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„The Other Side of Mindfulness.
Translating Buddhist Meditation into the Modern Clinical Setting“

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Abstract

Buddhist meditation techniques are many, whereby mindfulness is by far the most studied, secularized and popular form of meditation in the contemporary West. Interest in mindfulness meditation skyrocketed in the last decade, accompanied by the ever-growing literature in both scientific and public discourses. The primary concern of this thesis, however, is not to engage directly with these scholarly debates, nor to make judgments on whether these Western adaptations of mindfulness meditation practices are right or wrong, good or bad, faithful or unfaithful to the original Buddhist tradition. Instead, this work is composed to unveil "the other side of mindfulness" through the lens of cultural translation, by tracing the historical dynamics of the translation of certain Buddhist meditation techniques into modern clinical settings. Within this thesis, I will offer detailed accounts on how the *translated*, namely, mindfulness meditation has been selected, simplified, and then codified into a standardized retreat program, which then possesses the potential to move beyond its original social and cultural context. Furthermore, I will show how the *translators*, Kabat-Zinn and the mindfulness teachers, have translated these Buddhist messages into a modern context, into daily language, into scientific epistemological frameworks, and into new economic relations. In this way, I will argue that Kabat-Zinn, despite some of his ground-breaking work, is not as huge an innovator as is often depicted in the discourse. In fact, many of his ideas that were later popularized by the Mindfulness Movement were already present before mindfulness entered the western discourse.

Kurzdarstellung

Von den vielen buddhistischen Meditationsformen, die es gibt, ist die der Achtsamkeit (mindfulness) bei weitem die im Westen populärste und am stärksten säkularisierte und erforschte Meditationsform. Das Interesse an der Achtsamkeitsmeditation ist in den letzten Jahrzehnten sprunghaft angestiegen, begleitet von immer neuen akademischen wie auch populärwissenschaftlichen Veröffentlichungen zum Thema. Das Hauptanliegen dieser Arbeit ist es jedoch nicht, sich mit den akademischen Debatten direkt auseinanderzusetzen und darüber zu urteilen, ob die westlichen Adaptionen der Achtsamkeitsmeditation richtig oder falsch sind, gut oder schlecht oder ob sie die buddhistischen Traditionen authentisch widerspiegeln. Stattdessen zielt dieses Werk darauf, die "andere Seite der Achtsamkeit" durch die Linse der kulturellen Übersetzung offenzulegen, indem die historischen Dynamiken der Übersetzung bestimmter buddhistischer Meditationstechniken in den westlichen medizinischen Rahmen nachgezeichnet werden. In dieser Arbeit werde ich eine detaillierte Darstellung davon geben, wie das Übersetzte, um genau zu sein die Achtsamkeitsmeditation ausgewählt wurde, wie es vereinfacht wurde und wie es in ein standardisiertes Programm zur Entspannungstherapie kodifiziert wurde, und somit das Potential entfaltet, sich aus seinem ursprünglichen socialen und kulturellem Kontext zu lösen. Überdies will ich zeigen, wie die Übersetzer, Kabat-Zinn und seine Achtsamkeitslehrer die buddhistischen Botschaften in einen modernen Kontext, in alltägliche Sprache übersetzt haben und wie sie sie in einen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisrahmen und neue ökonomische Beziehungen eingebettet haben. Damit will ich zeigen, dass Kabat-Zinn, trotz einiger bahnbrechender Arbeiten, nicht der große Erneuerer ist, als der er oft im Diskurs dargestellt wird. Tatsächlich waren viele seiner Ideen, die später als Teil der Achtsamkeitsbewegung weite Popularität erfuhren, bereits präsent, bevor Achtsamkeit Einzug in den westlichen Diskurs erhielt.

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Introduction

It was late October, 2017. After some tedious studies, I went to a lecture on spine health from the perspective of Shaolin Chan medicine ("少林禅医"). It was given by Shi Yanyi ("释延医"), a Chinese monk specializing in acupuncture, at the Shaolin Temple located in the fifth district of Vienna, Austria. At the end of the lecture, I found myself sitting cross-legged with around forty others, mostly Chinese immigrants, counting our breaths in the big dharma hall. This, according to the lecturer, is one of the meditation techniques that belongs to a series of practices called "Mindfulness Meditation" ("正念禅修"). It is presented in a program called Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) developed by prominent American scientist Jon Kabat-Zinn, who with almost four decades of hard work has provided robust scientific ground for these ancient Buddhist meditation techniques. The technique of mindfulness of breathing is taught together with another practice called Standing Position ("站桩"), a foundational practice of Qi Gong ("气功"). These two techniques, along with the third called "Body Scan" which was scheduled to be taught in the successive sessions, are ultimately supposed to help us achieve both physical and mental health as a whole.

This event stands out in my memory, for it reveals the powerful impact of cultural translation, which in this context, denotes a process that has brought certain Buddhist meditation techniques into a secular, medical context, by granting it scientific ground and packaging it into various forms of mindfulness-based intervention programs (MBIs)[1] that ordinary people, with or without religious belief, are easily able to access. The impact of such practice is profound. On the one hand, it alters the public perception of meditation, from something alien, bizarre, and dubious, to something scientific, healthy, and fashionable. In this way, Buddhist meditation has made its way

[1] There are different ways to label these psychotherapeutic programs. Alternatively, when it moves beyond the scope of psychological interventions and is applied to other fields such as education and business, it has also been called MBPs (Mindfulness-Based Programs) (see for example Crane et al. 2017). In this thesis I use the abbreviation MBI for these mindfulness-based programs, since the primary focus is mindfulness' clinical applications.

into mainstream Western society in the form of mindfulness, and has penetrated almost all social sectors ranging from health care, primary and secondary education, higher education, to business, and military services in North America. Now, it is even transported back into its original Asian cultures with a new scientific charm.

Buddhist meditation techniques are many, whereby mindfulness is by far the most studied, secularized and popular form of meditation in the contemporary West[2]. Interests in mindfulness meditation skyrocketed in the last decade, accompanied by the ever-growing literatures in both scientific and public discourses. However, this short thesis does not possess the ambition to cover the whole Mindfulness Movement, since its great diversity would render every attempt to make a general comment in the length of a master thesis an "over-generalization." Similarly, some sophisticated arguments made in the discipline of psychology and neuroscience are beyond the scope of my current academic training. Thus, the object of observation here is limited to the emergence of the "medicalization of mindfulness."

"Medicalizing mindfulness" is a term used by Jeff Wilson in his book Mindful America (2014). He defines it as a process where mindfulness was transformed from "a set of beliefs and practices related to supernatural forces and posthumous existence" in Asia, into "a psychological technique that provides scientifically verifiable physical and mental results," as "a strategy to deliver the alleged benefits of meditation to the widest possible client audience" (Wilson 2014, 76). Medicalization, framed by sociologist Peter Conrad, refers to "defining a problem in medical terms, usually as an illness or disorder or using a medical intervention to treat it" (Conrad 2005, 3). This process is pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn's ground-breaking work Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program developed in the 1970s, as the prototype of all subsequent mindfulness-based intervention programs (MBIs).

Kabat-Zinn frequently quotes David Bohm, one of the most significant theoretical physicists in America who states that,

> "the words 'meditation' and 'medicine' come from the same Indo-European root, which means 'to measure,' in the Platonic sense of every-

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[2] Some historians have a problem with the usage of the term "East" and "West" as two entities vaguely opposing each other, since the boundary between the two is never clearly defined. Yet these usages are common in the mindfulness discourse. In this essay I frequently use the word "West" and "Western society" mainly to refer to Europe and North America. In the context of medicalization, I pay special attention to the two English speaking Western countries: the United States and partially Britain. I also use the word "East" which denotes regions that have been practicing Buddhism before the 19th century, such as India, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar.

> thing having its own right inward measure. Medicine is the restoring of right inward measure or balance when it's disrupted, and meditation is the direct perceiving or right, inward measure in all phenomena" (Kabat-Zinn and Davidson 2011, 36).

This statement has successfully grounded meditation from a non-Western source within the Western tradition and established an intimate relation between meditation and medicine. Medicalization of mindfulness denotes a process of translating specific Buddhist meditation techniques into modern clinical settings. The reason behind the choice of medicalization of mindfulness as the main target for observation is that it has played a vital role in bringing mindfulness to the modern West. The therapeutic application of mindfulness meditation has yielded great data which provides scientific ground for its countless health benefits. This has opened up a wide spectrum for further development. In the scientific realm, it has challenged the traditional understanding of the mind-body relation. Besides this, it has also renewed our understanding of the human brain (for example Davidson and Dahl 2017). For Buddhist communities, mindfulness meditation has offered new interpretation and legitimation for traditional teachings, which has enabled new self-understanding and self-representations. Moreover, these scientific verifications of mindfulness, function as a bridge and further facilitate the exchanges between the Buddhist traditions and the mainstream Western society. The psychotherapeutic form of mindfulness has become the golden standard as well as the gatekeeper for these cultural exchanges. Alternative forms of meditation techniques and related philosophies (Buddhist and non-Buddhist) are more easily accessible to Western society if they are in line with the ideas and practices promoted by the medicalization of mindfulness.

While first introduced by Buddhists and presented as the essence of Buddhist meditation, mindfulness today has moved far beyond this very tradition. This means that, though Buddhism has discovered mindfulness and the tradition has preserved practices in establishing mindfulness, it can no longer claim any authority over it. Today, mindfulness finds new home in psychological and neuroscientific theories (Davids and Thompson 2015: Carmody 2015; Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991) and appears as purely secular and scientific to the general public. Moreover, as commented by Robert Sharf, "Catholic monastics, Jewish rabbis, Episcopal priests, yoga instructors, martial arts teachers, and countless others can be found touting mindfulness as the essence of their own spiritual traditions" (Sharf 2014, 942). Finally, mindfulness has also been transforming every aspect of our ordinary lives, from eating, to walking, to sex, to pregnancy and parenting, to alternative ways of organizing the nation state. These later developments,

summed up as the "Mindful Movement"[3], though diverse in form, have only been able to take place because of the foundation laid by the medicalization of mindfulness process. A good and thorough understanding of the medicalization of mindfulness can offer us great insights into the ongoing fad in modern society.

This thesis is composed based on the established intellectual discourses on the medicalization of mindfulness, with special attention to the relationship between the clinical appropriation of mindfulness and its Buddhist roots. The central focus of this small piece of work is the dynamics of how ideas and practices from an original Buddhist context gained enough mobility to travel across the world, and integrate well into another society, from a historical perspective.

Meditation and Mindfulness

To begin with, it is very important to clarify two key terms that are frequently adopted interchangeably in the modern clinical context—meditation and mindfulness. What do they mean? And are they the same?

It is rather difficult to define what meditation is. As Bhante Henepola Gunaratana—a meditation master and the author of the classic bestseller *Mindfulness in Plain English*—puts it, "[m]editation is a word, and words are used in different ways by different speakers" (Gunaratana 2002, 23). To quote the renowned Western Buddhist as well as long-term meditation practitioner Alan Wallace, "[m]editation is a broad term. It just means messing around with your mind in a sustained way" (Wallace 2011, 146). It is also a way to become familiar with one's mind. For the extremely influential yet equally controversial Tibetan master Chögyam Trungpa, meditation is "the creation of the space which we are able to explore and undo our neurotic games, our self-deceptions, our hidden fears and hope" (Trunpa 1976).

To put it more precisely, while looking into text sources, meditation is a

[3] It is also packaged as the "Mindfulness Revolution," where the medicalization process is one of its integral parts. Besides this, it also includes processes which aim to transform individual life as well as modern society as a whole through the application of mindfulness. It is still an ongoing process.

close translation for the Pāli term *bhāvana*[4] (Sanskrit, also *bhāvana*), which literally means "cultivation," or "bringing into being." In a more limited sense it denotes "the sustained development of particular state of mind" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 112). These mental practices contain a wide range of approaches transmitted in the major three Buddhist schools: the Theravāda (a Pāli word meaning "School of the Elders"), the Mahāyāna (a Sanskrit word meaning the "Great Vehicle") and the Vajrayāna (a Sanskrit word for the "Adamantine Vehicle," or "Thunderbolt Vehicle") through a special teacher-student relationship. In the Buddhist context, meditation can also be the translation of *jhāna* (Skt. *dhyāna*), a deep state of meditative absorption, that is featured as a "state of perfect equanimity and awareness" through the attainment of single-pointed concentration" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 383; Vetter 1988, 5); or *vipassanā* (Skt. *vipaśyanā*), the practice of liberating insights into the nature of reality, which is believed to eradicate the roots of all suffering (Pāli *dukkha;* Skt. *duḥkha*).

Mindfulness is a frequent translation for the Pāli word "*sati*" (Skt. *smṛti*). It first appeared in Thomas W. Rhys Davids' translation work in the late nineteenth century. The original meaning of *sati* is "to recollect" and "to keep in mind." Traditionally, there are various objects to be kept in mind in the cultivation of the Buddhist path. In *The Path of Purification*, (Pāli *Visuddhimagga*), a classic Buddhist doctrine composed in approximately 5th century Sri Lanka, Buddhaghoṣa listed ten objects to be recollected in the mind: the Buddha ("the Awakened One"), the Dhamma (Skt. *dharma*, "the Teach-

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[4] Pāli is an Indo-Aryan dialect, which is "the canonical language of the Theravāda school of mainstream Buddhism" (Buswell and Lopez 2013, 612). It is close to the vernacular spoken by Buddha in his preaching. Sanskrit is another important source language for early Buddhist scriptures that are common to all the three major schools of Buddhism (as well as other Indian religions). The reason for citing the Pāli and Sanskrit forms of the words, is that many Buddhist concepts find no proper counterpart in English and are thus often left untranslated in the current intellectual debates. A certain level of familiarity with the original form is needed. Besides this, in the context of cultural translation, it is difficult to have a clear discussion about certain terms without referring to their original forms. One English term could serve as the translation for multiple Buddhist terms in Pāli and Sanskrit. In the same way, classic Buddhist terminologies presented in Pāli and Sanskrit often have multiple connotations which need to be translated into different English words. This gives rise to great confusion and complexity. In popular discussions, certain Buddhist terminologies are popularized with their Pāli spellings (particularly if the author follows strictly Theravāda tradition) and some are recognized in their Sanskrit forms (i.e., concepts that are common for all three schools). Since Pāli and Sanskrit closely resemble each other, I try to cite both forms in this thesis to avoid misunderstandings and further complications. I cite only other versions of the related terms (i.e. Chinese, Tibetan) when necessary. Though they are equally important, they do not contribute directly to the main topic of this work. In my writing, I mostly use the Sanskrit forms of these key concepts, but they may appear in Pāli in the quotations.

ings"), the *Saṅgha* (Skt. *saṃgha,* "the Community"), as well as virtue, generosity, deities, death, body, breathing and peace. Besides, "right mindfulness*"* (Pāli *sammā-sati;* Skt. *samyak-smṛti*) is also listed as one of "the Eightfold Path" (Pāli *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Skt. *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) and "the Seven Factors of Enlightenment" (Pāli *satta bojjhaṅgā*, or *satta sambojjhaṅgā*; Skt. sapta *bodhyanga*). Finally, the four applications of mindfulness include the contemplations of body, feelings, mental states, as well as *dharmas*[5] ("phenomena").

On the technical level, the contemporary usage of mindfulness is mostly associated with two of the ten recollections, namely, mindfulness of breathing and mindfulness occupied with body. In a more general sense, mindfulness is used to denote a kind of lucid awareness inherent in all of us, that "arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 1994). Particularly in the context of MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction), mindfulness has been adopted as an umbrella term, not only referring to bare awareness and its technical applications, but also pointing to the entire *Buddhadharma* ("the teaching of the Buddha") which highlights the "universal lawfulness" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 290). This I will discuss in details in the following chapters.

This clarification is brief and there are more aspects of these two terms that have not been touched upon[6]. Yet it may give a taste of the complexity of these terms that enables us to move beyond the public image and even fantasies constructed over the last half century, which have equaled the two with each other. Prior to the current Mindfulness Movement, the popular Western perception of Buddhism was that Buddhism is a rational philosophical system, which had been scientifically verified; now it is widely acknowl-

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[5] *Dharma* (Pāli *dhamma*) is notorious for its multiple connotations. It is generally adopted in the mindfulness context referring to "the teaching of Buddha," as well as "the universal lawfulness," yet when it is in plural form, it denotes to "phenomena".

