experience are awarded no value unless they incline toward the teacher's specific desired outcome. Finally, to address the last of the seven qualities, friendship, which fills the ethical space of the MBIs, may dissipate when the teacher "steps out" and realigns. Participants may feel respected, protected and cared for by such a move, yet the unique quality of friendship is gone, because the sense of equal sharing—that everybody is OK, even in their not-OKness— has been compromised.

After an issue for the gathering or the teacher has been resolved by "stepping out," that is, by actions that disturb the seven unique

qualities, it is possible to re-establish the ethical space through the pedagogy of the MBIs. Teacher and participants may turn towards and be with/in the experience that is alive in the present moment in the gathering, influenced, perhaps, by the stepping out. In fact, the teacher may choose to guide a formal meditation that offers the possibility for participants to allow their immediate thoughts, emotions, and body sensations to be as they are, and to simply notice those experiences in their contingent flow. Dialogue and inquiry after such a formal meditation may focus on corporeality and contingency in the experience—"What did you notice?" and "How is it now?" The teacher may use homiletic skills to share his or her own experience, and to offer any meaning he or she discovered, while inviting and remaining open to all other potential meanings from participants. Fully immersed in the pedagogy, which is identical to the ethical space, the gathering may find both a way to go on together, and a sense of coming home.

Tensions in the Ethical Space

The ethical space is not something that can be produced or maintained by force of will, meaning the will of the teacher. It is, rather, identical with the entire gathering's full immersion in the pedagogy—the central move of turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment. It is, as I have maintained from the prologue on, a relationship of participants and teacher characterized, in my model, by seven unique qualities. There is nothing immutable or "right" about my choice and ordering of the qualities. The space could be adumbrated and described in infinitely varied models. What is important is that the qualities are derived from the practice of the pedagogy and are focused on relationships. As such, this theoretical articulation of the ethical space captures much of what teachers and participants do together as a gathering. Further, it can be used to identify the tensions teachers may encounter between maintaining alignment with the ethical space of the MBIs and "stepping out" of the space in response to the presence of Gergen's (2009) "hovering" judges of other first order moralities.

The tensions involve, of course, not only the teacher but the participants as well. In fact, the tensions reside in the potentials of the teacher's response to the actions of one or more participants. When a participant or participants find that they cannot engage the pedagogy, the teacher is faced with a tension—to remain aligned with the pedagogy of the MBIs, or to align with another first order morality that is part of his or her multi-being and that nonetheless might be helpful for all the participants. While the teacher's choice of alignment is the key point that I am pressing, that point cannot be reduced to rules or principles, because any decision emerges from the relationships of the gathering, not from a teacher as autonomous agent. For example, in the vignette with Michele, the gathering's full immersion in the pedagogy sustained my alignment with the ethical space. My work with Michele was, therefore, simply further exploration of the central move of the pedagogy in the gathering—turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment. By contrast, consider my different alignment—with my social worker being—when I interviewed Greg one-to-one before a class. When he and I came together and spoke, the relationship unfolded as one of social worker and client. Our "dance" was familiar to each of us from these other ways of being, and, I believe, was helpful to Greg and, ultimately, to the group as well. I did not so much *decide* as *respond* within that situation—and I mean *situation* here as Shotter's (2008) term for joint action.

Maintaining the Ethical Space

In a nutshell then, the ethical space is identical with the practice of the pedagogy of mindfulness. An optimal class will maintain the pedagogy—and thereby the ethical space—throughout the entire class session. This is optimal because the greatest learning potential comes as the gathering successfully accomplishes the central move of the pedagogy, the turning towards and being with/in of each moment, again and again. The gathering finds that they can do this—that they know "how to" go on together. While a class session in which "stepping out" occurs may help the gathering learn the process of

turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment again, what is reinforced is that "we cannot always be together in moments of mindfulness." When the gathering can maintain the pedagogy, the possibility of continuing mindfulness is reinforced; this might be described as "steeping" in the practice of the pedagogy—a homely metaphor of making tea, of infusing the qualities in the space, which might be epitomized with the third dimension of *friendship*. For teacher and gathering to steep in friendship, then, is optimal pedagogy.

There are three important considerations for the maintenance of the ethical space of the MBIs. First is increasing the gathering's capacity for practice of the pedagogy, which is developed through an ever-thickening definition of mindfulness, and through experience of the unique qualities of the space. As the definition becomes thicker, the gathering becomes more able to work within the pedagogy, is less likely to experience "stepping out," and therefore spends more time steeping in the qualities of the ethical space.

The second consideration is the teacher's experience with the pedagogy, and particularly with the tensions around its maintenance. This can be described as trust in the practice and, therefore, in the space itself. The teacher's experience and "trust" is not different from that of the participants', in that it is developed through steeping in the ethical space. It is, in essence, a question of quantity of time spent in practicing how the gathering is able to go on together with the pedagogy—uninterrupted by "stepping out." I will discuss this in significant detail in Chapter 8.

The third consideration is the identity of the other possible first order moralities with which participants and teacher may align if they step out of the ethical space. Participants cannot be tightly defined and controlled in their potential alignments with other first order moralities, because they are unique multi-beings, as Gergen (2009) describes. Each of their relationships, present and past, is available as an alternative. That is, when they find that they cannot turn towards and be with/in the experience arising in the moment, they may step out and realign with the most helpful first order morality they can access. It is to be hoped that the stepping out will be benign to the gathering, and, indeed, in my experience this is vastly often the case.

Such differing alignment may go both unspoken and unnoticed; in fact, the participant may step out in her thinking—in "unfinished dialogue"—and quickly or eventually realign with the ethical space of the gathering with no words being spoken and no other person knowing of those moves.

When stepping out is spoken aloud, it is possible that the experience of the teacher and other participants may assist the participant in re-engaging with the pedagogy—as was the case with Michele. When stepping out is not benign, but, rather, potentially threatening to the wellbeing of participants, the teacher may find the need to step out of the pedagogy and, thus, the ethical space, in order to align with a different first order morality—as in the hypothetical case with Greg. This form of realignment will most often default to the teacher's other professional identity, bringing to bear its own ethical code and professional principles that must be upheld. The relationship then becomes one of, say, social worker and client (or, rather, clients, because all participants are the responsibility of the social worker). Possible realignments for MBI teachers are as myriad as the professional disciplines from which teachers are drawn. There are more than 185 different disciplines and organizations in mental health alone, each with a written code of ethics (Pope, 2012). Adding all those in medicine and allied health professions would expand the list considerably further. Regardless of professional alignment, the point is for MBI teachers to know their "home" profession well. Ultimately, in emergent situations, this is the binding relationship—the legal, rather than the relational. The power that comes with the teacher's professional discipline and license may need to be wielded with confidence and aplomb. This is not an opting out from or an undermining of the ethical space of the MBIs; it is simply the reality of living in a society in which responsibilities are divided as they are, and liabilities are calculated as they are.