[6] There are some complexities in the translation of the word. It is necessary to notice that *sati* (Skt. *smṛti*) has been translated not simply as mindfulness, but also "watchfulness," "contemplations," "remembrance," "recollection," It has been also translated as "meditation." Moreover, not one Pāli/Sanskrit word has been translated as mindfulness. Other words such as *anusati* (Skt. *anusmṛti*), *appamada* (Skt. *apramada*) may also be translated as "mindfulness" depending on the context. In the modern West, mindfulness can be used to refer to both the meditation on concentration and tranquility, as well as insight meditation (which will be introduced later in following chapters). Since I am not a professional philologist, I will not recount all the details of the terminologies. It is simply important to keep in mind that many different associations have been packed into the term "mindfulness." A number of brilliant works have been done in this field, for example: *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism* (1992), a wonderful collection of essays edited by Janet Gyatso, and two beautiful pieces written by Rupert Gethin (2011; 2015).

edged that the heart of Buddhism is meditation, and the essence of meditation is mindfulness[7]. Before diving into the discussion of the medicalization of mindfulness, I will digress a little bit to briefly trace the construction of the Western reception of Buddhism, in order to situate the medicalization of mindfulness as an integral part of the general developments of "Buddhist modernism."

The Reception of Buddhism in the West

Within this article, I have traced the cultural translation of Buddhist meditation techniques from its original Asian context to Western clinics, as part of the general development of "Buddhist modernism" (McMahan 2008). even though its current development has moved far beyond the realm of this very tradition, it is very relevant to this small piece of work.

"Buddhist modernism" comprises the "forms of Buddhism that have emerged out of an engagement with the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of modernity"—monotheism, scientific naturalism, and rationalism (McMahan 2008, 6, 10-13). Specifically, it is

> "a revival movement spanning a number of geographical areas and schools, a movement that reinterpreted Buddhism as a 'rational way of thought' that stressed reason, meditation, and the rediscovery of canonical texts. It also deemphasized ritual, image worship, and 'folk beliefs and practices and was linked to social reform and nationalist movements, especially in Burma and Ceylon (today Sri Lanka)"'(MaMahan 2008, 6; also Bechert 1966; Berkwitz 2006).

Most of the popular ideas circulating within the Mindfulness Movement are the direct descendants of these early constructions.

The Western discovery of Buddhism can roughly be traced to the sixteenth century. The first historical actors who actively worked with this tradition were the missionaries. The translations and interpretations (as well as misinterpretations) of Buddhism has been a long and dynamic process, which has eventually led to the invention of a single "Oriental philosophy" presented in the West (Urs App 2012). In some cases, local scholars chose to mobilize their intellectual resources to put Buddhism forward as a scientific

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[7] Within this article, I pay most attention to how *vipassanā* (insight) meditation has been taken from the Theravāda lineages, and their direct impact on the later Mindfulness Movement. This may give the impression that Theravāda has been the only tradition to introduce Buddhist meditation to the West. However, meditation was also emphasised in Zen and Tibetan Buddhism when coming to the West and Zen and Tibetan forms of meditation have also been studied extensively in modern clinics and laboratories of brain science.

religion in reaction to the missionaries' attack on Buddhism as a form of "idolatry," or superstition. Meanwhile, its European enthusiasts have also stated the compatibility between Buddhism and science in order to "exoticize" the latter (Lopez 2008, xi.). Some intellectuals would go one step further and argue that Buddhism should not even be labeled as "religion"—a category constructed based on the European experience modelled on Christianity—but as a form of "science" (Lopez 2012). In essence, Buddhism should be regarded as the science of mind (McMahan 2008, 206). This statement leaves a long-term imprint in history. Today, it still operates as the fundamental assumption guiding the works of many prominent scientists at the crossroads of Buddhism and science, where mindfulness is one of the major areas (for example Kabat-Zinn and Davidson 2011; Wallace 2007; Zajonc 2004).

The lumping together of Buddhism and science is a deliberate process which has lasted for more than a hundred years[8]. Parallel to the attempts to promote Buddhism's compatibility with science, are the efforts to understand Buddhism as a system of philosophy (for example Bayly 2004 Ch.9). Since the late 1860s, Buddhist philosophy became fashionable in the intellectual circles of Europe and North America. The academic inquiry into Buddhism started with the construction of a historical Buddha in India out of the manuscripts collected from the colonies. These researchers further directed scholarly interest towards the Theravāda school of Buddhism in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, which by then was perceived as the most faithful and original form of the tradition. Until the late twentieth century, the academic study of Buddhism was largely text-based (Lopez, 2012; Masuzawa 2005; King 1999; Clarke 1997). Though this approach has already been heavily criticized and thoroughly reflected upon within the circle of scholars in Buddhist studies, in the current polemics on mindfulness, we still see scholars frequently go back to these original Sanskrit or Pāḷi sources as an ultimate authority to legitimize their views (for example Murphy 2016).

The esoteric tradition of Europe also played an important role in constructing the Western reception of Buddhism. Though the Theosophists (an influential esoteric society in the late 19th and early 20th century) were primarily preoccupied with a clear doctrine, they were also interested in the altered state of consciousness as well as the supernormal powers ascribed in the Buddhist traditions. Their entanglement with Buddhism can be traced to the momentum event on May 25th 1880, when Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) converted to Bud-

[8] This process has been brilliantly traced by historian Donald Lopez Jr. in his book *Buddhism and Science* (2008) and on the construction of Western reception of Buddhism, see Lopez, *The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life* (2012).

dhism in Ceylon following the traditional custom. Yet, this did not mean that they had taken the Three Jewels, namely, the *Buddha*, the *dharma*, and *saṃgha*, as their sole refuge. Instead, the conversion to Buddhism was an attempt to recognize Buddha as one of their Master-Adepts in the esoteric system and include Buddhism as part of the wisdom tradition of Theosophy. Olcott later recounted, "[o]ur Buddhism was that of the Master-Adept Gautama Buddha, which was identically the Wisdom Religion of the Aryan Upanishads, and the soul of all the ancient world-faith" (Campbell 1980, 83). Western metaphysical traditions, such as Theosophy, Swedenborgianism, Transcendentalism or New Thought, chose to approach Buddhism as one of the gateways towards a universal truth, and place it parallel to other spiritual traditions such as Hinduism and Sufism, thus ignoring the particularity claimed by this very tradition. This perennial attitude prevails in the current Mindfulness Movement, which sometimes greatly annoys certain serious Buddhist practitioners (for example Bodhi 2016 and Hickey 2012).

Promoted as a science of mind from the East (today part of the "contemplative science"), Buddhism's engagement with the West's science of the mind, namely, psychology, begins with the work of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) and Eric Fromm (1900-1980). They both belong to the tradition of psychoanalysis and were greatly impacted by Dr. D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) —who introduced Zen (Chinese: 禅*chán*, Korean: *Seon*, Vietnamese: *Thiền*), a major branch in Mahāyāna Buddhism—into American society. Jung was also fascinated by the detailed description of the intermediate states after death accounted in Tibetan Buddhism through the work translated by Walter Evans-Wentz (1878-1965) in the late 1920s. Jung and Fromm's works have inspired a fruitful discourse between Buddhism and psychology. Yet the practice of meditation was not yet on the radar of ordinary Americans until the "Zen Boom" after the Second World War. In the late 70s, Buddhism re-entered psychology in the field of clinical psychotherapy, with the emphasis on mindfulness meditation developing in the revival movements of Theravāda Buddhism in the twentieth century.

All the above developments constitute the intellectual background out of which Jon Kabat-Zinn developed his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, marking the official beginning of the medicalization of mindfulness and very much guiding and guarding the whole process ever since. The great success of MBSR has inspired a series of other mindfulness-based intervention programs. The most famous mindfulness-based programs are, for example Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT Segal, Wiliams, and Teasdale), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT Hayes), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT Linehan). Within this thesis, I pay most attention to the analysis of

Kabat-Zinn's development MBSR program, since it has been the major source of inspiration for other Mindfulness-Based psychological intervention programs and has become the golden standard of the field.

Scientific research, mostly focusing on verifying the efficacy of the program, has been conducted mostly in the field of psychology to backup these innovations in inception. In this last decade, with the maturation of brain science technology, scientists are better able to trace the direct impact of meditation on structural changes in the brain (Goleman and Davidson 2017; Hölzel 2010a; 2010b). Meditation is no longer a myth but a cultivation process with tangible effects such as "altered traits" in the human brain. The alliance between psychotherapy and neuroscience further promote the popularity of mindfulness practices in mainstream society (for example Goleman and Davidson 2017).

Discourse on Mindfulness

The interest in mindfulness which skyrocketed in the last decade, is reflected in rapidly increasing academic publications on the topic. In psychology, several journals have dedicated special issues to mindfulness in order to clarify the large varieties of understandings and practices in the field[9]. For decades, mindfulness had largely been practiced in clinical settings without proper acknowledgement of Buddhism by most psychotherapists. After the Buddhist root of mindfulness was unveiled in the early 2000s, more and more psychotherapists dived into the study of Buddhism. Their discussions on whether the current clinical application of mindfulness reflects that of the Buddhist traditions, resulted in the special issue of the journal *Contemporary Buddhism* published in May 2011. This marked the beginning of an irreversible step which made mindfulness an object of interdisciplinary research, joined not only by psychologists and neuroscientists, but also by scholars in religious studies, history, sociology, anthropology and philosophy (for example McMahan and Braun 2017).

The peer-reviewed academic journal, *Mindfulness*, first issued in 2010, has become the very platform displaying new research findings as well as facilitating interdisciplinary discussions. The number of publications on mindfulness has grown so fast that they have given rise to the need for a monthly

[9] For example, *Psychological Inquiry* 18, no.4 in 2007; *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 65 no.6, *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy* 23 no.3, *The Humanistic Psychologist* 37 no.2 in 2009. After 2009, perhaps as the result of the maturation of the field, there are more handbooks than special issues in this field.

bulletin of mindfulness research review[10]. Research meetings have been held around the globe. Every year, huge, brick-like handbooks on mindfulness are being edited and compiled. The major theme of the handbooks reflect the general development of the discourse.

Firstly, a discussion about the clinical applications of mindfulness is presented in the *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness* (Didonna, 2009), with a foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn, focusing on concepts, practice, assessment, and specific cases in its clinical applications. At the time of its release, the book had only been designed to introduce mindfulness to psychotherapists as a promising new approach that could alleviate many physical and psychological symptoms. In 2014 and 2015, *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Mindfulness* edited by Amanda le, Ngnoumen, and Langer, *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research and Practice* edited by Kirk Warren Brown, and *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation* edited by Ostafin, Robinson, and Meier were compiled to face the increasing engagement and diversification of mindfulness research in the scientific realm, where not only more attention was being paid to the Buddhist root of mindfulness and the differences and similarities of its practice between East and West, but also a richer conceptualization and theorization of mindfulness in psychology and neuroscience was being offered. These books also include specific applications of mindfulness outside its clinical context, such as its integration into educational programs[11].

In May 2011, the special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* edited by J. Mark G. Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn dedicated to the Buddhist foundation of clinical mindfulness marked the beginning of an intensive interdisciplinary, intercultural, and inter-epistemological conversation. It further promoted engagement in the process of translation and back-translation between Buddhism and the medicalized form of mindfulness. In 2015, the handbook of *Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness* (2015) compiled by Shonin, van Gordon, and Singh, was published in order to systematically introduce some important Buddhist ideas as the foundation for its modern clinical adaptations.

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[10] American Mindfulness Research Association. "Mindfulness Research Monthly." http://goamra.org/publications/mindfulness-research-monthly/.

[11] This is a slightly arbitrary generalization, since each handbook certainly has quite a different focus and emphasis. I group them together here since they have all been compiled in order to face the complexity and the increasing spectrum of mindfulness research. They are also of course compiled in order to claim authority over mindfulness. The contemporary clinical application of mindfulness, as described in this article, has mostly been promoted by Kabat-Zinn. While Kabat-Zinn brought forth the most popular form of mindfulness we see today, it is has also been stated that Ellen Langer also introduced the term mindfulness independently in the field of psychology. See for example *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Mindfulness* (2014), and *Critical Mindfulness: Exploring the Langerian Models* (2016).

Since 2014, a kind of intellectual skepticism emerged out of the growing public fascination with mindfulness. The scholarly debates on "McMindfulness," various critiques, and critiques of the critiques of mindfulness from cultural and social perspectives have been crystalized in *Handbook of Mindfulness: Cultural, Context, and Social Engagement* (2016) edited by Purser, Forbes, and Burke. The discussion on ethics later developed into the *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions* (2017) edited by Monteiro, Compson, and Muster. Collections such as *What's Wrong with Mindfulness (And What Isn't): Zen Perspectives* (2016) edited by Rosenbaum, and the *Handbook of Zen, Mindfulness, and Behavioral Health* (2017) edited by Masuda have revealed some interesting aspects of mindfulness from the Zen perspective.

Needless to say, there are also other aspects that the central themes of these handbooks do not cover. The above is just one way to illustrate the trajectory of the development of the intellectual discussion on mindfulness. While most academic debates deem Kabat-Zinn a brave innovator who has not only successfully introduced mindfulness meditation into clinical settings, but also greatly transformed it, the modest attempt of this thesis is to offer an alternative way of understanding the clinical applications of mindfulness from a historical perspective. In other words, I will not engage directly in the debate on whether Kabat-Zinn's work is a watering down of Buddhist teachings, or, whether this over-simplified and decontextualized (for some, "distorted") version of mindfulness would eventually do more harm than good. Instead, my main argument is that Kabat-Zinn, despite some of his ground-breaking work, is not as huge an innovator as is often implied in the discourse. In fact, many of his ideas that were later popularized in the Mindfulness Movement did not come out of a vacuum but find their conceivable predecessors in the course of history.

The Benefit of A Global History Perspective

Facing the ever-growing popularity of mindfulness in our society, large amounts of effort have been devoted to discussions, clarifications, critiques, meta-critiques, and even critiques of the critiques on different levels and from various perspectives of mindfulness (Purser, Forbes, and Burke 2016). However, most scholarly debates, when concerning the relation between mindfulness and its Buddhist roots, tend to focus their attention on comparisons: they take certain authorities to represent the orthodox Buddhist ideas, and compare these ideas with what has been articulated in modern clinical settings. This approach may artificially create an authoritative form of Buddhism, as if to suggest that there have been unified agreements amongst all

Buddhist schools or even amongst different Buddhist scholars from the same school. Yet there has never been a unified, timeless, pure, and authentic form of Buddhism (Dunne 2015), and there is no authority to which one can easily appeal in order to legitimize one's own truth claims.

This is not to say that there is no value in such a comparative approach. As a novice in this field, it is even difficult for me to appreciate the complete depth and beauty of these insights generated through decades of serious learning and practical work presented in the current scholarly debates. Here I simply propose an additional historical dimension, where few great works have already been done. Bringing meditation from its Asian context to the West is a long and dynamic process. Ideas that have been promulgated within the Mindfulness Movement, are not fixed and timeless, but contain traceable evolutionary trajectory. So do their counterparts in Buddhism. We shall not compare the two without looking into the historical development, which has actually enabled one to transform into the other. The central focus of this thesis is to see how ideas travel across cultures.

The scope of this work is global in nature, but the research limits itself primarily to how mindfulness has reached and been appropriated in North America. This is because the United States has been hitherto the leading actor in the Mindfulness Movements and the medicalization process. Mindfulness has penetrated American society much more than other Western countries. It has thus evoked sound intellectual discussions and research. Britain has also played an important role in the whole process. British scholars made great contributions not only in the academic debates but also in their development of mindfulness-based intervention programs and high-quality scientific research on this issue. There is also lots of exchange and cooperation between these two English-speaking countries.

The aim of this work is not to engage directly with these discussions and make truth claims, or judgments over whether these adaptations are right or wrong, good or bad, faithful or unfaithful. Rather, here I try to deconstruct the public perception coming out of the medicalization process through reconstructing how this perception has come into being. As a result, this discursive practice has fundamentally reshaped the Western reception of Buddhism, as

> "what Buddhism seems to offer American society is primarily mindfulness, and what mindfulness appears to be is primarily a set of therapeutic techniques for managing stress and similar issues. More to the point, Buddhism appears simply to be mindfulness, and mindfulness is a scientifically verified, non-supernatural method of healing" (Wilson 2014, 103).

The global history perspective goes one step further than tracing one's past. It embraces more conceptualization and incorporates more sociological and anthropological theories than has been done in classic historiography. It is a huge phenomenon as well as a fascinating theme for our time to observe how ideas travel across borders—how certain ideas and practices gained mobility within one cultural context and brought into another, who were the active agents and what are the mechanisms that select, transmit and transform the message, and how these processes have reshaped the self-understanding of the traditional as well as the recipient society. I will use theories of cultural translation to shed light on our understanding of the whole process. The rich details of this process have in return, provided us with fresh insights into the phenomenon of cultural translation, which prevails in our contemporary globalized world.

In the first chapter I will briefly introduce the theories of cultural translation, as the basic lens through which I have organized my materials. In the second chapter I will introduce a few modernist attempts prior to the invention of MBSR, and try to answer the following questions: (1) how has the practice of meditation been selected in Asia as the way to preserve the Buddhist teachings and later on, to spread it overseas? (2) How have the techniques been simplified and formalized into a specific package for transmission? (3) How have these ideas and practices been received and further appropriated in the recipient society? (4) Who are the translators and what are their main motivations? And last but not least, (5) who or what are the authorities that guard the authenticity of the original message when it has undergone rapid change while crossing borders?

In the third chapter I will recount the development of MBSR, the thoughts and concerns for its creation, its translation of foundational Buddhist teachings into daily language through direct meditative experience; its translation of mindfulness into a mainstream medical framework and into scientific epistemology; as well as its intriguing relation with Buddhism. In Chapter four I will dedicate some pages to the issue of "second-person perspective" in the MBI programs. Mindfulness teachers, who take the role of *dharma* teachers in traditional Buddhist settings, are given the task of, as well as permission for, intensive translation of Buddhist tenets into daily Western language in their respective MBSR classes. The emphasis on the "second-person perspective" in the medicalization of mindfulness process is rather new and distinctive to the conventional model of cultural translation. It also deepens our understanding of the particular approach used by MBSR and other MBIs to cope with the issue of bridging between the epistemologies of eastern contemplative traditions and Western science.

The primary goal of this work is to offer a better understanding of the

medicalization of mindfulness process through the investigation of a single case—the development of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program, taking it as a work of cultural translation across cultural contexts, and examining the actors and interesting dynamics between Buddhism—as mindfulness' historical root—and it modern representations.

Chapter One

Globalization and Cultural Translation

Cultural translation is the theoretical foundation for the investigation of this work. It is one important aspect in the globalization of cultural forms and practices. Yet a cultural translation does not happen simply as we open a dictionary, find the entry and put whatever is there on paper. It does not take place merely on the intellectual level, rather, the translation has to be lived, experienced and explored in a new cultural condition. The translation has always been contested and a balanced effort in the preservation of the original message as well as the adaptations in the new environment is required. It is *alive* in history, for it *evolves* within intellectual discourses. It emerges when needed, transforms when the context changes, and fades away when its duty accomplished. All cultural translations are fluid and temporary. They serve as a bridge between cultures that are not yet capable of fully understanding each other. They demand sophisticated translators with a thorough understanding of the cultural resources on the ground. Cultural translation operates as a creative source for the generation of new forms of hybrid culture. It both grants and deprives identity, causing identities to always be in constant transformation.

Four Dyadic Pairs in Cultural Translation

Anthropologist Tulasi Srinivas has broken down the process of cultural translation into four dyadic conceptual pairs. The first pairs are *cultural awareness* and *cultural disembedding*. First, the members of the original culture, driven

by a sense of being part of a larger world, develop a belief that certain cultural forms possess value beyond their own community and could offer something to communities on the other side of the globe. This requires a degree of reflexive awareness to delimit a part from the whole, and to determine "both which parts are integral to the phenomenon itself and which can be translated" (Srinivas 2010, 331). Thus they consciously disembed these cultural practices from their cultural matrix and make them portable.

The second dyadic pair is that of *codification* and *universalization*. In this stage, the "embedded systems of meaning are simplified and then codified so that they can be made portable and easily understood." In this stage, the cultural form is *disassembled*. It discerns the extrinsic from the intrinsic, discarding the former and retaining the meaning and power of the latter for its legitimacy and authenticity. Reduced to a set of "regulatory principles or patterns of knowledge that is transferable" (Srinivas 2010, 333), these cultural ideas and practices is then powered by the engine of globalization—such as migrations, transnational economic institutions, as well as new technologies—and made able to travel across cultures.

Latching and matching take place at the third conceptual stage of cultural translation, where the codified cultural forms are granted mechanisms for latching that "enable them to match up with the interpretive maps of meaning within other cultures" in the new social context (Srinivas 2010, 335). Hybridity emerges out of this process, where originality and authenticity undergo rapid change. Some societies may have better latching systems than others and may be better at absorbing foreign ideas. The matching can be so effective, that when this newly imported cultural form meets desires in the new context adequately, it can integrate itself as part of the everyday consciousness of the host society. The foreign roots of such ideas or practices maybe then forgotten.

The final stage of cultural translation is conceptualized as *contextualization and reembedding*. According to Srinivas, "[n]ew cultural forms are given new meanings to make them fit seamlessly into the cultural of reception, which is itself evolving" (Srinivas 2010, 337). These forms are further transformed either into a form appearing to be strange and exotic, particularly appealing to members of modern capitalist societies (Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973), or it may strike us as "a concordance", in that it can "bring up a cultural resonance in the host society where people remember or think they remember the cultural form" (Srinivas 2010, 338), as something long forgotten, a sense of nostalgia in the receiving culture.

This short account of Srinivas's theory may be reductive, yet her insights shed great light on the process of importing mindfulness into the West via the vehicle of clinical medicine. All these dynamics can be clearly observed

in the development of the modern Mindfulness Movement. In Chapter two I focus mostly on the translation process concerning the first two dyadic pairs, how meditation has been selected and deliberately *disembedded* from its original cultural matrix based on a particular *cultural awareness,* and then how it has been *codified* into a standardized retreat course that is *universally* applicable to people with different backgrounds. And in Chapter three I pay most attention to the last two dyadic pairs, how these insight meditation practices have been *reembedded* in the Western clinical settings through the program of MBSR. The better mindfulness finds its expression in the scientific theories, psychological or neuroscientific, and the better mindfulness embeds itself within Western social settings, the less necessity there is in revisiting its original Buddhist context. However, cultural translation is not just a lineal process and takes place simultaneously in different directions. As Kabat-Zinn puts it, it involves both translation and back-translation between its original context and its host culture, which transforms the self-understandings of both.

Four Essential Elements in Cultural Translation

While reviewing the development of clinical mindfulness, I realized that Srinivas's theory is helpful but not enough. Apart from theorizing cultural translation into four progressive steps, it might better clarify the complexity of the case through identifying four essential elements which contribute to the success of the translation. These are: the *translators*, the *translated*, the mechanism that ensures *authenticity*, and the mechanism which provides *authority*. The later two—authenticity and authority—are central themes resurfacing again and again in all mindfulness discussions.

First and foremost, the *translators* in the context of mindfulness are mostly active agents embodying the first person meditation experience, ready to bring it out of its textual source and its religious context, and express it to a different audience with diverse needs, in a language that is familiar to this new audience. Meditative experiences are, to a certain extent, beyond words. It is the targeted audience that determines the direction of its translation. It is the willingness to communicate and meet the desires of their audience that motivates the translators to translate. The translators are sometimes scientists who translate the meditative experience into scientific data, evaluating and theorizing it. They investigate the first-person experience by measuring it with third-person objective approaches, and offer new scientific explanations of the experience. These translations are generally more appealing and convincing to the public who worship science as the ultimate authority in our modern time. In the case of clinical mindfulness, science's capacity to verify

meditation experience has made it an authority other than the tradition which itself transmitted meditative instructions.

On the other hand, the translators are also teachers who transmit their meditative experience directly through a mentor-student, and later, a psychotherapist-client relationship. This is called the "second-person perspective," which plays a peculiar role on the ground-level development of clinical mindfulness. The first generation of mindfulness-intervention programs, such as MBSR, makes intensive meditation training in either *vipassanā* (Pāli word for "insight") meditation or Zen a pre-requisite for its teachers, and yet the teachers are asked not to bring Buddhism into the classroom except "in essence" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 299). They are requested to teach foundational Buddhist tenants such as the Four Truths for the Noble One(s)[12] in the formal curriculum but just as a way to introduce *reality* and to replace the conventional illusionary perceptions that are the roots of suffering. This naturally requires an intensive level of translation. The investigation into the role of teachers in the medicalization process offers us an interesting lens to look into the dynamic relation between tradition and its modern adaptations. I will discuss this in detail in chapter four.

The second vital element in cultural translation is the *translated*. These are messages selected by the prominent members of a given tradition through a reflective awareness of the value of its culture in a global context. In this case, specific forms of meditation had been chosen for lay people in order to enhance their study and preserve the Buddhist tradition which was facing the threat of colonialism in late twentieth century Burma. Later, meditation, in a form stripped away from all associations with rituals or cosmologies, was selected as the ambassador that would represent Buddhism to its foreign students. It was deliberately selected as the good that would be mobilised and exported overseas, where convinced of its value, other groups of agents from the recipient society would embrace it, and it would be actively *recontextualized* in the host culture. The original message is translated into new languages, makes sense in different systems of meaning, and is embedded into new social relations. In this way, meditation has been transmitted and at the same time transformed across cultures.

Thus it is important to have a mechanism that secures the *authenticity* of the message. This is the third vital element for cultural translation. Authen-

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[12] It is better known as "The Four Noble Truths" (Pāli *cattāri ariyasaccāni;* Skt. *catvāri āryasatyāni*). Yet cautious scholars argue that it may be a misreading of the Sanskrit compound. Here "noble" should be regarded as an adjective associated with the person but not the truths. According to Kenneth Roy Norman, *satyas* should not be truth claims made as a set of beliefs; instead, they are that "which is true for those who have attained the status of Noble Ones, or for the Noble One, i.e. the Buddha" (for example William 2002, 41).

ticity contributes to the validity and credibility of the practice. The ultimate source of authenticity that which has been transmitted directly from Buddha. Traditionally, the authenticity of meditation practice preserved in the Buddhist tradition is guaranteed for two reasons: firstly, it has been transmitted for thousand years, practiced and tested by countless practitioners; and secondly, these practitioners have valued and respected the transmission without altering according to their own opinions, nor with the aim of satisfying the needs of their students (Chit Tin and Dhaja 1997, 4-5). This, however, is no longer the case in the medicalization process, for clinical mindfulness has moved beyond the traditional organization of ideas and practices. Both its teachers and students may have difficulty identifying themselves as Buddhists and certain parts of the tradition have been deliberately omitted within its contemporary presentations. This makes it hard to label clinical mindfulness as part of the Buddhist tradition[13].

On the other hand, the authenticity of the practices can also be guaranteed by references to textual sources, in this case, to the classic Buddhist scriptures, such as the Pāḷi Canon. One way to ensure the authenticity of the message is to translate ideas and concepts back into their Buddhist contexts. In this way, we can crosscheck our modern interpretations with those from the past. However, the idea that something stands pure and unchanged in the course of human history is merely an illusion. No tradition can eternally preserve its cultural forms when facing the continuous challenge of a changing temporal spatial context. In fact, Buddhism is famous for its adaptive characteristic when spreading into another social and cultural context. Thus, the transmission of lineage as well as the consultation of authoritative scriptures are two important mechanisms that contribute to the new construction of authenticity in the Mindfulness Movement.

The issue of authenticity is often intertwined with the issue of *authority*. Where authenticity in this context mostly refers to how closely the current translations are faithful to their roots in the past, authority acts as the ultimate source of legitimation for these translations. There are three authorities engaged in the Western adaptation of the mindfulness practice: Buddhism,

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[13] Scholars in religious studies generally agree that the clinical application of mindfulness has moved beyond Buddhism as one organized religion and thus has been completely "secularized". Yet as we will see in the following chapter, one of the popular ideas promoted by the emergence of modern Insight Meditation Movement (which is the direct predecessor of the medicalized form of mindfulness) is that Buddhism should not be counted as a religion. Besides this, some psychotherapists who are at the same time also serious Buddhist practitioners regard mindfulness' psychological applications as another step in the development of Buddhism as a tradition of "the science of mind" (for example Bazzano 2016). In short, the understanding of Buddhism has been challenged and reshaped in the emergence of the Mindfulness Movement.

as the tradition which offers the original message; science, as the vehicle which recodifies the message and appeals to larger audiences; and individual experience, as the moon pointed by the finger, which fundamentally opens up the possibilities for radical new interpretations. Within the development of the modern form of mindfulness and the scholarly polemics which have followed, these three authorities sometimes align , although they appear to be mutually exclusive at other times.

This thesis is neither composed in the order of Srinivas's four dyadic pairs, nor the four vital elements. These are merely conceptual tools that I use to penetrate the complexity of the phenomenon. I will refer to these concepts while tracing the history of mindfulness and in reviewing scholarly discourse.

Chapter Two

Mindfulness on the Move

Within this chapter, I will deconstruct two public perceptions on Buddhist meditation which circulate in the modern Mindfulness Movement. Firstly, that meditation is always a central practice amongst all Buddhist practitioners—for the renouncers as well as for the householders alike; secondly, that the meditation techniques popular today have always remained the same and have been transmitted and preserved in the most authentic form throughout the course of history. My main intention here is to trace some important developments that have served as the foundation for later mindfulness' clinical adaptations. I will pay special attention to how the *translated* has been selected by the *translators*, how the message has been simplified and packed into a universal structure of transmission, and which mechanisms have secured the *authenticity* and *authority* of the translation.

Textual foundation of vipassanā meditation

Scholars often trace the root of the modern Mindfulness Movement to the reform movements which took place in late nineteenth century Burma (today Myanmar). It is part of the Insight Meditation Movement (Vipassanā Movement) which took place in the Theravāda Schools that promoted a set of meditation practices commonly labelled as *vipassanā*. *Vipassanā* is a Pāli word for "insight" (Skt. *vipaśyanā*). It denotes "direct intuition of the three marks of existence that characterize all phenomena (Pāli *tilakkhaṇa*; Skt. *trilakṣaṇa*)": that are impermanence (Pāli *aniccā*; Skt. *anityatā*), suffering (Pāli *dukkhā*; Skt. *duḥkha*), and non-self (Pāli *anattā*; Skt. *anātman*) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 978).

The systems of training in *vipassanā* popularized today by the Insight

Meditation Movement are "modern constructs that do not antedate late nineteenth century Burma," that are "derived from, or at least inspired by, commentarial or scriptural precedents" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 978). These textual foundations of the modern *vipassanā* are primarily: "*Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing*" (Pāli *Ānāpānasati Sutta;* Skt. *Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra*), "*Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness* (Pāli *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta;* Skt. *Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra*)[14] collected in the middle length discourses (Pāli *Majjhima-Nikāya* MN.) in the Pāli canon, as well as *The Path of Purification* (Pāli *Visuddhimagga*), one of the most important works in the Theravāda school outside its Pāli canon.

There is a general concurrence that meditation is an occupation which demands intense engagement. Buddhist meditation can be roughly categorized into two types: the cultivation of concentration (Pāli *samatha* Skt. *śamatha*), and the cultivation of insight, *vipassanā*. The cultivation of concentration is supposed to lead to the stages of meditative absorption (Pāli *jhāna*; Skt. *dhyāna*) and supernormal powers (Pāli *abhiññā*; Skt. *abhijñā*). And the cultivation of insight will lead to enlightenment (Pāli *bodhi*; Skt. *bodhi*) and liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Pāli *nibbāna*; Skt. *nirvāṇa*). Traditionally, they are practiced in succession[15].