It is sensible, then, that the MBIs require (or heavily suggest) that teachers have a graduate degree and considerable training in working with any particular populations with which they may engage. As an example from the MBI community, while teaching MBSR with the training provided by the UMASS CFM does not

require a graduate degree, the minimum educational requirement for teaching in the UMASS CFM program has, however, been stated as a master's degree in social sciences, health sciences, education, or related fields (Santorelli, 2001a). Further, certification as an MBSR teacher, the highest level of training accomplishment through the CFM, does indeed require a graduate degree (CFM, 2012). For teaching mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), the minimum requirement is a degree and license in counseling or psychotherapy, plus additional specific training in cognitive therapy. Requirements for DBT, ACT, and psychotherapy using mindfulness pedagogy are shaped by the identity of licensed psychotherapist/counselor, which requires a graduate degree. It is of great value to all concerned that teachers have such facets—such "hovering judges"—within their multi-beings.

Using the Ethical Space

In this chapter, I have shown that the practice of the pedagogy by the gathering, which is identical with the ethical space, is a dynamic first order morality. Within this way of being that is co-created in relationship, the gathering learns how to go on together. This learning is not explicit, but rather is a "steeping" in the ethical space—a growing knowing how to turn towards and be with/in what is arising in the moment. The less "stepping out" that interrupts that steeping, the more "trust" in the practice (which is also the ethical space) develops within the relationships of the gathering—becoming potential multi-being alignments for participants and the teacher. Yet, stepping out is always an option, because the MBIs are located not only within their own potential discourse of ethical space, but also within the discourses of the health care professions with their professional and legal responsibilities. The ethical space as first order morality is transparent to the gathering, and is a useful, pragmatic situation for teachers.

The theoretical articulation of the ethical space, coming as it does from a very different intellectual discourse than the scientific and psychological discourses that dominate the MBIs, may offer new,

generative ideas towards resolution of the two current urgencies of the MBI community. In the chapter that follows, I will suggest ways in which the model of the ethical space and its "workings" as a first order morality help address the MBI community's urgencies: first, a need for definitions of mindfulness to "protect" it from misconstrual and to assist in the academic and scientific research enterprises, and, second, a need to ensure quality in the training and ongoing development of a large cadre of new teachers drawn from diverse backgrounds.

CHAPTER 8

Addressing the Urgencies
of the MBI Community

First: Defining Mindfulness

The first urgency of the MBI community, as I have described in Chapter 1, is to define and operationalize mindfulness. This is being approached, as noted, in three ways—by proposing and critiquing operational definitions within the scientific community, by appealing to Buddhist tradition, and by distinguishing differences between the MBIs and conventional clinical practices. The ethical view of this essay offers a different perspective, the discourse of relational being, which stands in a kind of counterpoint to each of these approaches. I shall offer that counterpoint, as I see it, for each in turn.

Counterpoint to the Academic and Scientific Definitions

Within the different discourse of this essay, mindfulness is not a mind-state (or trait) that a participant in the MBIs achieves individually, but rather is a relational achievement of the gathering. That is, moments of mindfulness are co-created products of the pedagogy, and are identical with the ethical space. What must be defined, then, is not some mind-state (or brain-state), but what the gathering of practitioners—participants and teacher—actually co-creates. The gathering's practice of the pedagogy is available for observation. What is said and done in the classroom is actually the definition of mindfulness that the participants co-create and work with from moment to moment and

session to session. As I have noted, that definition is fluid, constantly changing as new and different words, images, experiences are brought into the gathering.

The practicing of the pedagogy by participants when alone at home, and therefore much of the definition that is worked with at that time, is also available for considerable direct observation. It includes the audio recordings of meditation guidance used in the classes, which most often feature the teacher's choices of words and vocal expression—so the definition will be infinitely variable. Indeed, as the participant is practicing alone, she is in all probability engaging in some unfinished dialogue with the teacher and the gathering— another source of variability in the definition. Also, as noted in Chapter 5, home practice includes the attempt to reproduce the set and setting of a formal meditation as instructed and experienced in the gathering; language, sights, sounds, sensations, are either approximated or deliberately changed in home meditation—varying the definition further. Throughout the entire process, the participant is aligning with the gathering and its definition of mindfulness, and negotiating that definition in unfinished relational encounters.

In some cases, the participant does not undertake any formal meditation homework. Nevertheless, that participant may invoke the practice of the pedagogy at any moment, in the unfinished dialogue that is informal mindfulness meditation. Within this situation, the participant is invoking the relationship of the gathering by aligning with the pedagogy—the answer to "What do I do, and how do I do it?" in the moment. The participant is reliant upon the relationships of the gathering. Given the character of such engagement, the scientific findings that people who do far less than the recommended formal meditation "homework" nevertheless benefit significantly from the MBIs (see note 13 in Chapter 5), may not be seen as so surprising nor raise as great an urge for justification as they do currently—at least if we think about relationships rather than mind-states.

Counterpoint to Buddhism-Based Definitions

As suggested in Chapters 1 and 2, definitions of mindfulness within Buddhism are highly contested from tradition to tradition, assume

contexts that are not acknowledged in the MBIs, and contain language and concepts that never reach the participant in an MBI gathering. As such, clinical leaders and researchers in the MBIs, and practitioners and scholars of Buddhism may assume any one of a range of perspectives on the association of Buddhism and the MBIs. The Buddhist scholar Rupert Gethin (2011, pp.268–269) elegantly summarizes his view of the possibilities:

> *From one sort of Buddhist perspective, the abstraction of mindfulness from its context within a broad range of Buddhist meditative practices might seem like an appropriation and distortion of traditional Buddhism that loses sight of the Buddhist goal of rooting out greed, hatred and delusion. From a different Buddhist perspective, it might seem to be an example of "skill in means" (upaya-kausalya): it provides a way of giving beings the opportunity to make a first and important initial step on the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. From yet another perhaps still Buddhist perspective that might be characterized as "modernist", it strips Buddhism of some of its unnecessary historical and cultural baggage, focusing on what is essential and useful. A non-Buddhist perspective might regard the removal of the unnecessary historical and cultural baggage as finally revealing the useful essence that had hitherto been obscured by the Buddhist religion. Finally we might regard the coming together of practices derived from Buddhism with the methods of modern western cognitive science as affording a true advance that supersedes and renders redundant the traditional Buddhist practices. As observers of social history, we might also see it as an example of a change from a cultural situation where we turn to religion to heal our souls to one where we turn to medicine and science.*

To these possibilities I would dare to add (or oppose) the relational perspective, which foregrounds the practice of the pedagogy by the gathering, and, thereby, makes the definition of mindfulness dynamic—alive in every moment. In the view of the ethical space, a definition of mindfulness is continually negotiated within the gathering of practitioners. This gives the MBIs a vernacular pedagogy that supports their pragmatic aim, which can only be described as turning towards and being with/in the experience of the moment—without reference or recourse to Buddhist horizons of meaning. The pedagogy is self-defining; it is the work of the gathering.