For beginners, it is necessary to start one's meditation practice with the practice of calm-abiding meditation. The methods of calm-abiding had already been developed in India prior to the awakening of Buddha. It is generally about fixing one's mind on a certain meditative object—either a form to be seen, a sound to be heard, sensations in the body, or thoughts and feelings in the mind—so that the normally agitated mind can be calmed down. With practice one can gradually fixate the mind on nothing, and relax it into open awareness itself. The most common form of the calm-abiding technique adopted in the Vipassanā Movement is the fixation of one's mind on breathing (Pāli *ānāpānasati*; Skt. *ānāpānasmṛti*). Mindfulness of breathing was also the method adopted by Buddha in his quest for liberation. As described in the scripture,

> "[a]nd, bhikkhus, this concentration through mindfulness of breathing, when developed and practiced much, is both peaceful and sublime, it is an unadulterated blissful abiding, and it banishes at once and still evil un-

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[14] It is also under the name *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Skt. *Mahāsmṛtyupasthāna Sūtra*), as the 22nd text collected in the long discourse (Pāli *Digha Nikāya* DN.).

[15] After a thorough study of the classic scriptures Gethin points out that there was no such clear distinction between the two types of meditation in early times. The practice of the two mutually benefit each other (Gethin 2011; 2015). Some contemporary Tibetan teachers also express a similar idea within their teachings.

profitable thoughts as soon as they arise" (Buddhaghoṣa, transl. by Ñāṇamoli 1976, 285).

Sixteen aspects of instruction on the mindfulness of breathing have been discussed in the *Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness of Breathing*." The technique appropriated in the Burmese reformation is commonly related with the first and second parts of the instruction[16]:

"(i) Breathing in long, he knows 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he knows 'I breathe out long. (ii) Breathing out short, he knows 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he knows 'I breathe out short'" (Buddhaghoṣa, transl. by Ñāṇamoli 1976, 286).

In the *ānāpānasati* techniques spread in the Vipassanā Movement, practitioners are generally asked to observe the natural flow of breath through the nostrils. Alternatively, one can also practice observing the natural breath through the movement of one's chest or abdomen[17]. With the practice of mindfulness of the breath, or any form of the calm-abiding techniques, concentration (Skt. *samādhi*) comes as a natural fruit, which opens the gate to the practice of insight (*vipassanā*) meditation. There are many stages of concentration ("meditative absorption," Pāli *jhāna;* Skt. *dhyāna*) to be achieved. Each is a blissful state related to attainment of supernormal powers.

2,500 years ago, Gautama Siddhartha, later known as Buddha, after renouncing his luxurious life as a prince in searching for the ultimate liberation from all suffering, received the instructions from his ascetic teachers and reached such stages of deep absorption. However, he realized that these alone could not eliminate the root of suffering. He then discovered the technique of *vipassanā*—the supreme seeing—a technique that is supposed to bring penetrative insight into ultimate reality and end all suffering.

The path of *vipassanā* begins with the observation of the body. As is pointed out in the "*Discourse on Establishment of Mindfulness*," this includes: (1)

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16 Other aspects have also been important for advanced practice instructions. Yet since the third aspect of "mindfulness on breathing practice", there are already different understandings and interpretations amongst the Theravāda teachers. The details are not discussed here, but can be seen in the work by German-born Theravāda scholar Bhikkhu Anālayo (2003; 2014).

17 For some, the choice of the chest or abdomen as the reference point is because this is easier for beginners. For meditation master Mahāsi Sayadaw (1904-1982) this is a necessity, since observing the breath through the nostrils may lead to losing contact with one's body sensations.

the observation of breath[18]; (2) being aware of the posture (walking, standing, sitting, and lying down); (3) staying aware during one's daily activities; (4) contemplating thirty-one anatomical constitutions of the physical body; (5) contemplating the four basic elements (earth, water, fire, and air) consisting the body; and (6) contemplating the various stages of decay of the corpse. The importance of these practices has been claimed by Buddha in different *sutra*s, as:

> "Bhikkhus, when one thing is developed and repeatedly practiced, it leads to a supreme sense of urgency, to supreme benefit, to supreme surcease of bondage, to supreme mindfulness and full-awareness, to acquisition of knowledge and vision, to a happy life, here and now, to realization of the fruit of clear vision and deliverance. What is that one thing? It is mindfulness occupied with the body'" (Buddhaghoṣa, transl. by Ñāṇamoli 1976, 1976, 259).

In the modern Vipassanā Movement, meditation instructions are given mostly focusing on the first three parts of the practice. The contemplation of the body is preceded by the contemplation of feeling (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral), the contemplation of mental states, and the contemplation of *dharmas* ("all phenomena"). This includes the Five Hindrances (Pāli *pañca nīvaraṇāni*; Skt. *pañca nivāraṇa*), the Five Aggregates (Pāli *pañca khandha*; Skt. *pañca skandha*), the Six Sense Spheres (Pāli *saḷāyatana*; Skt. *saḍāyatana*), the Seven Awakening Factors (Pāli *satta bojjhaṅgā* or *satta sambojjhaṅgā*; Skt. *sapta bodhyanga*), the Four Truths for the Noble One(s) (Pāli *cattāri ariyasaccāni*; Skt. *catvāri āryasatyāni*), and the Eightfold Path (Pāli *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Skt. *āryāooṣṭāṅgamārga*) (Anālayo 2015, 71-88).

As Buddhaghoṣa comments, *vipassanā* is a supreme path to liberation that "is never promulgated except after an Enlightened One's arising," thus it can be particularly claimed as "Buddhist." Moreover, it is not only "Buddhist," but indeed essential for the Buddhist path. As the *locus classicus* in the *Sati-*

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[18] Mindfulness of breathing is commonly regarded as an effective technique for the cultivation of concentration, however, it can also be practiced as a form of insight meditation. In fact, as proven by Gethin (2015), no clear distinction can be observed between the practice of concentration and insight in early Buddhist texts.

Here, mindfulness of the breathing is mentioned in both *sutta*s for different purposes. As Anālayo concludes, "whereas the *Satipaṭṭhāna-Sutta* moves through different exercises in order to cover the four establishments of mindfulness, the *Ānāpānasati-Sutta* accomplishes the same based on a single practice: mindfulness of breathing. In this way, what taken on its own is an aspect of the body, namely the breath, can according to the *Ānāpānasati-Sutta* be used as the basis for moving from contemplation of the body to contemplation of feelings, mental states, and dharmas […] [T]he object used for contemplation is a bodily phenomenon does not automatically imply that actual practice needs to be confined to observation of the body" (Anālayo 2015).

paṭṭhāna Sutta claims,

> "Monks, this [vipassanā] is the direct path for the purification of being, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness" (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2009).

Most important for the later Vipassanā Movement is its characteristic as being "outside the province of any sectarians" (Ñāṇamoli 1976, 259) thus it is universal by nature. The core element of the practice is to have a direct experience of the impurity of the body, the truth of suffering, impermanence, and the lack of ownership of all these experiences. In this way, it is used to direct the practitioner's mind away from worldly affairs and dedicate oneself to the path of liberation.

It is necessary to clarify that the word *vipassanā* articulated in the Modern Insight Movement stands as an umbrella term referring to the whole set of meditation practices, including mindfulness of breath, mindfulness occupied by the body, and *mettā* (Skt.*maitrī*), the practice of loving-kindness. In certain settings, only the second part: mindfulness occupied by the body, is named under *vipassanā*. This multiple usage of the word is important to clarify before reviewing the specific historical developments of the movement. There were two renowned masters who contributed greatly to the innovation of modern *vipassanā* techniques: Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) and Mahāsi Sayadaw[19] (1904-1982). Both their lineages engaged in brining the practice abroad and settling it into a new cultural and social context.

The "Dharma Rain": meditation for laities

Given meditation's pivotal role on the path of liberation, only a small amount of Theravāda monks and nuns actually engaged in the practice prior to the nineteenth century (Braun 2014a; Sharf 1995). Before the reform movement in nineteenth century Burma, the attainment of the absorption stages (Skt. *dhyāna*) were believed to be the necessary prerequisite for the practice of *vipassanā* meditation (Braun 2013; 2014a). The logic behind this approach is simple. Just as a candle light cannot be well preserved in the strong wind, one cannot see through the subtleties of reality without the foundation of a calm and concentrated mind. However, the attainment of the required level of concentration (Skt. *samādhi*) as preparation for insight

[19] "Sayadaw" is a title given for senior monks, who are either influential teachers, or meditation masters in Burmese Buddhist system.

meditation practice requires considerable time and effort. One may spend decades practicing day and night in an isolated jungle or a mountain cave in order to achieve the meditative absorption stages.

Thus, for some Theravadins, even the possibility of attaining liberation through meditation has been questioned in our degenerated age (Skt. *kaliyuga*) (Pranke 2010, 455). Apart from those who have dedicated themselves to decades of meditation in solitude, no one is believed to have been able to liberate themselves through the practice of meditation. Buddhist monks and nuns commonly centered their religious activities on preserving Buddhist teachings, performing rituals, or observing discipline in order to accumulate good merit and with this, secure a better rebirth.

This also implies a closed door for most laities regarding their engagement in meditation. Tied to secular responsibilities, lay people simply cannot devote the great time and energy needed to go through such practices. Additionally, meditation is also a way to disengage oneself from worldly affairs, where one cultivates a detached attitude towards one's experience of the everyday world, and radically reorients oneself towards the single, ultimate destination—the liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Pāli/Skt. *saṃsāra*)[20]. This seems to be contradictory to the pursuit of prosperity in ordinary lay life.

The situation changed in the late nineteenth century[21]. The birth of modern insight, traced by historian Erik Braun, took place on a special day—28th of November, 1885, when the kingdom of Burma was conquered by British army[22]. The king, who previously acted as the greatest protector and generous sponsor of Buddhist tradition, was sent into exile. Monasteries were burnt into ashes and both monks as well as lay people were convinced of the impending loss of Buddhism. It was not about *if* but *when* Buddhism would fade into oblivion.

Facing this acute threat, lay practitioners took up a much more active role in protecting Buddhism from being lost. Before this time, only teachings on

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[20] Not all Buddhist schools share the same goal for meditation. Here we limit our focus to the Theravāda tradition.

[21] The renaissance of *vipassanā* already began in the eighteenth century, when the scholar monk Medawi (1728–1816) composed a few *vipassanā* meditation manuals in vernacular (Pranke 2010). In the nineteenth century, reformists such as Ajaan Mun (1870-1949) from Thailand, and Dharmapada (1864-1933) from Sri Lanka, also contributed to the establishment of the *vipassanā* techniques that was suitable for lay practitioners. Yet these attempts did not spark any large movements such as those that later took place in Burma (Braun 2014).

[22] There were also reforms attempts have also been made in Thailand and Sri Lanka which are not described here. See for example Anālayo (2012).

the practice of generosity (Pāli/Skt. *dāna*), and on the necessity and benefits of observing ethical disciplines (Pāli *sīla;* Skt. *śīla*) were given to lay practitioners. Householders generally had no access to profound Buddhist philosophies. Thanks to the advent of printing technology and the modern press, subjects that had long been confined to the monastics were now made accessible to all. Large numbers of laities organized themselves for in-depth studies and debates of Buddhist scriptures no matter how sophisticated the topic was. This process was later described as the "fan down" of Buddhist teachings (Braun 2013; 2014a).

Ledi Sayadaw is one of the most prominent figures in the promotion of these reformations. He was a learned scholar, well-versed in Pāli, who paid special attention to the increasing importance of laities in the preservation of the Buddhist *sāsana* (Skt. *śāsana*), a word which denotes the full range of Buddhist teachings and practices. Described as "spreading Buddhist teachings like falling rain" (Braun 2014a), he composed the essential teachings of *Abhidharma*[23] into simple verses in modern language for the lay practitioners, so that they could easily memorize and study them. For the monastic communities, he clarified some difficult points in the understanding of profound Buddhist teachings. Besides this, he was also influential overseas, as he had close interaction with the nascent Pali Text Society (1881-). His works have been highly praised by his peers within the Theravāda tradition.

More importantly, Ledi Sayadaw was the first to use meditation as a way to deepen the study of *Abhidharma*. It is believed that the main tenants of Buddhist teachings, as the Three Marks—impermanence, suffering, and non-self—should not only be grasped on the intellectual level, but must be directly experienced[24]. He selected and appropriated meditation techniques for lay people, explaining them in simple terms so that they could integrate the

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[23] There are "three baskets (*tripiṭaka*)" within the Pāli Canon: the *Vinaya Piṭaka* copes with the rules and disciplines of the Sangha community, the *Sutra Piṭaka,* the discourses and sermons of the Buddha, as well as the *Abhidharma Piṭaka*, the systematic philosophy. "*Abhidharma*" (Pāli. *Abhidhamma*) is a Sanskrit word referring to the "highest" and "advanced" doctrines. It was compiled 100-200 years after Buddha. Compared to *Sutras*, it provided a more "objective, impersonal, and highly technical description of the specific characteristics of reality and the causal processes governing production and cessation" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 4).

[24] There are three types of knowledge (wisdom) formulated in Buddhism: wisdom from hearing and learning (Skt. *śrutamayī prajñā*); wisdom from contemplating and analysing (Skt. *cintāmayī prajñā*); and the wisdom of direct experience from meditative cultivation (Skt. *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). It is the third kind of wisdom that is supposed to lead to the ultimate goal of liberation.

practices as part of their daily lives. More revolutionary was Ledi Sayadaw's deemphasis on the attainment of absorption stages (Skt. *dhyāna*) as the prerequisite for insight meditation practice. Only "momentary concentration" (Pāli *khanika-samādhi*), as "a minimal level of concentration that would enable the meditator to continually return, moment after moment, to the object of contemplation," is required before setting up the practice of *vipassanā*. The implications of these reforms have been profound. They fundamentally altered the settings for meditation practices. As Braun puts it, "forget the jungle or the cave. Meditation is possible in the city" (Braun 2014a).

Lay practitioners were further empowered, when the lay disciple of Ledi Sayadaw, Saya Thetgyi (1873-1945) was authorized to be a meditation instructor—an occupation primarily performed by ordained monks or nuns. Yet, we can see from his case that though the attainment of absorption states were no more the prerequisites, a good level of concentration was strongly preferred. Before Saya Thetgyi left his teacher for home, Ledi Sayadaw had told him to "continue practicing and strengthening your concentration (Samādhi)," because "[w]hen concentration comes, the factor of wisdom (Paññā) will come too," and only then would Thetgyi be qualified to teach (Chit Tin 1988, 10) However, until that day Thetgyi had already been required to practice concentration for thirteen years under the strict guidance of his teacher.

The authorization of Thetgyi as meditation instructor also meant that the transmission of the meditation practice no longer solely revolved around monasteries. Yet the lay transmission system was not yet constructed. The full-time teaching career of Saya Thetgyi was sponsored by his wife and sister-in-law through their work on rice fields. There was no fee for his meditation instruction and Thetgyi would sometimes pay for his students missing time at work in favor of meditation (Chit Tin 1988, 9-20). The teaching was also given according to an individual's progress without any formal guidelines as we see today.

Thetgyi did not know any Pāli, and had practiced meditation completely based on the *dharma* verses composed by his teacher Ledi Sayadaw. This showed that it was possible to conduct meditation without a complete study of Buddhist philosophy, solely using simplified essential instructions. This was also the case for his prominent disciple, U Ba Khin (1899-1971), a high-ranked government official, who formalized the transmission mechanism and brought *vipassanā* oversees.

Vipassanā to the globe: standardization of the transmission

It is predicted that Buddhism will last for 5000 years in this world before leaving with no trace. Today, we are only half-way. If Ledi Saysaw had lived through the time where Buddhism was threatened to fade into oblivion, U Ba Khin had witnessed a time of a prosperous revival of Buddhist *sāsana* in Burma after its independence from the British Empire in 1948. It was not purely a religious movement but closely intertwined with nationalist politics (Jordt 2007) that had been promoted by the newly independent Union of Burma as "a patriotic endeavor and source of national identity"(Braun 2014a). U Ba Khin deemed the Independence Day of Burma as the day of the resurgence of Buddha *dharma*. Never in his life had he separated his faith in Buddhism from the nationalist sentiment for Burma (Chit Tin 1988, 21-45). Holding several important positions in government, he was in charge of the Sixth Buddhist Council (1954-1956), with around 2,500 renowned Theravāda Buddhist scholars from eight different countries gathered together in the preservation of Buddhist teachings and practices.