The cosmopolitanism that is a quality of the ethical space makes the MBIs more available to more people, regardless of their religious backgrounds and allegiances. The gathering does not so much receive a tradition as co-create its own, moment-by-moment, with the material available from the engaged practitioners. Such material includes both the teacher's training within the MBIs and the ongoing observations of the participants, shared in all the available forms of human communication. In his lectures on pedagogy, George Steiner (2005) makes a nice distinction. He brings together the Latin word *traditio*, meaning, "what has been handed down," and the Greek *paradidomena*, meaning, "what is being handed down *now*," and notices the tension between them and what it means for teaching. The pedagogy of the MBIs and their co-created definitions of mindfulness seem much more at home as *paradidomena*, now.

Counterpoint to Other Clinical Approaches

One purpose of this essay from the start has been to distinguish differences between the MBIs and other, more typical clinical interventions used to treat medical and mental health conditions. The model of the ethical space, with its seven unique qualities has been drawn from the practice of the pedagogy and the MBI community's own distinctive language and discourse. The three NONs—non-pathologizing, non-instrumental, non-hierarchical—are terms that have been applied and defined by community leaders in their own work of distinguishing differences, as I have shown. Because they appear so often in the literature for the purpose we are describing here, it is worth the time to review them, and to see how clearly they draw the boundaries between the MBIs and other forms of interventions—particularly given the way they have been honed sharply in the process of building the model.

Non-pathologizing has its genesis as a concept in the early statement to participants that "as long as you are breathing, there is more right with you than there is wrong, no matter how ill or hopeless you may feel" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p.2). That spirit expands throughout the pedagogy to undermine the power of the clinical

gaze that, as described in Chapter 3, delivers the nearly inescapable identity of a diagnosis, maintains surveillance for symptoms (while convincing patients to keep themselves under surveillance), and measures and ranks distance from "normal." It is the living out of the pedagogy within the gathering that expands participants' identities beyond labels, structures a different relationship to symptoms, and limits comparisons to *this* experience in *this* moment, which is perfect by definition.

The non-instrumental quality flows directly from the quality of non-pathologizing. There is a clash of concepts, as clinicians typically act to reduce symptoms, while the pedagogy of the MBIs refrains from such action, instead asking participants to turn towards and be with/in their experience of the moment—whether symptomatic or salutary. The MBIs offer a way of being with the way things are with a certain equanimity, rather than a way of achieving a particular desired outcome.

Those first two NONs offer the participant a sense of freedom, a space in which to move unimpeded. The third—non-hierarchical—promises the sense of equality. The MBIs insist on the expertise of the participants in their own experiences, their own lives. When each is expert, the teacher is simply one of many that know how it is for themselves in the moment, and the possibility of reciprocity and friendship among all of the gathering arises.

So, yes, the MBIs offer a kind of resistance to typical clinical practice. However, they are also legitimized and have risen to their current level of acceptance in medicine and mental health care through a focused program of empirical research. This continuous drive for scientific data of high value—equal to that required in pharmaceutical research—sets up a tension with the eschewing of desired outcomes that is key to the pedagogy of the MBIs. Differences that may be distinguished are, therefore, not always brought to the foreground. In fact, the community has often framed the tension positively, as between two different but potentially complementary empirical epistemologies—the (modernist representation of) Buddhist psychological enterprise and the contemporary scientific enterprise. It is believed that in the confluence of the two approaches

both may derive insights valuable to their enterprise (e.g., Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Yet there are additional concerns that continue to drive the need to differentiate the MBIs from typical clinical interventions. Mindfulness is often conceived in clinical applications as an intervention, and therefore is seen as an analog of manualized psychotherapeutic approaches or medications. This is problematic, in that those who first encounter mindfulness from the scientific side may treat the pedagogy and practice of mindfulness in ways that are appropriate to the analogies, yet ultimately inappropriate for an MBI. Hence the fears of the community:

> *Do we need to be concerned that young professionals might be increasingly drawn to mindfulness (or expected by their senior colleagues to use or study a mindfulness-based intervention) because it may be perceived as a fashionable field in which to work rather than from a motivation more associated with its intrinsic essence and transformative potential? Can it be exploited or misappropriated in ways that might lead to harm of some kind, either by omission or commission? Might there even be elements of bereavement and loss on the part of some, mixed in with the exhilaration of any apparent 'success', as often happens when success comes rapidly and unexpectedly? (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p.4)*

Such concerns are being addressed as the two urgencies under discussion in this essay: developing a thoroughgoing definition of mindfulness, and ensuring that MBI teachers "embody mindfulness." Definitions are proposed within the scientific discourse, the modernist Buddhist discourse, and the uneasy territory between. As I've shown, such definitions hew to basic assumptions that mindfulness is a mind-state that can (potentially) be measured objectively, and can be taught and developed through individual, isolated, "internal" practice. With such a theoretical understanding, teacher training clearly and logically would emphasize individual practice and silent retreats, as indeed is the case.

By doing what I am suggesting in this essay, adding a different discourse to the ongoing dialogue within the MBI community,

the community may find new ways to differentiate its mindfulness research and teaching enterprises. For example, in the discourse of relational being, mindfulness cannot be seen as a mind-state in an individual; rather it is the product of the practice of the pedagogy by the gathering. While mind-states might be measured objectively and compared empirically (particularly if reduced to brain activity), a relational achievement can only be analyzed in its own moment-by-moment expression.

Research reflecting a relational view of mindfulness would of necessity be well differentiated from that of manualized therapies and medicines. It would focus on the gathering and its product, and would attempt to capture and consider the varied processes that bind the group together. This would include all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication—perhaps even the streaming silence described by Buber (see Chapter 3). Such research would be classified as qualitative, a vastly under-used approach even within the current scientific discourses. In a review of the Mindfo database,[181] which compiles all of the research articles published on mindfulness within the discourse of the MBIs and related interventions, I found that in 2011, the latest full year on record, there were nine qualitative studies among the 397 research articles published—a bit over two percent of the total. Looking back to the prior year, seven of 353 articles were qualitative in nature—a little less than two percent. And as the years go back, the percentage continues to shrink.

Certainly, a more robust qualitative research enterprise—particularly using methods that are congruent with the relational being discourse generally, and that support the ethical space of the MBIs specifically—would serve to deepen understanding of the gathering and its product. This opening of new territory in which action and meaning trump measurement and outcome would provide the young professionals with whom the community is concerned with thicker descriptions and actionable ways of being in the practice of the MBIs that are differentiated from the typical clinical interventions.

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18 Mindfo is a database of over 2,300 references on mindfulness research warehoused by Mindfulness Research Guide, available through www. mindfulexperience.org/mindfo.php.

If those interested in working within the MBIs could come quickly to understand the activities and qualities of MBI gatherings just by reading the research literature—which is not yet possible—such potential teachers and researchers could be rather more embraced than feared. This possibility points directly to the second urgency, of appropriate and thorough teacher development.

Second: Ensuring Teacher Quality

The second urgency of the MBI community is to meet the rapid growth of demand for teachers, and to ensure that the young professionals being trained in the MBIs will have deep understanding and experience of mindfulness and maintain an ongoing connection to its practice (Cullen, 2011; Grossman, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2011). The central questions of how training programs might best be focused, and how teachers in training might best be developed and evaluated, are just beginning to be addressed (Crane, *et al.*, 2010, 2012; McCown, *et al.*, 2010; Santorelli, *et al.*, 2011). The model of the ethical space of the MBIs that is presented in this essay can be of value in furthering resolution of this urgency, as it offers a unique perspective and is aligned with the key domains of teacher development, as I shall show.

The ethical space is both contrapuntal to and congruent with the two discourses or thought styles that are predominant in the MBIs.

First, the ethical space offers precise counterpoint to the scientific thought style of MBI research. The scientific discourse focuses on individuals and their outcomes, proposes mindfulness as a state or trait of mind (cultivated in isolation), and considers the teacher (if at all) as a delivery vehicle (or even a vector) for mindfulness for the individual patient. In counterpoint, the ethical space proposes that mindfulness is a co-creation of the gathering of participants, and therefore is a relational achievement, not an individual mind state. Further, mindfulness is not an objective, measurable "thing" that is delivered or entirely controlled by the teacher, but is, rather, a product of the gathering of participants and teacher that is unique from moment to moment.

Second, the ethical space is congruent with the thought style of teacher training programs in the MBIs, which focus on the "person

of the teacher." Those concerned with MBI pedagogy have noted the tension between the view of the scientist and of the teacher (Crane, *et al.*, 2010; McCown & Reibel, 2009; McCown & Wiley, 2008, 2009). That is, scientists would prefer the teacher as a clean vector delivering a pristine mindfulness, while teacher-training programs accept— even celebrate—each teacher's continually unfolding understanding of mindfulness and capacity for communicating that contingent understanding. The model of the ethical space offers teacher training a place to stand that not only overcomes tensions with the scientific discourse, but also maps closely to a three-part scheme often used for describing and even evaluating development of a teacher that will be described below.

The ethical space, as an integrated model arising from the rich theoretical discourse of relational being, crisply delineates the two domains of the MBIs that are in tension—research and teaching. While research stands within scientific discourse, now, teaching and teacher training may stand within their own theoretical home ground of the ethical space. This division would bring a precision and clarity to the way the tension is currently characterized, by replacing the culturally untenable and intellectually unbridgeable opposition of modern science and ancient religion with which the MBI community currently wrestles with a more simple opposition of science and a contemporary secular discourse. The contested discourse of interdependence within Buddhist modernism, and the non-dual view that Kabat-Zinn (2011; Dunne, 2011) advocates for the MBIs, can be re-visioned with no loss of integrity as the ethical space and its discourse of relational being. As I noted in Chapter 1, Kabat-Zinn's description of the extraordinary solidarity of MBI teachers and their patients invokes a non-dual view in which, like a Bodhisattva and sentient beings, they "are not separate, and *never* were" (2011, p.295; emphasis in original). Alike in mysticism is Santorelli's view of Chiron, the "wounded healer" of Greek mythology, as the archetypal MBI teacher, in which, "Outwardly, we direct our efforts toward restoring others, but somewhere maybe we know there really is no *other*" (Santorelli, 1999, p.17; emphasis in original). What is represented by the italicized *never* and *other* in these views is congruent at the level

of human relationships with Gergen's (2009) concept of *confluence* in relational being, described in Chapter 3.

The MBI gathering is a confluence in which teacher and participants are mutually defined in the ongoing action. In this conception, there are no bounded individuals, no independent entities (the terms "teacher" and "participant" are simply placeholders). There are only pragmatic definitions of identities as required within the coordinated actions of the gathering—comprising the co-creation of mindfulness, of the ethical space. This view places MBI teaching within a thoroughly secular, Western academic discourse with a long and respected (though continually contested) history. This is certainly a place of greater potential for acceptance than the current position on the margins of Buddhist modernism. There, the intellectual legitimacy of MBI pedagogy as a discipline apart from psychotherapy, medicine, or religion meets strong critique both from those sympathetic to the undertaking (e.g., Cohen, 2010; Rosch, 2007) and those more dubious (e.g., Hickey, 2010). Professional legitimacy for the peculiar occupation of MBI teachers, I propose, is to be found in what we are already doing in the classroom, and in aligning ourselves with a friendly discourse of the Western tradition—one that is perhaps related or tangential to clinical mental health disciplines, but does not impose discipline or "brand" MBI teachers in restrictive ways.

The discourse of relational being is, demonstrably, one practical approach. Within that discourse, young professionals could absorb, without religious conflict, the philosophical underpinnings of MBI teaching. They could also more easily comprehend the value of the practical relational skills required in developing as a teacher, as well as the necessity of being steeped in the practice of the pedagogy itself. Thus, the continually sounded demand for daily formal meditation may be reframed relationally. It is not so much about self-improvement and self-exploration as about learning to turn toward and be with/in the emerging moment in the gathering. Meditating alone is simply steeping oneself in the central move of the pedagogy, invoking an unfinished dialogue with one's own teachers to maintain the turning towards and being with/in the moment. Likewise, the requirement for retreat-style meditation may be reframed as steeping in the practice of

the pedagogy of the MBIs. Here, again, we may say that the learning is relational in origin and intent.

The seven qualities of the ethical space correlate with a valuable, established scheme for teacher development. In fact, the ethical space's three dimensions map to the three-part scheme for describing the "person of the teacher," as my colleagues and I proposed (McCown & Reibel, 2009; McCown, *et al.*, 2010): authenticity, authority, and friendship. Pushing authenticity against the three NONs, authority against the three Cs, and friendship against the seventh, all-pervading quality with the same name, should generate useful insights into teacher development.