Born in a merchant family, U Ba Khin showed great intelligence from early childhood. This brought him a position in the Accountant General's Office in Burma. Later, when he started with meditation in 1937, his progress was extraordinarily fast, which then in some way led him to several high-ranking positions in the government. The life story of U Ba Khin was repeatedly told as a perfect example as how meditation could be well-integrated in lay life and how one's secular career could greatly benefit from the practice of meditation.

Accounted in the bibliography of U Ba Khin, there are two major objectives of his work:

> "1. The maintenance of the purity of the Buddha's Teachings in Burma and abroad. 2. The revival of the Sāsana (Teachings) in its land of origin and the spread only been seen as a glimmer before" (Chit Tin 1988, 37).

During the course of his teaching career, U Ba Chin formalized the instruction of *vipassanā* for beginners. It was packed into a ten-day course centered on morality (Pāli *sīla;* Skt. *śīla*), concentration (Pāli/Skt. *samādhi*), and wisdom (Pāli *paññā;* Skt. *prajñā*), which are common practices for all Buddhist schools and foundational for the development of the non-sectarian Vipassanā Movement. Participants are given the instruction of *ānāpāna* ("mindfulness on breathing") on the first day for the cultivation of concentration. The techniques of *vipassanā* in the form of contemplation of the body is given only on the sixth day. And on the last morning, students are instructed in the practice of loving kindness (Pāli *mettā;* Skt. *maitrī*).

The instruction on *ānāpāna* is to focus one's mind continuously on the

flow of natural breath, being aware of the touch of the air below one's nostrils and above the upper lip as the breath comes in and goes out. In the practice of *vipassanā,* one is instructed to go through the sensations in the body section by section with clear awareness. One should practice staying in equanimity without attachment to the pleasant sensations or aversion to the unpleasant ones. Through practice, one may be able to experience *kalāpas*[25], where matter (*rūpa*), mind and mental properties (*nāma*) are "in constant state of change—impermanent and fleeting" (Ba Khin 1951, 151).

The course is conducted in a retreat setting partially resembling the timetable in traditional monasteries. The day at a *vipassanā* retreat starts at 4.00 in the morning and ends at 21.00 in the evening, with breakfast, lunch, and dinner breaks. The day is packed with around 7 hours of sitting meditation and a dharma discourse twice daily, about forty-five minutes in length, which clarifies some main Buddhist concepts and cosmologies. Besides this, beginners are offered opportunities for a personal interview with the instructor in case difficulty or confusion arises.

The transmission of meditation was previously a very individualized process. As taught repeatedly in U Ba Khin's dharma discourse, the speed with which one is able to progress in meditation depends on how much virtue of perfection (Pāli *pāramī;* Skt. *Pāramitā*) one has accumulated in his or her countless past lives, as the necessary preparation for the path towards liberation. Though packed into a universal structure for all, a ten-day course cannot guarantee any visible and immediate results. Besides this, these courses operate on donations from old students, as part of the practice of generosity (Skt. *dāna*) and do not charge any fixed tuition fee[26].

The standardization of the transmission of meditation has been a vital step towards its globalization. It has provided a universal framework that is easy to mobilise and with which a mass audience can be easily approached. As the renowned master Webu Sayadaw (1896-1977) praised, "[i]t is like the time of Buddha when so many benefited. Can one imagine how many enjoyed the fruits of the Dhamma in a single moment then? Can one count the number? They are innumerable!" (Chit Tin 1988, 42)

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[25] *Kalāpas* are believed to be the smallest unit of existence in the Theravāda tradition. The Mahāyāna and Vijrayāna tradition do not share this view.

[26] In the Asian context, the courses are offered completely for free (including no charge for food or accommodation). However, in Western centers, due to a lack of the *dāna* tradition, a basic fee including the cost of food, water, and electricity is sometimes required.

Facing Diversity: A Scientific and Non-Sectarian Sentiment

U Ba Khin proudly identified himself as a Buddhist. His *dharma* discourse was given in Buddhist terms and frequently quoted stories from Buddhist sutras with related cosmologies. Yet it was not his intention to convert anyone to Buddhism, neither did he expect one to believe in what he said without personal experience. He frequently compared meditation with science and advocated for a scientific attitude towards meditation. As he told his students at the beginning of every retreat:

> "I do not request anybody to believe anything unless they see it, unless they experience it. So you are not here to believe me[27]. The Buddha said, 'Don't believe even me'. You experience for yourself. And you find out whether what you experience is good and whether it is for your well-being. If it is for your well-being, you can accept it. If it is not for your well-being, the you will not accept it. So the training here will be through experience" (Chit Tin and Dhaja 1997, 9).

If Ledi Sayadaw's contribution was to put meditation forward as an essential part of the Buddhist religious practice by appropriating the technique and simplifying the teachings to make them more accessible to lay practitioners in Burma; U Ba Chin further codified the message through standardizing its instructions, formalizing the course, and relating the rationales of meditation to those of conducted scientific experiments (meaning that the teachings are mere scientific assumptions that are to be verified through the student's own experience). This scientific sentiment used to explain meditation was appealing to audiences who may not have held immediate conviction towards Buddhism, thus granting it the possibility to move beyond primarily Buddhist societies.

The conviction of U Ba Khin and his successors was that the best way to preserve Buddhist *Sāsana* was to spread it abroad. There is a clear "cultural awareness," in Srinivas' terms, that Buddhism has something to offer to this world: primarily the non-sectarian and scientifically compatible *vipassanā* meditation which will improve general well-being in our time. U Ba Khin traveled abroad a number of times to teach meditation and he trained a few foreign students to be able to carry on his work in their own countries. As shown in a letter dated 1969, six foreign disciples were authorized by U Ba Khin to teach. They were: Dr. Leon E. Wright, Robert H. Hover, John E. Coleman, and Ruth Denison from the United States; Forella Landie from

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[27] This is a classic expression extracted from the *Kālāma Sutta*, cited as "the charter of free inquiry," widely adopted in the Vipassanā Movements.

Canada; and J. van Amersfoort from Holland[28] (Chit Tin 1988, 42). A few international meditation centers have also been established after his decease (Ba Khin and Chit Tin 1999, 202-294).

U Ba Khin also has a clear idea that these "innovations" must be authorized by the tradition itself. Since 1951, U Ba Khin had submitted his experience in practicing and teaching *vipassanā* meditation to several distinguished monks for verification. His pioneer work was highly praised by the tradition, as they all said to him: "*Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu* (well-done, well done, well done)" (Chit Tin 1988, 38).

Satya Narayan Goenka (1924-2013), commonly known as S. N. Goenka, was authorized by U Ba Khin to teach in July 1967, and has become one the most influential figures to spread the Vipassanā Movement around the globe. Around 183 meditation centers across the world today organize a regular retreat on his order (even after his death). He was also invited by the United Nations in 2000 to be one of the speakers for the "Millennium World Peace Summit" of religious and spiritual leaders. Born as a Hindu in a rich Indian immigrant family in Burma, S. N. Goenka had a special insight of the non-sectarian and universal characteristic of *vipassanā* meditation.

For Goenka, "[t]he Buddha never taught a sectarian religion; he taught Dhamma–the way to liberation–which is universal". He inherited his teacher's non-sectarian attitude, and further expressed that, "[t]he day 'Buddhism' happened, it devalued the teachings of the Buddha. it was a universal teaching and that made it sectarian" (Goenka 2000, 49-50).

This attitude of taking *vipassanā* as non-sectarian, and beyond any religious tradition, was intensified by Goenka. Compared to U Ba Khin, Goenka's students were largely non-Buddhists. Relating meditation to scientific experiments and the emphasis on the universality of the meditation experience has become one of the pivotal principles in the later development of Mindfulness Movements in the West. One does not need to be Buddhist to be able to benefit from the powerful technique. In Goenka's center, traditional rituals have been removed from the scene and Buddhist cosmologies are mentioned less. The time for dharma discourse is reduced and the time for sitting meditation is greatly lengthened to up to around 11 hours per day. The formal structure of the ten-day retreat is finalized and solidified. A research institute was also founded to promote new understandings and interpretations of the classic texts. The message has been more and more disembedded from the Theravāda matrix; it has been greatly simplified and universalized, then well-packaged into a transferable program. The clock of *vipas-*

[28] The source text mistakenly describes Coleman as British. However, I do not yet have access to the original letter. Therefore, it is unclear whether there was a mistake in the letter or in the source book.

sanā has struck and it is now ready to hit the road.

"Bare Awareness": the teachings of Mahāsi Sayadaw

Some historians also trace the origin of the Insight Meditation Movement to Mahāsi Sayadaw, a student of Mingun Sayadaw (1868-1955), who was the first to hold a group sitting specially for householders as early as 1911. His lineage is even more open towards innovations of traditional meditation techniques than the Ledi's. The techniques appropriated within this lineage were later referred to as "The Mahāsi Method."

Differing from the Ledi lineage, Mahāsi favored the abdomen as the reference place for observing the breath, since the concentration on the breath at the nostrils might lead to practitioners losing contact with the body. Most importantly, Mahāsi's teachings further emphasize momentary concentration (Pāli *khanika samādhi*) as the basis of noting the flow of changing sensory experience. Through simply being in the here and now, and noting how things really are with full awareness, one achieves the momentary concentration, which can later be lengthened into moment-to-moment concentration. Absorption states (*dhyāna*), with the sole role of concentration are further de-emphasized in comparison to the Ledi lineage. According to Mahāsi, "concentration in *vipassanā* is only there to support awareness (sati) and intuitive intelligence (paññā)," where "the steady gaze and exploration of impermanence, satisfaction and not-self," namely, the "Three Marks of Existence", leads directly to liberation (Bodhidhamma 2003).

This led to the conceptualization of mindfulness (*sati*) as "bare attention" by his disciple Nyanaponika Mahathera (1901-1994), a German-born monk, whose book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* has been a great sensation in the West. His conceptualization of "bare attention" has directly impacted Kabat-Zinn's interpretation of mindfulness articulated today. For Nyanaponika, bare attention is:

> "clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called 'bare,' because it attends just to the bare facts of a perception as presented either through the five physical senses or through the mind […] When attending to that six-fold sense impression, attention or mindfulness is kept to a bare registering of the facts observed without reacting to them by deed, speech or mental comment (namely by self-reference—likes, dislikes, etc.—judgment or reflection). If during the time, long or short, given to the practice of Bare Attention, any such comments should arise in one's mind, they are made objects of Bare Attention and are neither repudiated nor

pursued, but are dismissed, after a brief mental note has been made of them" (Thera 1965, 32).

Besides being a great meditation master, Mahāsi was also a learned scholar who was invited to be the questioner and final editor of the commentary literatures complied within the Six Buddhist Council. Yet, "The Mahāsi Method" requires no prior familiarity with the Buddhist texts. The simplicity of his method, as Robert Sharf comments, has made it "one of the foundations of Buddhist modernism—an approach to Buddhism that cut across geographical, cultural, and sectarian boundaries" (Sharf 2014, 942). This form of "bare attention" was taken by Kabat-Zinn in the construction of the medicalized form of mindfulness." Yet it has not emerged without controversies. The most serious critique resurgent in the clinical application of mindfulness is its amoral implication, in that it seems the importance of ethics has been neglected in conceptual formulations of mindfulness[29] (Sharf 1995, 262-265; 2014, 944).

Vipassanā Reaches America: IMS and Spiritual Rock

In the previous sections I have reviewed how meditation has been selected by Asian masters as a method of preserving Buddhist tradition as well as spreading its valuable teachings abroad; how certain meditation techniques have been simplified and put into a standardized framework for transmission, ready for exportation; and how lay people have played a more and more important role within these processes. In this section, I will briefly recount the early adaptations made by Western *vipassanā* teachers during the importation of these Buddhist meditation techniques into the West, where hybridity emerged out of the *latching* and *matching* process[30].

The 1970s were critical years for the birth of the modern Insight Meditation Movement in America. Little was known about this technique in the

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[29] Gethin has done a great job in investigating the relation between mindfulness and ethics by reviewing how the old Buddhist schools have classified *sati* as skillful, unskillful or both (Gethin 2015). Different classifications of mindfulness may lead to different ways in its conceptualization. Sharf (2016) has compared the "Mahāsi Method" with the meditation techniques historically instructed in the early *Chan* period as well as the Tibetan *Dzogchen*, and argued that this extremely simplified version of mindfulness might be a result of certain social dynamics (i.e. the need to integrate lay practitioners).

[30] The main sources of this section are Wilson's *Mindful America* (2014), two articles from Fronsdal on the western *vipassanā* movement (1999; 1995), Seager's *Buddhism in America* (1999), "The Transformation of Mindfulness" by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2016), as well as *The Birth of Modern Insight* (2014) and a public lecture given by Braun in the same year.

West prior to this time. In 1975, four like-minded friends bought an old Catholic seminary and boy's school in Barre, Massachusetts. They turned it into a meditation center later known as the Insight Meditation Society (IMC). They were four Jewish youngsters: Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jacqueline Schwartz[31] with a background of intensive meditation training in Southeast Asia.

The establishment of the Insight Meditation Society is owed to the great success of the summer course given by Kornfield and Goldstein in the Naropa institute, Boulder, Colorado, founded by the preeminent Tibetan master Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987) in 1974. After the summer course they continued touring around America, teaching meditation retreats. Facing students with almost no prior knowledge of Buddhism, they decided to adopt a hybrid approach in the transmission of *vipassanā*: regarding meditation technique, they chose to teach the "Mahāsi method", which is relatively simple and has no prerequisites; yet the structure of the course was modelled on Goenka's settings. These teaching activities eventually led to the opening of IMC in 1976.

Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein both joined the Peace Corps in Thailand in the mid-1960s. After their mission had finished, Kornfield went on to become ordained as a monk and trained under the renowned Thai forest master Ajahn Chah (1918-1992), and later also under the Burmese master Mahāsi Sayadaw and his student Dipa Ma (1911-1989). Goldstein spent seven years in India studying and practicing Buddhism with Mahāsi's close disciple Anagarika Munindra (1915-2003). Later he also explored the Tibetan form of meditation. Salzberg had traveled to India at the age of 18 and received most of her intensive meditation training under S. N. Goenka.

In the founding period, the four friends offered *vipassanā* in a fashion that combined both the lineage of Ledi Sayadaw and Mahāsi Sayadaw together. The primary concern was to "offer the powerful practices of insight meditation, as many of our teachers did, as simply as possible without the complications of rituals, robes, chanting and the whole religious tradition" (Fronsdal 1995). Two authorized meditation instructors from the Ledi lineage, Ruth Dension (1922-2015) and Robert Hover (1920-2008), were also frequently invited to hold retreats in the center. Later, Goldstein and Salzberg wrote to Goenka and requested that he should come to America and teach. However, the request was turned down. As Goenka stated in the letter: "[i]f you open a center and have more than one lineage teaching

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[31] Some sources do not mention the name Jacqueline Schwartz. I have not yet done thorough research on this issue.

here, it will be the work of Mara[32], and it will be the undoing of the dharma" (Braun, 2014b). This denial had subtle but profound implications. At the very least it meant that the American adaptations which further modified the model of transmission developed in Asia, were not *authorized* by the lineage anymore.

In early 1980s Kornfield moved to California and co-founded Spirit Rock in 1988. Since then, IMS and Spirit Rock were the "powerhouse" that trained large numbers of teachers and students from America (as well as from Europe), building up a huge network of sub-groups across the continent. They shared a list of approved teachers, published their own journal—*Inquiring Mind* (1984-2015), organized annual meetings for the "mainstream" ***vipassanā*** teachers in order to discuss the developments of the Insight Movement. All this created a positive atmosphere for grounding the practice in a new cultural context.

Modelled after the Asian example, these meditation centers try to organize their courses based on *dāna*, the practice of generosity. However, it is difficult to offer everyone free admission to the courses, as is done in the Goenka centers. So a minimum course fee that covers the basic operational budget is charged. Today, one can choose to pay the fee within a given range according to one's individual financial capacity. Scholarships are also applicable for those with real economic difficulties. As Fronsdal quotes in the *Insight Meditation Teacher's Code of Ethics*, teachers "agree to offer teachings without favoritism in regard to student's financial circumstance" (Fronsdal 1998, 175).

Quite a few changes have taken place since the adaptation of ***vipassanā*** to American society. These have been summarized bitterly by Bhikkhu Bodhi as "the transformation of mindfulness" (Bodhi 2016). Born in New York, Bhikkhu Bodhi (born Jeffrey Block) was trained and ordained as a monk in the traditional way in Sri Lanka in 1973. He participated in IMS in its formational years, bearing first-hand witness. Some of the transformations he has described were unfortunately not originally American. For example, having trained in a traditional monastery where knowledge and practice must be as balanced as the left and right foot on the path of liberation, Bodhi found it rather alien that an intensive meditation retreat could be offered to those without any familiarity of Buddhist literatures. Moreover, he read the repeated statement that "Buddha did not teach Buddhism; he taught the Dhamma" as a "declaration of independence" for American appropriations, while neglecting that it had already been a famous phrase by Goenka which had signaled the advent of ***vipassanā*** to the globe. As Gil Fronsdal fairly comment-

[32] Mara: "the personification of the forces antagonistic to enlightenment" (Thera 1999).

ed in 1995, some of the transformations were in part a continuation of the works of their Asian gurus.

The success of *vipassanā* meditation in the West is partially owed to the transmission model that was developed in Asia. It fits very well in the age of "religious individualism," since it requires "no commitment to an organization, a teacher or Buddhist teachings" (Fronsdal 1998, 169, 177). The central role of meditation on the Buddhist path has been further promoted. Meditation as "the heart of Buddhist dharma" has been propagated in popular books as well as in little pamphlets circulating in meditation centers. The result of this simplified version of transmission is obvious: one can easily meditate alongside a secular daily life, without the need to change one's preexisting lifestyle, religion, or other social, cultural or philosophical views. In this way, meditation finds its pathway penetrating into new social contexts and at the same time is also exposed to further alterations.

Needless to say, there are many peculiar developments of insight meditation in America. The Western Vipassanā Movement has been greatly shaped by its interaction with other Buddhist traditions. America was a like a "melting pot" where people consumed the teachings and practices from all schools under the name "Buddhism" without discerning the sectarian differences[33] (Wilson 2014, 25; Fronsdal 1998). Gil Fronsdal, a PhD in Buddhist studies at Stanford as well as a meditation instructor himself, follows both the *vipassanā* as well as Zen tradition. Some insight meditation teachers also engage in the practice of Tibetan *Dzogchen* (Tibetan: *dzogpa Chenpo*, "Great Perfection") whose non-dualistic emphasis also impacts the instructions they gave in their *vipassanā* course. In fact, most *vipassanā* teachers also feel reluctant to associate themselves with the "orthodox" Theravāda tradition and prefer to identify themselves only with the technique (Fronsdal 1995). This blended flavor has greatly impacted the later construction of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program.

The situation has perhaps grown to be a bit worrisome for those who take sincere care of preserving the tradition. Not only have thoughts and practices from diverse Buddhist schools been blended together (which is also a vital character in clinical mindfulness), but Buddhism has also been blended together with other Asian spiritual traditions, such as Daoism and Hinduism. Observed by Bodhi in the late 70s, there was, on the one hand, a vacuum of essential Buddhist concepts in the *Dharma* Talks organized in IMS; and on the other hand, Buddhism was presented as "only another way to describe universal truth pointed out by all saints that was reduced to present

[33] America does not owe all the credits of the current combination of all Buddhist schools. Asian Buddhist reformers also began their cross border exchange since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

moment awareness"[34] (Bodhi 2016, 5). This does not only hamper the thorough understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness of the tradition, but it also contributes to the emergence of a kind of Western Buddhism practice based on an extremely reductive assumption that "Dhamma equals mindfulness meditation equals bare attention" (Bodhi 2016, 11).

The goals and objectives of the practice have also been transformed. Traditionally, the ultimate goal of meditation has been "the attainment of *nibbāna*, liberation from the cycle of rebirths." This is possible through the primary function of mindfulness meditation since it can "eradicate the mind's deep defilements and uproot the belief in a substantial self" (Bodhi 2016, 5). However, over the course of Western adaptations, instead of turning the practitioner's mind away from worldly affairs, meditation has been adopted as a tool for "enhancing the appreciation of present moment"; and instead of enabling the practitioner to directly experience the truth of non-self, it is now devised to promote the function of healthy ego[35] (Bodhi 2016, 5, 12).

Indeed, similar concerns had already been expressed, in the forming period of the Vipassanā Movement, by its leading figures, who questioned whether "lay-based practitioners can seriously peruse the extraordinary goal of enlightenment, which throughout most of Asian history was done by monks and nuns living in celibate monastic communities," and whether there would be "a gradual loss" of Buddhist doctrines and practices in generations to come (Seager 1999, 172-173). However, the situation is not static and the development is never linear. In the last decades, facing the existential "threat" to the integrity of Buddhist dharma again, we can see a growing engagement in serious investigation of Buddhism on the popular level as well as in formal academic discussions. We should nevertheless be grateful to

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[34] When looking carefully into the programs offered by IMS and Spiritual Rock today, we can say that this situation has gradually changed. Today, as Buddhism appears to be a more familiar term to most Americans, more elaborate Buddhist tenets have been included in the curriculums. Yet I still put Bodhi's description here, because it serves as a vital context from which Kabat-Zinn took his inspirations. This perennial sentiment could be seen as a continuation of the early Western reception of Buddhism (see "Introduction: The Reception of Buddhism in the West.")

[35] These comments I have cited here are from Bhikkhu Bodhi, an influential figure in America as well as an active contributor in the current Mindfulness Movement. Quite a few scholars share the same concern as Bodhi. Yet this way of regarding the primary goal for meditation as the attainment of *nibbāna* (Skt. *nirvāṇa*) is an understanding mostly within the Theravāda tradition. There are some different interpretations in the Mahāyāna as well as Vajrayāna tradition. Since we are still talking about part of the Vipassanā Movement which originated in the Theravāda tradition, Bodhi's comments appear not only to be valid but also powerful.

these early translators who translated the *vipassanā* meditation into English, into personal experience, into philosophical or spiritual concepts that are familiar to us, and into different social dynamics, thus making Buddhism in America less alien but more appealing and accessible to the general public.

The Influence of Zen and Its Open Attitude towards Changes

Most scholars, when paying attention to the origin of mindfulness' clinical adaptation, tend to look primarily into the Vipassanā Movement as their source of inspiration. Indeed, the transformations in modern Insight Meditation— with its central focus on householders and secular life; its scientific and non-sectarian standpoint; and its style of transmission—all directly impact the birth of its clinical variations. However, a close examination of Kabat-Zinn's work would suggest that the picture is far from being complete (Monteiro 2015, 181-216). Our account would only be partial if we were to neglect the influence of Zen which had already arrived in America decades before the coming of *vipassanā*.

As briefly reviewed in the introduction, Zen is a major branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism, originating in China and known as *Chan* (禅 *chán*). It later spread to other Asian countries such as Japan (*Zen*), Korea (*Seon*) and Vietnam (*Thiền*). Japanese Zen reached America in the early twentieth century and was popularized in the 50s and 60s, where the Japanese word "Zen" became the umbrella term for all Asian *Chan* traditions in the West. Today, it is sometimes hard to draw a clear boundary between these Asian traditions since they have all been reworked in the "melting pot" of America. The popularization of Zen Buddhism in the West would not have taken place without the great work of pioneering masters such as Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-), and Seung Sahn (1927-2014).

Thich Nhat Hanh is seen as a true "celebrity Buddhist" in the West, whose influence has even exceeded that of the 14th Dalai Lama. He is a lineage holder of the *Thiền* tradition, the Vietnamese variation of *Chan,* which has been greatly influenced by the Theravāda teachings. He arrived in America in 1960 to study comparative religion. Later he also gave lectures on Buddhism at Princeton and Columbia University. In the mid-1970s he began to teach mindfulness meditation. His teachings "emphasize Theravāda-type mindfulness exercise but with a Mahayana, especially Zen, interpretation" (Wilson 2014, 35).

He has been one of the most important advocators of "engaged Buddhism" with a clear life-affirming attitude. For him, mindfulness practice is not devised to retreat from the world in the way in which it has been tradi-

tionally understood. Instead, mindfulness practice is the "preparation for a deep and thorough engagement with it [the world]". Meditation as well as ritual practices are seen to be the cultivation of love and compassion. These spiritual activities are not performed in order to secure a better rebirth, but "to embody wisdom, compassion, peace, and joy in the present movement" (Seager 1999, 235).

His book *The Miracles of Mindfulness*, first published in 1976, along with more than 100 other books have planted this very concept of "mindfulness" into the hearts of millions of Westerners. Now mostly residing in the Plum Village in France, founded in 1982, his influence has spread all over Europe and North America. The mindfulness practice group that he established—the Community of Mindful Living—has more than 350 affiliated groups registered in America alone. It is impossible to review all of his beautiful work and great achievements here, however, the reforms that he has made, which transform mindfulness into a way of better appreciating this life, expressing love, and engaging with the world, have played an important role in the general Mindfulness Movement. This has also directly impacted Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues in their development of mindfulness-based psychological intervention programs.

Another important figure to be mentioned here is Seung Sahn, a Korean *Seon* master born to protestant parents in South Korea. In 1948 he was ordained as a monk and in 1972 he came to United States to preach Buddhism. Kabat-Zinn helped him in founding the Cambridge Zen Center in Massachusetts. In 1983 Seung Sahn founded the Kwan Um school, where laities are allowed to wear robes and celibacy is not required. He developed a dynamic teaching and practice style "combing sitting meditation, *koans*, dharma talks, chanting, and prostrations" (Seager 1999, 193). Instead of a mere focus of *zazen* ("sitting meditation"), his teaching has a special focus on *koans*, which is generally "a story about or remarks made by earlier *roshis* (*roshis:* "old or venerable mater")". It normally requires "a cognitive leap that transcends one's normal way of thinking," or refers to "conflicted situations in life that given proper attention, can aid one on the path of realization" (Seager 1999, 131-132). The influence of this approach is clearly visible in Kabat-Zinn's work, where he takes his conceptualization of mindfulness as a *koan*, which appears to be paradoxical on the surface and can only be fully grasped outside the conventional mind (Kabat-Zinn 2015b).

Seung Sahn was also extremely open-minded towards American adaptations of Buddhism. His teaching on "Don't known Zen" has been a source of creativity for his students to continue experimenting an American style of Buddhism. Preoccupations with retaining the purity of a tradition are not on his mind. Adaptations are not only acknowledged but even warmly wel-

comed. As he expressed in an interview,

> "I just understand Korean style. That's all. First, Buddhism appeared in India, so Indian style developed. Then China, so Chinese style appeared. From China it went to Korea, so Korean style developed. Now I transmit Korean style to American students. After a while, American style appears" (Sueng Sahn 1996).

By the end of 1980s, Seung Sahn had already handed over most of the teachings to his students in fostering the Americanization of Buddhism. Later, he decided to return to Korea and passed on the Kwan Um school completely to his disciples. As he stated, "[b]efore, everybody was my student, but now the Ji Do Poep Sa Nims[36] have their own students [...] they understand American mind better than me. I taught only Korean style of Buddhism; now the Ji Do Poep Sa Nims are teaching American style Buddhism" (Seung Sahn 1984). This open attitude to change has opened the gate for further innovative forms in the preaching and practice of dharma.

There are three major reasons to look into American Zen Buddhism as an important source for the later development of Mindfulness-Based Intervention programs. (1) Kabat-Zinn inherited the style of "*dharma* combat" from Seung Sahn as a special teaching approach in the MBSR program to explore "the challenging detail first person experience of the practice and its manifestations in everyday life" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b; Kabat-Zinn 2005). (2) As many scholars who have completed a deep and detailed study on the Theravāda texts have claimed, there is no direct counterpart between the conceptualization of mindfulness in early canon texts and the one made by Kabat-Zinn[37]. The understanding of mindfulness, later popularized in the Mindfulness Movement, was constructed based on the "non-duality" attitude learnt from his study and practice of Zen, rather than based strictly on the original Pāli texts. (3) Most importantly, while the experiments of IMS have already failed to receive full authorization from their Theravāda lineages, Zen

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[36] "Ji Do Poep Sa Nims" is a title of Dharma teacher within the Korean Zen School.

[37] There are many articles published on this topic. See for example, Sharf, "Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (And Why It Matters)" (2015), "Mindfulness and Mindlessness in Early Chan" (2014), and Gethin, "Buddhist Conceptualization on Mindfulness" (2015), and "On Some Definition of Mindfulness" (2011).

Buddhism happily embraced these new appropriations in America[38]. As Kabat-Zinn claims, "MBSR is mostly vipassana practice (in the Theravada sense as taught by people like Joseph [Goldstein] and Jack [Kornfield] etc.) with a Zen attitude"[39] (Gilpin 2008, 238).

The medicalization of mindfulness process relates to Buddhism in different ways. From the Theravāda schools, it has taken the simplified meditation techniques, its standardized package of transmission, its scientific attitude and its concern for universal humanity, which has provided the *authenticity* for the approach; and from the Zen traditions, it was given the *authority* for brave innovations, a dynamic style of teacher-student interactions, and an open and non-dual attitude in facing the ever-changing condition in our contemporary world.

[38] With the development of the Mindfulness Movement, more and more critical voices emerged within the American Zen Communities. One important collection of the critiques of contemporary mindfulness from a Zen perspective was edited by Robert Rosenbaum, and Barry Magid: *What's Wrong with Mindfulness (And What Isn't): Zen Perspectives* (2016). Here they argue that as a movement preoccupied with results, mindfulness reaches millions through the "engine of consumerism, competition, and glorification of the individual self" with considerable unintended pitfalls and pratfalls (Rosenbaum 2016, 6).

[39] This is however partially true. Tibetan Buddhism has an inexplicit impact on MBSR as well. First of all, many American Vipassanā teachers also engaged in the practice of Tibetan *Dzogchen*. Secondly, Kabat-Zinn has listed two books from Tibetan master Chögyam Trungpa, as the primary source of inspiration in the development of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn 2011b). Thirdly, Kabat-Zinn's description of mindfulness closer resembles the concept of *rig-pa* articulated in Tibetan Buddhism, rather than *sati* from Theravāda. Finally, Kabat-Zinn is himself a *Dzogchen* practitioner and has described his fundamental practice as "a mix of Zen and vipassana elements, now leavened by Dzogchen" (Gilpin 2008, 238)

Chapter Three

The Conventional Story of Mindfulness

> "You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become water, my friend." —Bruce Lee

In the last decades, mindfulness has been depicted as water. Water may take the form of its container, yet its very existence does not depend on the container. And so too is the case of mindfulness. Though this was suggested around 2,500 ago by Buddha, the Awakened One, and was eventually elaborated upon and put into practice by numerous sages from the Buddhist tradition, its very existence lies far beyond any given tradition. Mindfulness is a universal capacity for all humanity that always has the potential to be freely adapted to any cultural, historical, or social context. Based on such a conviction, mindfulness has been translated into a series of psychotherapeutic programs in the modern clinical context.

The "Psychologization" of Buddhism

Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) developed in the late 1970s is universally recognized as the 'turning point for the Mindfulness Movement's relationship with science and medicine" (Wilson 2014, 79). Prior to this, few attempts had been made to bring mindfulness into modern psychology.

Buddhism had entered the field of psychology centuries before the emergence of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program. In fact, "psychologization" is

one of the distinctive features of Buddhist modernism. It began in the 19th century when the founders of the Pali Text Society, Thomas W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) and his wife Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids (1857-1942), amongst other Western scholars, first referred to Buddhism as the "science of mind," and presented it as a form of ethical psychology—"the true Eastern compeers of Aristotle, and Western psychology" (Rhys Davids 1912, 61). Carl Jung and Eric Fromm brought Tibetan as well as Zen Buddhism into the realm of psychoanalysis. Jung developed his concept of the collective unconsciousness based on the idea of *dharmakāya*[40] and Fromm used Zen practice as a way to "unearth the entirety of the unconsciousness and bring it to consciousness," and thus to overcome alienation and return to "wholeness" (McMahan 2008, 52). These attempts were accompanied by Fritz Perls' "awareness training" (the Gestalt therapy), the concepts of "peak experience" and "self-actualization" promoted by Abraham Maslow, and the transpersonal psychology dating back to the 1960s as one form of psychological perennials.