A New View of the "Person of the Teacher"

The three-part scheme for development of MBI teachers arose from the discourse of individualism in which the MBIs themselves participate. The three terms, *authenticity*, *authority*, and *friendship* presume that the *individual* teacher must cultivate particular skills and/or ways of being through *individual* practice in isolation from the MBI gathering, which then may be applied to understanding and working with the *individuals* in an MBI class. The three-part scheme is descriptive and helpful, and my colleagues and I have used it to good effect in training teachers. However, I would now like to pursue the idea that the three dimensions of the ethical space and its home discourse of relational being offer a different perspective—a new view—that can even further improve teacher training and development.

The new view offers advantages in considering teacher training because it locates the actions of teacher development within the relationship of the gathering. As Gergen (2009, p.136) describes the outcome of this view: "Each relationship will bring me into being as a certain sort of person, and the actions that I acquire will enter the repository of potentials for future use." Thus, the view does not find an individual teacher developing a skill or mind-state, but rather considers a particular relational accomplishment of the MBI gathering, which may become a potential within the multi-being of the MBI teacher. As a teacher steeps in the relationships of MBI gatherings,

in a sense she learns "all the parts"—the differing bits of the shared activity that comprise the relationship—which can be correlated with the authenticity, authority, and friendship scheme. Here's Gergen again (2009, p.137): "In sum, all meaning/full relationships leave us with another's way of being, a self that we become through the relationship, and a choreography of co-action. From these three sources, we emerge with enormous possibilities for being."

A New View of Authenticity

In the discourse of the ethical space of the MBIs, then, the teacher need not be conceived as a bounded being who is a singular, integrated, "authentic" self in all situations. Rather, within MBI teacher training and development, the teacher may be most usefully seen as multi-being. The advantages are clarified within the "operation" of the ethical space, in which an authentic, coherent, integrated expression of turning towards and being with/in the moment helps best establish the potential of the pedagogy of the MBIs in the gathering. It is of significant importance, however, that the teacher have the potential within her multi-being to become, as well, the professional self— social worker, physician, etc.—that can meet any participant who has "stepped out" of the practice of the pedagogy and thus out of the ethical space. It is this professional being, unaligned with the MBIs, who can establish a pathologizing, hierarchical, and instrumental helping relationship, and can work through the necessary actions.

Current MBI teacher training and development programs would not change dramatically if they shifted to the discourse of the ethical space, yet such a shift would significantly clarify expectations and practice. Current programs hold a central idea that what a teacher does in the classroom must come from their personal meditation practice, that they must "embody" mindfulness for the individuals in their classes (e.g., Crane, *et al.*, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2010). Thus, authenticity of the individual teacher is associated with individual meditation practice. Teacher trainees must, in this way of thinking, be steeped in meditation; hence the call for commitment to a daily personal practice and regular attendance at meditation retreats within particular Buddhist traditions.

From within the discourse of the ethical space, these demands not only remain, but also obtain further clarity in the context of relational being. In this context, trainees must develop specific potentials as MBI teachers. The key potential, of course, is to be able to practice the pedagogy—turning towards and being with/in the moment—no matter what is arising in the gathering. Logically, then, teachers must steep intensively in the actions of MBI gatherings as they co-create mindfulness over and over again. The co-creation does not happen in a bounded body and mind, but rather within the confluence of the gathering, through all the depth of significance available, and through all the subtleties of confluence. To develop as a teacher is to incorporate the potentials generated through co-creation of mindfulness. Such potentials may be reinforced initially by practice with recordings from one's MBI teachers, and later in isolated practice by engaging in the unfinished dialogue that defines isolated practice. Therefore, we could say that teacher development essentially comprises ongoing exposure to MBI gatherings. This is in contrast to the current preferences for MBI teachers to have ongoing relationships within traditions other than the MBIs, meeting with Buddhist meditation teachers and attending longer retreats within particular Buddhist traditions. In such relationships, the trainee may gain potentials for meditating with others in particular ways. Yet this does not help teachers gain the very particular potentials of the MBIs. Much more is communicated in the verbal and many non-verbal realms in the MBIs than is offered or received in the more "traditional" Buddhist gatherings—which tend to share the process of meditation without sharing any content, as the anthropologist Michal Pagis (2010) describes in discussing the experiences of Vipassana meditators.

A teacher well steeped in the ethical space of the MBIs has the potential to turn towards and be with/in the moment in a gathering in a non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, non-instrumental way. The more such potential the teacher has, the more possible it is that she will maintain the ethical space of the pedagogy rather than stepping out to the security and safety of the structure, required actions of the "professional" response resident in the multi-being. The more a teacher can steep within the relationship of a gathering, the more

the potentials of the ethical space become available—in the moment and in multi-being. It might be said that the practice of the pedagogy in the gathering is self-reinforcing. The good teacher steps out very seldom; her students steep. The teacher who has not steeped in the pedagogy does not have the potentials required to *not* step out. This may also be the reason for the conundrum of finding good teachers noted by Santorelli: "We have had instructors with five or six years of meditation experience who do very well in the classroom. Conversely, we have met people seeking jobs who have twenty or more years of meditation practice in their background who we did not feel at the time were capable of teaching in the classroom" (2001b, p.11-8:4). When authenticity is relational, it is not about some capacity to stay "within" or "true" to oneself, rather, it is about the potential to stay with/in the practice of the pedagogy in the gathering.

It is worth noting here that a recent qualitative study of the role of teachers in the MBIs suggests that the sense of the supportive relationships of the MBI group is given more weight and importance by participants than by teachers. The authors observe that participants feel encouraged by peers and, as well, feel less dependent on the teacher due to the wider relationships. The authors conclude their thoughts on this topic in a way I find consonant with much of my analysis above: "Although some teachers are aware of the importance of the group, the importance might be an underestimated factor in the MBCT training and might need more attention in training teachers (van Aalderen, *et al.*, 2012).

A New View of Authority

So, authenticity can be re-viewed as the potentials of *being* that are generated in the gathering, and that help the teacher and participants to remain engaged with the pedagogy of the MBIs. By contrast, authority can be re-viewed as the potentials for *acting* that are generated in the gathering, and that provide a sense of "knowing what we're doing" or "knowing how to go on together" as the moment of pedagogy unfolds. Authority, in the context of relational being, then, may be aligned with the three Cs—corporeality, contingency, cosmopolitanism. The three should not be considered as skill sets to be developed inside the

teacher. Rather, the relational view suggests them as potentials for joint action in the relationship of an MBI gathering; potentials that are available within the multi-being of teachers steeped in the practice of the pedagogy. By considering the actions implicated in each of the three, I hope the value of a relational, ethical-space-based approach to teacher development will become evident.

Corporeality offers definition and specificity in the practice of the pedagogy. It is what participants may turn towards and be with/in as the moment unfolds. In asking the question, "Where do you notice that in your body?" the teacher is setting in motion an action that is best considered a joint action within a confluence. The teacher does not direct and hold the participant alone. Rather, the full gathering is implicated. For example, the exploration Michele undertook in the vignette at the head of Part IV was not her work alone, nor the work of the teacher as her therapist. It was the accomplishment of the gathering. Steeped in the pedagogy, the potential for turning towards and staying with/in the moment is generated and becomes possible for all. That essential turn to corporeality—to feeling sensation in the body first, rather than engaging in emotion-talk, stories, and intellectualization—deconstructs the ways of approaching the unfolding moment that come from familiar discourses of individuality, with their emphasis on pathology, hierarchy, and instrumental action. It requires great courage and support, which can be re-visioned as a relational accomplishment, to pursue such a way of being. Also, it requires the development and deployment of a capacity for thick description, to bring the moment and its inherent changes into cogency. This, too, arises only through confluence. The gathering does it; the steeped teacher has the potential. In short, teachers don't develop capacities inside themselves. Rather, they develop potentials inside the gathering.

Contingency is the word for the profundity that may be touched upon as the MBI gathering explores and expresses the continual, inexorable awareness of change. It may be grasped (or, rather, *not* grasped) in the practice of the pedagogy, and the many possible modes of expressing it define and deepen a potential for teachers. A heavy, restricted way of seeing and being in the world can be transformed as

the gathering recognizes contingency. The limiting stories, emotion-talk, and intellectualization can be deconstructed by turning towards contingency, particularly by tracking the shifts of sensation in the body. Indeed, the recognition of contingency forever undermines the power of pathology, hierarchy, and instrumentality, making way for the ethical space. What's important for teacher development here is this: transformation and freedom may only be achieved within the relationship of the gathering. There, myriad unspoken, unfinished dialogues take place, simultaneously with the spoken dialogue of participant and teacher. All of these dialogues with their discoveries contribute to the potential of the gathering to support transformation and freedom—from many different directions. Therefore, it is not ultimately helpful to conceive pedagogical actions or to train MBI teachers within the framework of individual encounters between teacher and participant. Only through steeping in the ethical space, whether as a participant-observer or teacher, can a trainee emerge with the total potential, the full dimensionality, of the contingent moments of a transformative dialogue.

Cosmopolitanism is the quality of allowing meaning to emerge from the joint action of the gathering: from the unfinished dialogues of "thinking," from the spoken-aloud dialogue of teacher/participant inquiry, and from the background hubbub of the flow of the moment-by-moment situation that Shotter (e.g., 2008) describes. The meaning for participants and teacher in the moment is always right and always in transition. It arises from the full engagement of the gathering in the pedagogy. This is significant for teacher training and development, as the potential to allow meaning to unfold contingently for participants, trusting in the self-informing and self-correcting action of the pedagogy, is uniquely available within the ethical space. Such action is complicated to describe, much less to train for, within a discourse of individualism. The trainee must learn, for example, to engage a participant in dialogue about their "subjective" experience, ensuring their freedom to explore and "say anything," while not putting them in the hot-seat, and while keeping the rest of the participants engaged in the proceedings (McCown, *et al.*, 2010). That's a lot for one person to learn, track, and balance. The discourse of the ethical space, of relational being, simplifies the description of

the undertaking, but does not change what happens in an inquiry dialogue. It simply reduces the pressure on the teacher in training. Trainees steeping in MBI gatherings emerge with potential for the joint actions of inquiry: knowing that meaning arises in the gathering itself, that it is influenced not only by spoken dialogue of teacher and participant, but also by unfinished dialogue when the participant goes silent, by non-verbal contributions of others, and by the whole sensuous perceptual background of the gathering that is changing any meaning even as it is generated. Inquiry, therefore, is not framed as a special technique of an advanced teacher; rather, it is just a spoken aloud illustration of how the gathering works in turning towards and being with/in the moment.

Ultimately, the best training for being in the gathering is to be in the gathering, deeply, continually, as participant and teacher.[192] I wish to be clear about the definition of the gathering for teacher development use. A teacher–participant dyad is in itself a gathering; it is not an encounter of two subjectivities, but rather might be defined as a confluence, as Gergen (2009) suggests, or even as a joint action or situation, as Shotter (2008) characterizes it. In full engagement with the practice of the pedagogy, the dyad explores how to turn towards and be with/in the moment, involving perhaps spoken and non-verbal dialogue, which is "finished" between the participants (placeholder!), plus realms of unfinished dialogue, plus the hubbub of the living, breathing, moving background. Gatherings of any size, then, are thick and deep enough to steep in. Teachers in training may emerge with the "authority" of the three Cs—the potentials that make a difference.

19 When the discourse of MBI pedagogy moves away from learning skills with and for individuals towards being with/in the moment in the gathering, and moves away from the individualistic practice of mindfulness meditation towards the co-creation of mindfulness in the gathering, evaluation of teacher preparedness may change as well. Currently, the flagship MBSR training program at UMASS Center for Mindfulness requires teachers seeking certification to have taught a minimum of four MBSR classes (CFM, 2012). In the discourse of the ethical space, this falls far short of "steeping" in the practice of the pedagogy. Likewise, the minimum requirement to have taught 15 classes for those who would teach teachers seems far too low to achieve the *potentials* that this essay suggests.

A New View of Friendship

Both the three-part scheme of the person of the teacher and the three-dimensions of the model of the ethical space include friendship. What is more, their definitions are much the same—it is only the individualist language that separates the former from the latter.

In the person of the teacher scheme, the teacher offers friendship to the individual participants. In fact, my colleagues and I suggested (McCown, *et al.*, 2010) that it starts from inside the teacher—from an *intention* to meet people "where they are." That definition contains, as well, non-pathologizing and non-hierarchical qualities. Even non-instrumentality is a quality: we suggest "coming to any encounter *without* an agenda or intention to fix or improve the other" (p.99).

In defining friendship in the discourse of the ethical space, despite the similarities, the difference is quite clear. Friendship is not offered. It is shared. As the gathering participates fully in the pedagogy, friendship is an all-pervading quality—as a relational achievement. It is a potential and a fact within a gathering. A teacher in training therefore steeps in it. She emerges with friendship as potential in multi-being. She doesn't apply skills and willpower to bring friendship to the class. Rather, she already knows how to go on, as the presence of the participants and the joint actions of the pedagogy allow friendship to pervade the ethical space.