Jon Kabat-Zinn was not the first to discover the psychological benefits of meditation. This idea had already been articulated by those cultural translators who introduced Buddhism to the West. These translators were of Asian origin, for example, Henepola Gunaratana, the author of *Mindfulness in Plain English*, who was one of the first to manage to overcome mental illness with the help of a meditation practice. Before his experiment, the "proper" Buddhist methods for coping with psychological and physical ailments in his time, were chanting and exorcism. There were no explicit links made between the purification of mind, namely, meditation, and psychological and physical healing. In *What the Buddha Taught* published in 1959, Sri Lankan monk Walpola Rahula (1907-1997) also claimed that better concentration, as the result of meditative practice, could lead to a better mental and physical health condition, relaxation, and improvement of an individual's performance at work. These translators were also of European origin, for example, the German-born Jewish monk, Nyanaponika Thera also listed a number of worldly benefits of a mindfulness practice in his book, including clarity of mind, happiness, quietude, and self-control.

Jon Kabat-Zinn was even not the first to consider meditation as an object for scientific investigation. Western interests in meditation began with Transcendental Meditation (TM) promoted by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the Hindu tradition from the 1950s to the 1970s. The focus on scientific investigation is formulated as the "Relaxation Response." Since the 1970s, there

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[40] *dharmakāya*, a Sanskrit word, literally meaning "the true body," is one of the "three bodies" (Skt. *trikāya*) described in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

have been a number of doctoral dissertations written on Buddhist meditation techniques and its intersection with psychology. Two leading figures in the Western Vipassanā Movement, Daniel Coleman and Jack Kornfield, each wrote their PhD thesis on the psychological effects and mechanisms of Buddhist meditation. According to Fronsdal, in the late 1990s, nine out of fourteen regular meditation instructors located in Spiritual Rock were trained psychotherapists. The marriage between Buddhist meditation and psychotherapy, as McMahan comments, is a continuation of the "demythologization," and "detraditionalization" of Buddhism on the soils of Europe and North America (McMahan 2008).

The Mystical Birth of MBSR

The development of MBSR has been recounted as a "mysterious unfolding process that may actually have no precise beginning and no end" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 285). The conventional story of MBSR starts in the 1970s when Jon Kabat-Zinn, the youngest son of the prominent biomedical scientist Elvin Abraham Kabat, received his PhD in molecular biology. Having been a serious Zen practitioner as well as a yoga instructor, Kabat-Zinn went on to explore *vipassanā* meditation which had recently made its way to America. In 1974, he attended a retreat led by Robert Hover (1920-2008), an American aerospace engineer and a meditation instructor authorized by U Ba Khin. In this retreat, Hover requested his students to sit for two hours without a single voluntary move (this is called the *adiṭṭhāna* sitting, "sitting with strong determination"). This naturally caused great pain. However, this pain was eventually transformed through the application of the *vipassanā* technique. This experience led Kabat-Zinn to, for the first time, ponder the possibility of sharing "the benefits of meditation practices with medical patients, especially those experiencing chronic pain that wouldn't go away just by changing the posture or stopping meditation practice" (Goleman and Davidson 2017, 84). He quickly jotted this down on the back of an envelope.

Five years later, in the spring of 1979, while sitting in another ten-day *vipassanā* retreat in the newly founded Insight Meditation Society (IMC) located in Barre, Massachusetts, a sudden vision hit Kabat-Zinn. It lasted about ten seconds, and was vivid and rich in detail. Here he saw

> "…in a flash not only a model that could be put in place, but also the environment—namely that it could spark new fields of scientific and clinical investigation and would spread to hospitals and medical centers and clinics across the country and around the world, and provide right livelihood for thousands of practitioners" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 287).

He took this as his "*karmic* assignment": a kind of destined calling in the Buddhist sense. The primary intentions behind his translation were, on the one hand, to share the "essence of meditation" with those who suffered from pain, physically or mentally, yet would not able to meditate or had no interest in Buddhism; and on the other hand, to make meditation "commonsensical" to Western society and to "develop an American vocabulary that spoke to the heart of the matter and didn't focus on the cultural aspects of the traditions out of which the dharma emerged" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 287-288). The target of his program were patients suffering from chronic pain who had failed to be cured through conventional medical treatments. The primary goal of this program is not to *cure* these patients by removing their physical symptoms—though the alleviation of pain is frequently reported—but to *heal* them by transforming the way these patients relate with their pain. These transformations of perspective are supposed to come as a natural consequence of a meditation practice, which may provide us with new understandings of mind-body relations.

From the very beginning, the development of MBSR had been fully authorized and supported by Kabat-Zinn's teachers from the Insight Meditation Society. As noted by Christopher Titmuss, "[a] person steps into the role of a Dharma teacher through the support and sanction of a teacher," and the tradition will "consider it questionable to launch oneself into such a teaching role without the endorsement from a senior teacher" (Titmuss 2016, 182). Kabat-Zinn had also requested approval from his Buddhist teachers for the development of his mindfulness program. After having the flash of inspiration during a retreat led by Christopher Titmuss and Christina Feldman in 1979, he went for a personal interview and explained his vision to Titmuss. Titmuss considered this a good challenge to be taken on and deemed Kabat-Zinn a well-established meditation practitioner in the Zen and *vipassanā* traditions, thus deciding that he did not need the guidance of a senior teacher as his mentor, and that he could act on his own.

The approval of the IMS for the development of MBSR was not widely articulated. This was partially due to the fact that the relation between medicalized mindfulness and its Buddhist origin had been intentionally obscured during the establishment period of MBSR. Later, when mindfulness' Buddhist root had been unveiled and the program had been heavily questioned as a form of "stealth dharma"—doing Buddhism without using the name of Buddhism—in the late 90s and early 2000s, Kabat-Zinn would have to seek approval and authorization of his approach from some more "traditional" and "authoritative" Buddhist figures, such as Thich Nhat Hanh and Sueung Sahn. Kabat-Zinn is also famous for his active engagement in the Mind & Life Institute, which holds regular meetings between a group of Western

scientists and the fourteenth Dalai Lama. There he has reported the MBSR program and has also received permission for his translation work from the Dalai Lama.

Another vital intention behind the creation of MBSR program, as recalled by Kabat-Zinn, is to "provide right livelihood for thousands of practitioners" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 287). This implies that the development of MBSR is not only a process of translating old Buddhist teachings into daily secular language and into mainstream medical context, but also a process which has transformed the ancient *dāna* oriented financial system into a modern psychological industry. While the "transfer of custodianship," namely, the transfer of teaching authority from the monastics to the laities (Bodhi 2016, 8) is taking place, there is rising concern about a new form of economic relation in the organization of the transmission of the meditation technique. This process, which aims at *re-embedding* mindfulness into a new economic context is drawing more and more attention in the later discussion on the Mindfulness Movement where mindfulness has become a real billion dollar industry moving far beyond the realm of psychotherapy (for example Wilson 2014; 2016).

Let us review briefly, that Sayagi Theygi, the first lay teacher in the modern Vipassanā movement, whose teaching career was fully sponsored by his other family members, had distributed money to some of his students to "buy" their time from work in order to enable them to meditate. The *vipassanā* meditation centers established in Asia offer teachings, catering, and accommodation for free and operate solely on the practice of generosity—on donations given by old students who felt that they benefited from the course. Yet meditation centers later established in North America and Europe had mostly failed to manage their functions entirely on donations and a certain amount of operational fees had to be charged according to the participant's financial capacity. Then came MBSR, which for the first time turned the instruction of meditation into a means that could sustain one's livelihood. It created new career opportunities and gave rise to new psychological businesses. Following this line, the financial relations to mindfulness meditation were gradually altered and better integrated into the new economic context.

Kabat-Zinn took on his "*karmic* assignment" with quite some speed. After discussions with his *vipassanā* teachers, he went on to talk to three physicians in the hospital and asked them to refer their patients who were not able to be cured through conventional medical treatment, to his Stress Reduction and Relaxation program (later developed into MBSR as we know it today) which was "based on relatively intensive training in Buddhist meditation without Buddhism […] and yoga." The response was very positive. A few months later, in the fall of 1979, the Stress Reduction Clinic had been estab-

lished as part of the Department of Medicine. As recounted by Kabat-Zinn, "[w]e were invited wholeheartedly into the mainstream" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 293).

What is in the Package?

There are elements in the package of MBSR resembling those in Buddhist traditions and some are specially devised to look different. The original ten-day course was initially extended into a ten-week program with weekly meetings, designed for those who were not acquainted with meditation in its conventional retreat settings. It was later condensed and formalized into an eight-week program consisting of two and half hours of group meetings each week and homework of 45 minutes guided meditation per day. A one-day retreat consisting of six-hours of mindfulness practice is offered in the sixth and seventh session of the course.

The Buddhist meditation retreats regard ethical behavior as the foundation for further practice. They normally begin with taking refuge as well as the five disciplines for householders (Pāli *pañcasīlāni*; Skt. *pañcaśīlāni*): abstaining from killing; abstaining from taking what is not given; abstaining from sexual misconduct; abstaining from lying (false speech); and abstaining from intoxicants. MBSR had sometimes been questioned as lacking in ethical foundations and Kabat-Zinn had some thoughts on the matter. He placed these five disciplines under the principle of "no harm," and used the Hippocratic Oath as the counterparts embodied by teachers of MBSR within the medical context as a solution to the problem.

Characterized as a program which offers intensive meditation training, a standard MBSR program starts with mindful eating of a raisin. This lasts for a few minutes and involves separate steps including holding, seeing, touching, smelling, placing, tasting, and swallowing. It is designed to offer a first taste of mindfulness and to dispel the conventional conception of meditation, "since people don't expect eating to be part of meditation training. It makes meditation practice much more ordinary and something of a surprise" (Kabat-Zinn 2011a, 39).

The first meditation technique taught in the program is the "body scan." This comes from the *vipassanā* techniques instructed by Mahāsi Sayadaw. Here, participants are asked to first practice "mindful breathing"—observing the natural breath through the rise and fall of the chest while lying down on their back. "Mindful breathing" is presented as the foundation of all mindfulness practices, since breath "lies at the intersection of the voluntary and involuntary nervous systems" (Bien and Didonna 2009, 478), where formal

meditation posture, which is important for deepening the meditation experience, is not required at this stage. The second step is to move one's awareness to a particular body part on an inhale, and to mentally release the tensions accumulated in this area on the exhale. The process begins with the left foot and gradually covers the whole physical body. This lasts for about 45 minutes.

Sitting meditation is taught when participants become more familiar and comfortable with the practice of body scan. It also begins with "mindful breathing," where the participants are asked to gradually move their attention to enveloping the entire body. Wherever pain is detected during the process, one is instructed to be an observer of the feeling instead of identifying with it, and to simply accept it and let it be. After the whole body has been enveloped by awareness, participants are then asked to direct their attention outside bodily sensations and towards objects such as sounds, feelings, or streams of thought. This practice eventually ends with pure open awareness with no fixation to any special object of the mind. Informal mindfulness practices such as walking meditation, eating meditation, and three-minute mini-meditation are provided so that one can integrate mindfulness meditation into their daily life.

On the wisdom aspect, discussions and personal interviews are held in order to share personal experiences, as well as explore certain Buddhist-driven themes and concepts—such as suffering and the cause of our suffering—although they are "disguised" using different terminologies. These talks are organized in the form of "*dharma* combat," through which teachers are supposed to guide their students to be able to see how things really are—a kind of *reality* that was pinpointed in Buddhist teachings. "The Four Truths for the Noble Ones," and the "Eightfold Path," as the shared conceptual framework for all schools of Buddhism, has been set up as the guideline not only for MBSR, but also for other mindfulness-based intervention programs such as MBCT (Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy) (Teasdale & Chaskalson 2011a, 2011b, 89-124). However, as stated by Kabat-Zinn, Buddhism cannot be taken into the classroom except in its essentials, which opens up immense space for individual translations conducted by mindfulness teachers according to their own experiences with mindfulness meditation and its applications in daily life.

Yoga is yet another important element that features MBSR, thanks to Kabat-Zinn's previous experience as a Yoga teacher. Though some body work does benefit meditation, Yoga has not been a common component in either the *vipassanā* or the Zen retreats (it is even forbidden for some strict *vipassanā* courses). In MBSR, mindful Hatha yoga has been welcomed by those who cannot yet enjoy the sitting practice and it contributes well to the

release of mental and physical stress. Other small tasks, such as noticing a pleasant or unpleasant event everyday are given as weekly homework. Poem reading, often not necessarily from a Buddhist author, takes place in group meetings as a means to moistening the heart. A hybrid complex has emerged not just for the prosperity of the Buddhist tradition, but more importantly, for the adoption of certain Buddhist concepts and techniques which can be used to diagnose and solve our contemporary malaises, such as stress.

"Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" as Cultural Translation

Before diving into the specifics of certain Buddhist concepts which have been translated into modern terms, the following question must be answered: why is a translation needed? What is the rationale behind removing mindfulness from its original Buddhist context, trying to present it as purely secular, and seeking to provide concrete scientific grounding for its practices?

It was in the late 1970s when a secular psychological program involving eastern meditation techniques was first envisioned. It was a time when yoga and meditation were far from reaching mainstream American society. They were classified by the majority of Western dwellers as "New Age" and "Eastern Mysticism," with a sentiment of "flakiness", and thus lacked ground for credibility. This naturally contradicted Kabat-Zinn's intention and was deemed a "serious risk that would have undermined our attempts to present it as commonsensical, evidence-based, and ordinary, and ultimately a legitimate element of mainstream medical care" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 282). To prevent people from being deterred by skepticism, it was on the agenda of those who had developed the MBSR curriculum to "articulate the dharma, without ever using the word 'Dharma' or invoking Buddhist thought or authority"[41] (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 282).

The choice of words for the program—"Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" reveals some central themes of cultural translation within this context. In this section, I will focus on examining the usage of "mindfulness" by Kabat-Zinn—the most troublesome word within the whole discourse; why he and his colleagues decided to add "mindfulness-based" onto the name of their successful stress-reduction program; the meaning of "stress" and its "reduction;". Moreover, at the heart of the whole translation process lies the

[41] This is a claim made by Kabat-Zinn in the early forming time of MBSR. Later *dharma* has become *the* word for Kabat-Zinn. This change took place in the 1990s, when the mainstream society was more open towards Buddhism and its related topics. And it has also been related to Thich Naht Hanh's endorsement of Kabat-Zinn's work (see Kabat-Zinn 2011b).

very concept of "skillful means (Skt. *upāya*)" the ultimate legitimation of Kabat-Zinn's approach to MBSR.

The rather peculiar usage of "mindfulness" is perhaps the most important cultural translation that needs to be clarified. In the 90s, after the first taste of the success of the Stress Reduction and Relaxation program, Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues felt the need to add something in order to differentiate their "*dharma*-based" approach from other stress-reduction programs. It was necessary to find an *umbrella term* which was "broad enough to contain the multiplicity of key elements that seemed essential to field a successful clinical programme" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 288). Thus he found the word "mindfulness," which had already been promoted by Nyanaponika as

> "the unfailing master key for knowing the mind and is thus the starting point; the perfect tool for shaping the mind, and is thus the focal point; and the lofty manifestation of the achieved freedom of the mind, and is thus the culminating point" (Thera 1965).

Kabat-Zinn offered two operational definitions:

> (a) paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn 1994). (b) the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn 2005).

These two definitions resemble each other and have frequently been quoted as "moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness," or in certain intellectual debates, simply as "bare attention" (for example Bodhi 2016; Sharf 2014; 2015). It is depicted as a universal quality of human beings[42] and has served as the foundation for most of the later psychological and neuroscientific research on consciousness, and moreover, of most of the popular understandings of "mindfulness" outside clinics and laboratories.