The View from the Ethical Space Clarifies the Urgencies

I have been suggesting that the ethical space with its home discourse of relational being provides a helpful new perspective on (1) attempts to define and operationalize the construct of mindfulness for research and theorizing, and (2) ensuring the quality of teacher training and development as the MBIs continue their rapid growth.

For the first, the ethical space offers to change the tensions about the definition of mindfulness, from attempts to bridge a gap between modern science and ancient religious worldviews and practices, to the bridging of the gap between modern science and contemporary social science, as I described above. This is an intelligible meeting

of differing discourses within the Western intellectual tradition, and the bridging of that gap would be of significant value in improving the potential for clinical insights in medicine and mental health care in general. One discourse critiques the other in direct, rather than in the highly interpreted and mediated ways required in the science and religion dialogues. Further, there are opportunities for both sides to contribute at the same level in the same secular, culturally acceptable way to the overall growth and elaboration of the MBIs. This is characterized well in the discussion of the need for both quantitative and qualitative research.

Second, the ethical space offers a view of the process of teacher training that is more direct and pragmatic than the current discourse. The ethical space refocuses the undertaking. It moves away from the current core insistence on trainees developing their internal capacities through efforts at individual, daily, and retreat-style meditation, which are efforts isolated from the actual practice of the pedagogy. Instead, it shifts the center of focus to the practice of the pedagogy itself. Such a view is certainly logical, direct, and sensible to those young professionals who are needed to meet growing demand for teachers, but who are feared for their potentially shallow understanding and experience of mindfulness. In the view of the ethical space, teacher trainees steep in the practice of the pedagogy in the gathering and emerge with the potentials for the actions of the pedagogy and the relationships of the gathering. Such trainees develop quickly, knowing just what is necessary for the co-creation of mindfulness—and maintenance of the ethical space. Young professionals, therefore, should be steeped in the practice of the pedagogy in the gathering. Then, regardless of their particular spiritual background or history of individual meditation practice, they may be welcomed, not feared—which reflects the practice of the pedagogy.

Approaching Conclusions

In the prologue, I said that I hoped my inquiry into the ethical space of the MBIs would provide a theoretical articulation that would be useful to clinicians and educators in working with the challenges of

their day-to-day practice. Further, I hoped it would be useful to the MBI community overall in grappling with the urgencies attendant to its rapid growth—the need to define mindfulness and differentiate the MBIs, and the need to train and develop more teachers. Ultimately, I hoped that I would be able to show that the practice of the pedagogy of the MBIs is not simply a first order morality, but has qualities of a second order morality, as well.

My initial objective was to identify the unique ethical qualities of MBI group relationships. I trusted that I would then be able to explain how those relationships work to keep participants feeling the level of safety and support that participants and teachers find so remarkable. To accomplish this, I first needed to understand both the assumptions and the possible approaches that the MBI community might take to describe or define an ethics for itself. This understanding emerged in Part I. In Part II, I reviewed the actual practice of the MBIs, and began to identify the unique qualities of relationship and action. All of these qualities flowed from the practice of the pedagogy, moderated through group action. This suggested to me that mindfulness, the pedagogy, and the ethical space are interrelated, and, in fact, identical. I was loath, however, to propose a single theoretical view of the relationship and actions, and so, in Chapter 5, I explored a wide range of potential views. I approached a theory from seven different angles, each offering a singular opportunity for reflection. Then, in Chapter 6, I began to articulate the theory as a three-dimensional model. I defined a dimension comprising three qualities of *doing* (corporeality, contingency, cosmopolitanism), another dimension of three qualities of *non-doing* (non-pathologizing, non-hierarchical, non-instrumental), and a third dimension, which might be considered a transcendent quality (friendship) that suffuses the whole. I proposed this model, this theory of an ethical space, as an example of what Gergen (2009) calls a first order morality. Recall that in a first order morality, participants construct a way of being together from shared definitions of the good, and a participant dare not transgress, or she is no longer accepted within the group. First order moralities are legion, and therefore change as a participant moves from alignment with a particular group to a different alignment. Each of a participant's

alignments then become potentials within her multi-being, as Gergen describes (2009). Gergen further suggests that this instability of first order moralities may be problematic, because it sets up conflict between different alignments—as one potential judges another, so to speak. There is also the possibility that the ethical space of the MBIs could be defined as a second order morality in Gergen's (2009) terms—a way of coordinating conflicting first order moralities in order to maintain relationships. I will explore this possibility further in the epilogue.

The first order morality view became very useful in Part IV, as I began applying the model of the ethical space to the MBIs. In this view, then, I could say that the practice of the pedagogy is simply what it is, and that the ethical space it comprises is also self-identical. In other words, I did not need to look outside the ethical space to define it or to "prove" its morality. Its transcendent quality of friendship, of mutual well-wishing, would be pleasing to the vast majority of ethicists, whatever their philosophical commitments. To stay a long time, to *steep* in the space, is good and pleasant from the inside view of the first order morality—and from many outside-looking-in views, as well. Nevertheless, as I described, if participants, or even the teacher, find that they cannot stay in the ethical space of the MBIs, but are drawn to align with some other potential of multi-being, the teacher has options to address the emergent situation.

The instability of first order moralities, then, is not so much problematic as problem solving. The teacher may step out of the ethical space of the MBIs into the ethical alignment of her professional identity and its ethical code, which is also sanctioned within the legal system of the broader community. Once in this alignment, the teacher may resolve the emergent situation using the resources of her profession. During this time, neither she nor the group are practicing the pedagogy, and, therefore, are not within the ethical space. If the class is still together when the situation is resolved, it is possible to resume the pedagogy and, thus, the space. Within the MBI community, it is sensible to prefer the potentials of the ethical space to the various possibilities of a "professional" space—most of which are pathologizing, hierarchical, and instrumental, and, as

well, prefer intellectualization to corporeality, prefer to drive change rather than be open to contingency, and are willing to impose a particular meaning rather than respect what is created in the moment of cosmopolitanism. Thus, the more an MBI gathering has steeped in the ethical space, the greater the potential for staying in it. This would appear to be a shared good for both teachers and participants.

As to the urgencies of the MBI community, this essay adds to the dialogue on both the definition of mindfulness and the development of new teachers. It does this through a central insight: from a relational being point of view, the practice of the pedagogy, its product of mindfulness, and the ethical space in which it happens *are identical*. We might say, "It is what it is."

This brings a different kind of clarity to the search for a definition of mindfulness. Mindfulness can then be seen as a relational achievement, a joint action, a confluence. Therefore, we need not see it as a state or trait of one person, nor measure it in isolation, nor suggest that people grow in mindfulness by practicing alone. We can, instead, locate, assess, and grow it in relationships. The process is only slightly different: emphasizing the connected moments, and capturing their qualities—qualitatively. What is more, when it comes to differentiating the MBIs from other approaches, it is the ethical space in all its ever-shifting detail that makes the MBIs stand out.

Likewise, in teacher development, we can open up new approaches and let go of old fears if we allow the practice of the pedagogy, mindfulness, and the ethical space to simply be what they are, identical relational achievements. As trainees steep in the pedagogy, in the gathering, they will emerge with the potentials of the ethical space. They will know the practice, not from inside themselves, but rather from inside the relationships. Without feeling as if we are neglecting the fabled "inner" dimension, now the community can focus on what can be heard, seen, and felt as we train and evaluate new teachers— who enter into the ethical space with us.

As this essay concludes, I have accomplished almost all that I set out to do. All that remains is to describe how the ethical space may be considered as a second order morality. I shall take this up in the epilogue that follows.

Don't Stop Now
Ongoing Practice as Epilogue

I'm sitting in a chair, practicing mindfulness meditation. I'm in a chair, rather than on a cushion because of a relationship—or many relationships. I spent decades on the floor because that is "how we do it" in the traditions in which I began my study of meditation. I moved to a chair to be kind to myself, which was not an immediate consideration, way back when. Now, entering my sixties, there's sense to it, and a story behind it. A teacher on a retreat described her move to a chair as being kind. I heard that as I was beginning to steep in MBI gatherings, where those training me were solicitous of comfort. The world turned, or at least indexed a click or two…

I reach out and start the timer, because a meditation instructor, who became a friend, impressed me with how important regularity and time boundaries are. I learn through time…

Feeling into the body in the chair. These sensations are what is happening in this moment. I'm turned towards them, or even into them. Arms coming toward rest, I notice the long traveling as I give myself to gravity, which idea and phrase come from an ongoing mentoring in Sensory Awareness practice—a Western grown tradition of mindful exploration. Just noticing and knowing "how it is" now, as we say in that discourse. Legs and back as well, traveling. And the face—a favorite focus of a friend and mentor in MBI teaching. I let the social muscles come to rest as I think of her. The only tension is an appropriate "hint of a smile," which she loves to recommend…

Within the ellipses, noticing and knowing. Within all the traveling I isolate a spot beneath my left shoulder blade that is hurting. Turning towards the

experience, I put out the welcome mat, as Jon and Saki say; being friendly toward what is already here. Renewing my smile. I'm in the gathering, alone…

I make space around that shoulder spot. Space, since I've heard Stephen Batchelor talk, has become for me not some imaginary volume, but rather the medieval Indian philosopher's definition of "lack of resistance." Traveling, traveling…

In the ellipses, traveling and sensing. And in all the welcoming space, I find that hurt again and wish and want it gone. So, my traveling becomes a flight from rest…

I try a small move, then a big one… In the ellipses, the shoulder spot is still there, big as a dollar coin, blue with a purple edge, a burning cool. I know it well; it's a friend. I recall what a friend said about mindfulness last night. It's like watching a baseball game in which your team is not playing. Nothing is at stake, so every moment, every play, can be vividly clear, moving, artistic… Just watching, without the burden of wanting…

Within the ellipses, watching…and…I find myself wanting… Traveling in reverse and tuning up in sensation, emotion, and thinking… I find myself demanding grace, to put it in words I used with a spiritual director, in yet another discourse. Demand or surrender: two sides of the human coin of suffering—dollar sized for me. My decision: making space for grace…

In the ellipses, I soften; perhaps "the I" *softens… For description of the ongoing flow of these ellipses, right now I rely on a friend I do not know, although his voice is in my ear—I read Don Cupitt, the Anglican priest and nontheistic theologian, and make sense of no sensible meaning… He says, "In prolonged meditation we learn to relax the linguistic special training and the effort of will by which in ordinary speech substances are composed, hierarchies of power are confirmed, and value-scales established. The metaphysical structures crumple and collapse downwards. Everything slowly subsides and flattens out into a depthless continuum of flowing meanings. The 'I' melts down into the continuum, and so too does God… One begins to feel happier and happier as one dissolves. That's meditation: the flattening out and the dissemination* heal the mind. Try *it!" (1998, p.132).*

Traveling goes in the direction of gravity again. As does meaning. And time. The bell rings and shines in the hint of a smile. This moment is friendly— even friendly toward my shoulder spot, as I notice its insistence.

The Potential of Second Order Morality

This vignette is one way of considering second-order morality. Inside my highly populated meditation, there was conflict with the coin of suffering, and potential conflict among the friends and mentors from competing discourses who are present silently or boldly as I sit. It was all contained in and by the practice of the pedagogy, which produces mindfulness and the ethical space. Within the ethical space we produced together, this gathering found peace.

In Gergen's (2009, 2011) purposefully sketchy definition of second order morality, its practice involves *relational responsibility*—being responsible for the relationships of the gathering, as it were, rather than with each person. It is not about care of self and other. It is not something individuals do. It is, like the full engagement with the pedagogy of mindfulness, a relational achievement. It is finding a way for the group to go on together—to coordinate action.

I find Gergen's suggestion that, "One might draw sustenance here from the concept of *kenosis* [a Christian theological concept], in this case the emptying of the self into the process out of which the very self is created" (2011, p.218), to be much aligned with the experience of the gathering. Even in this vignette, as the self melted into the process of the gathering, conflicts were dissolved within the practice of the pedagogy—there was no stepping out.

Second-Order Morality Means No Stepping Out

The seven qualities of the ethical space of the MBIs describe a way of relational responsibility. It is evident in this vignette. My teachers and mentors and friends—who reside within different discourses—helped to keep the practice focused on corporeality, in which there was a dollar-sized potential for conflict. Contingency was the theme—the gathering learns from time. And cosmopolitanism was key to the shifts of ways of going on. No mode, no meaning, neither Buddhist, baseball, theistic, nontheistic, fleshly, or ghostly friendship, was preferred.

All were welcome, in this non-hierarchical space. Nothing was broken, only perceived as such (there was self-subjectification). There was actually nothing to pathologize. In fact, as the practice of the pedagogy

continued, a wholeness was revealed. I merely did what I was doing anyway—practicing the pedagogy, day in, day out—demonstrating the non-instrumental nature of this undertaking. And I stayed in the chair—a relational achievement, a manifestation of friendship.

I'd like to suggest that full engagement of the pedagogy of the MBIs produces mindfulness, the ethical space, and second-order morality. A well steeped teacher and participants, whatever other alignments with conflicting first order moralities they may have, may generate what they need to go on together. The invitation is Cupitt's: "*Try* it!"

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