In this way, Kabat-Zinn separates mindfulness into *deliberate mindfulness* when cultivated intentionally, and *effortless mindfulness* which arises spontaneously (Kabat-Zinn 2015a, 1481). The two are ultimately unseparated and share the same characteristics,

> "like an electromagnetic field […] a field of knowing, a field of awareness, a field of emptiness, in the same way that a mirror is intrinsically

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[42] Equally interesting is that Kabat-Zinn has constructed a "history" for mindfulness in his work: "[o]ver the centuries, the universal inborn capacity we all have for exquisitely fine-tuned awareness and insight has been explored, mapped, preserved, developed, and refined—not so much anymore by prehistory's hunting-and-gathering societies, which sadly, along with everything they know of the world, are on the verge of extinction brought on by the 'successes' of the flow of human history, such as agriculture and the division and sepcialization of labor and the rise of advanced technologies—but rather in monasteries" (Kabat-Zinn 2015a, 1482).

empty, and can therefore 'contain" anything, and everything that comes before it" (Kabat-Zinn 2015, 1481).

Mindfulness is further broken down into seven attitudinal foundations: non-judging, non-striving, letting-go, beginner's mind, patience, acceptance, and trust (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Finally, to make the case more complicated, partially in reaction to the flourishing of scientific researches on meditation and compassion, Kabat-Zinn proposes an alternative translation for mindfulness, — *heartfulness*, — which denotes the "openhearted and affectionate attention to our experience" (Kabat-Zinn 2017).

These definitions, as well as descriptions have been celebrated by some who regard them as deriving from direct and authentic first person meditation experience; yet they have equally annoyed many others for their notorious imprecision and vagueness. Serious Buddhist practitioners have also criticised this as a *decontexualization* of Buddhist teachings. Kabat-Zinn's response is that since mindfulness is essentially ineffable, no single definition of the term is possible. What he has offered is merely an attempt at operational definitions of mindfulness. Moreover, in some sense, the entire book *Full Catastrophe Living*, the best ever selling book by Kabat-Zinn on mindfulness and MBSR, first published in 1990, is itself a definition of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 291).

The term probably became more confusing when it was given a double purpose—not only referring to "lucid awareness," but also in acting as the "placeholder" for the entire *Buddhadharma*, which links explicitly with "a universal *dharma* that is co-existence, if not identical, with the teachings of Buddha." It is meant to "carry multiple meanings and traditions simultaneously […] as a potentially skillful means for bringing the streams of alive, embodied dharma understanding and clinical medicine together" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 290). This "ambiguous" approach towards mindfulness obviously incurred intellectual attacks from different angles. In a talk with Edo Shonin conducted in 2015, Kabat-Zinn defended this approach as "something of a *koan,*" which is "a deep question that is not completely amenable to a totally cognitive response." Its lack of conceptual clarity can be seen as an invitation to the suspension of our judgment and to enter the direct experience of moment-to-moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn 2015b).

The next *translated*-pair to be clarified are "stress" and its "reduction." *Dukkha,* (Skt. *duḥkha*), a word often translated as "suffering," or "satisfactions," is central to the Buddhist understanding of the world. There are three major types of suffering: (1) *dukkha-dukkha*, "the misery caused by (physical and mental) suffering," or "the suffering of pain," which refers to the full range of unpleasant mental or physical experience; (2) *vipariṇāma-dukkha*, "the misery caused by change," that all pleasant sensations will eventually

deteriorate; and (3) *sankhāra-dukkha*, "the misery caused by conditioning," or "pervasive suffering," that all phenomena are constantly changing, arise as fruit of past actions, karma, thus "impermanent and undependable" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 271). In other places *dukkha* has also been classified into eight types of suffering: birth, aging, sickness, death, "to be conjoined with what one dislikes", "to be separated from what one likes", "not to get what one wants", and "grasping with the five aggregates (Pāli *khandha*; Skt. *skandha*)" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 271).

Dukkha is also the central theme of the "Four Truths of the Noble Ones", which was instructed by Buddha after his Enlightenment, and collected in the first discourse "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma" (Pāli *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta;* Skt. *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*). These four truths are foundational doctrines shared by all Buddhist traditions. They include: the first truth of suffering; the second truth of the cause of suffering; the third truth of the cessation of suffering; and the fourth truth, as the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. The four truths are sometimes recognized as a medical framework, where Buddha, the doctor of the world, diagnoses our disease (as suffering), points out the cause of the disease (such as craving, aversion, ignorance), leads us to the end of disease (freedom from poisonous mental states), and gives us the medicine to cure the disease — which is the "Eightfold Path" towards ultimate sanity (Anālayo 2011).

In the title of MBSR, *dukkha* has been embedded in the word "stress." Three reasons are given for such a translation. Firstly, there are already scholars who have translated *dukkha* into stress (for example Bhikkhu Thanissaro 1999). Secondly, stress is the most common form of suffering of our time, endemic in modernity, to which all city dwellers can instinctively relate. Finally, there was already a growing scientific discourse at the time on the issue of stress reactivity and pain regulation (for example Goleman and Schwarz 1976; Benson 1975; Walsh 1977, 1878, 1980), which served as the foundation for the development of MBSR. Besides, the word "reduction," does not only refer to the path that leads to the cessation of suffering, but also means that stress cannot be completely eliminated, just as suffering will not end until we reach the goal of full enlightenment.

Kabat-Zinn deems hospitals and medical centers "*dukkha* magnets,": places full of people suffering from stress and pain from all kinds of disease and illness, and seeking a way to relieve themselves from it (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 130-133). They are the places where one meets suffering face-to-face. With the practice of meditation, one can "dive into the experience of *dukkha* in all its manifestations"—such as frustration, depression, anxiety, aversion, restlessness—and dive into "the ultimate source of *dukkha* without ever mentioning the classic ethology" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 288), such that

one can investigate these mental states first hand, and alleviate them without the need to ever refer to Buddhism. In this way, as Kabat-Zinn states, all major Buddhist principle tenets have been translated in the classroom, including the Four Truths for the Noble One(s), the Eightfold Path, the Four Immeasurables, the concept of Impermanence, and the nature of Non-Self.

This approach, Kabat-Zinn claims, is one of countless forms of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*) in Buddhism. *Upāya* literally means "method," and is commonly used as synonym for *upāyakauśalya*. This concept is mostly used in the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, where Buddha's previous teachings are viewed as mere expedients that shall be abandoned. Secondly, *upāya* also refers to how Buddha "intentionally fashions different versions of his teachings to fit the predilections and aptitudes of his audience." This concept has thus been used to "reconcile apparent contradictions within his teachings, since those teachings ultimately are provisional expressions of his realization." Today, *upāya* is mostly associated with "the extraordinary pedagogical skills of the Buddhas and advanced Bodhisattvas" (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 942-943).

The concept of skillful means has served as the ultimate source of legitimation for the *recontextualization* of *dharma* in secular and medical contexts. Kabat-Zinn has made the claim that,

> "The intention and approach behind MBSR were never meant to exploit, fragment, or decontextualize the dharma, but rather to recontextualize it within the frameworks of science, medicine (including psychiatry and psychology), and healthcare so that it would be maximally useful to people who could not hear it or enter into it through the more traditional dharma gates, whether they were doctors or medical patients, hospital administrators, or insurance companies" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 288)

Besides this, since the practice of MBSR does not follow a strict Theravāda, Mahāyāna or Vijrayāna approach, it does not belong to any specific lineage, thus "whatever the particulars of your dharma history, is your lineage" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 300). Everyone is invited and authorized to be a potential cultural translator who can create new cultural expressions of mindfulness through the wordless individual experience. The practice of skillful means requires one to "take the whole individual dharma history of delight," with the acknowledgement that "the real lineage is formless, and with eyes of wholeness and a heart of kindness, know that literally everything and everybody is already a Buddha, already the patriarchs, already the dharma, already your teacher" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 300). This, as Buddhologist John Dunne comments, is the "innatist" approach towards Enlightenment and is contrary to the "constructive" approach mostly adopted in the Theravāda school of Buddhism (Dunne 2011).

Another Name for Buddhism, or the Watering-Down of Dharma?

The MBSR program enjoyed great success from the very beginning. As Kabat-Zinn frequently quotes in his own work, some participants came to him after the training and exclaimed, "[t]his isn't stress reduction. This is my whole life!" Given the well-acknowledged benefits of MBSR, Daniel Goleman, one of the pioneer psychologists interested in the intersection between Buddhism and psychology, wrote a letter to his long-time friend Kabat-Zinn in 1983, encouraging him to conduct some research on the effectiveness of the program, supported by some newly developed soft measurements designed at Harvard (Goleman and Davidson 2017, 260-261). Whether or not Kabat-Zinn already had such a plan in mind is unknown, but this marks the beginning of the currently booming scientific research on mindfulness meditation. Needless to say, modern science is a cooperative field and Kabat-Zinn alone would have had no chance to create such a sensation about mindfulness in Western society. One of the vital contributors to its success is the repeated emphasis on constructing "a robust scientific foundation" for mindfulness research.

In this way, MBSR was presented as a purely secular and scientific program prior to the 1990s, where its Buddhist origin had been deliberately obscured. The relation between Buddhism and MBSR seems quite confusing and is one of the central themes heavily debated within the mindfulness discourse. Here, I will not dive directly into the details of the discussion, however I will first reveal how Kabat-Zinn has *presented* the relation between MBSR and Buddhism himself, in different contexts and to different audiences.

On the one hand, Kabat-Zinn is a serious Buddhist practitioner who engages with different Buddhist traditions. He has trained under Seung Sahn, a Korean Zen master who has been extremely open-minded to Buddhism's American adaptations, and has been interacting with the group of Western lay *vipassanā* teachers who were pioneers in the appropriation of Buddhist teachings, better planting it on American soil.

On the other hand, his understanding of Buddhism is quite different from the traditionalists. Since the 1980s, Kabat-Zinn has given a few public talks at medical centers, addressing professionals and lay audience, on topics regarding

> "how Buddha himself was not a Buddhist. How the word 'Buddha' means one who has awakened, and how mindfulness, often spoken of 'the heart of Buddhist meditation,' has little or nothing to do with Bud-

dha per se, and everything to do with wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 283).

Clearly, Kabat-Zinn has not invented these thoughts himself, but has taken most of his inspiration from the early *Vipassanā* advocators. However, he goes one step further. In a public talk held in 1997, Kabat-Zinn openly expressed that, "I really don't care about Buddhism. It's an interesting religion, but it's not what I most care about. What I value in Buddhism is that it brought me to the Dharma" (Kabat-Zinn 1998, 515).

Here, it might be helpful to finally reflect upon Kabat-Zinn's usage of the word *dharma*. The idea of *dharma* is at the center of the whole translation enterprise, mediating between the three authorities: Buddhism, personal experience, and science. It is originally a Sanskrit word widely employed in all Indian spiritual traditions. The root √dhṛ literally means "to hold" and "to maintain." Based on these basic connotations, the word *dharma* is frequently translated as "law" in English. In the Buddhist context, the word has been granted three distinct denotations: the first, (1) the "teachings," or "doctrines" of the Buddha; the second, (2) the "phenomenon"; and finally, (3) the auspicious "qualities" and "characteristic" of the Enlightened One (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 242).

For Kabat-Zinn, the word *dharma* denotes "the lawfulness that the Buddha discovered, described, and offered skillful methods for developing [*bhavana*])" (Kabat-Zinn 2017). There are two major aspects of the usage of this word. On the one hand, this "lawfulness" is in fact "co-extensive" and "not different in any essential way from" the *Buddhadharma*[43], the teachings of the Buddha (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 290; 296). It represents the essence of all Buddhist teachings and thus harmonizes the "divergent sources (and the possible interpretive difficulties) [from different schools of Buddhism] by appealing to what he [Kabat-Zinn] calls a 'universal dharma framework'" (Braun 2017, 182).

On the other hand, though articulated by Buddha, *dharma,* "the universal lawfulness," is "not Buddhist" (Kabat-Zinn 2011c). It is presented in a perennialist spirit as "an ancient force in the world" (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 136) that has not only been preserved in Buddhism, but also in "Taosim and yoga, and which we also find in the works of people like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, and in Native American wisdom" (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 5). Besides this, *dharma* is also depicted as scientific in nature because it "resembles sci-

[43] Kabat-Zinn sometimes makes a distinction between the word with capital "D" or a lowercase "d," namely *Dharma* and *dharma*. While the former denotes the Buddhadharma (the teachings of the Buddha), the latter emphasises its " universal character and applicability" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 300). This usage of the word is, however, inconsistent in Kabat-Zinn's work.

entific knowledge, ever growing, ever changing, yet with a core body of methods, observations, and natural laws distilled from thousand years of inner exploration" (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 136-137).

Braun argues that Kabat-Zinn's concept of universal *dharma* actually refers to our direct personal experience (Braun 2017, 182). In this way, *dharma*, first extracted as the essence of Buddhist teachings, taking the form of the mindfulness experience, is articulated as the "universal lawfulness" that is not so different from the law of gravity (Kabat-Zinn 2011c). Following this line of argumentation, MBSR is nothing but an attempt "in all humility" to

> "differentiate Buddhadharma from a more universal articulation of that very same dharma that might serve as a door into insight and potential liberation from stress and suffering of all kinds for those whom the Buddhist doors are not going to be readily accessible" (Kabat-Zinn 2017).

It is necessary to note that Kabat-Zinn was not always completely sure of his approach. Facing attacks criticising him of doing "stealth dharma," and being charged with endangering the integrity of the Buddhist tradition, Kabat-Zinn had doubted himself, "[m]aybe we're watering down the true Dharma and trying to justify that to ourselves", and "if that were true, I would quit tomorrow" (Gates and Nisker 2008, 37; 39). He turned to a number of Buddhist authorities for confirmation of his approach. He traveled to Temples in Japan to seek validation for his approach from *rinzai* Zen master and also went to the fourteenth Dalai Lama to receive permission as well as support for his approach (Gates and Nisker 2008, 39-40; Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 57).

The MBSR program has gained great public sensation through the best selling books, *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) (composed in simple, everyday, as well as scientific language) on Kabat-Zinn's early experience with MBSR. Before sending his draft to the publisher, Kabat-Zinn had sent this work to Thich Nhat Hanh for his opinion. Thich Nhat Hanh had responded in an "elegant and affirming way." His brief endorsement was later taken as the preface of the book:

> "…Reading it, you will see that meditation is something that deals with our daily life. The book can be described as a door opening both on the dharma (from the side of the world) and on the world (from the side of the dharma). When dharma is really taking care of the problems of life, it is true dharma. And this is what I appreciate most about the book" (Thich Nhat Hanh 1989).

In this way, the *authenticity* of the MBSR approach has been triple-guaranteed by science, Buddhism, and direct first person experience. We may conclude that, Kabat-Zinn is himself a Buddhist who has learnt about mindfulness practices and their related doctrines from his Buddhist masters. He in-

herits a Buddhist modernist spirit from these Asian masters and has gone one step further. In framing mindfulness as a "universal inborn capacity" which has more to do with "our capacity for knowing" than "with a particular religion, philosophy, or view" (Kabat-Zinn 2015a, 1482), he tends to move beyond this very tradition by universalizing its teachings. Yet he still has to go to Buddhist authorities for the authorization and confirmation of his approach. In the 1970s, he was more confident of the "scientific nature of the *dharma,*" and had deliberately obscured the relation between mindfulness and Buddhism to prevent people from being deterred by its "New Age" sentiments associated with the words 'yoga' and 'meditation'. In the 1990s, when the general context had shifted and some solid scientific evidence of the efficacy of MBSR had been accumulated, Kabat-Zinn gradually opened up the Buddhist origin of MBSR and later become one of the leading figures in the inter-disciplinary and inter-epistemological dialogue between Buddhism and science, in the field of contemporary applications of mindfulness.

To sum up, there has been some internal consistency throughout the ever-changing appearance of MBSR. Kabat-Zinn has never lost his personal groundings in Buddhism. He has never lost contact with Buddhist authorities, and never devalued the teachings he has received from his Buddhist teachers. Yet he has a particular vision of Buddhism, in that while he respects its teachings, he believes that the universal quality of these teachings can do more for this world beyond being part of a religious tradition if properly translated into a language that makes sense within the modern scientific context. In this way, he has deliberately altered the ways in which he relates to Buddhism (as an institutional organization) according to the changing context (including the changing public imagination), in order to better realize his goals.

In an article published in 2011, Gethin concluded five basic standpoints in viewing MBSR's relation to Buddhism. For conservative Buddhist communities, MBSR is deemed a decontextualization of Buddhist dharma. Abstracting mindfulness from its traditional context, without the emphasis on its necessary ethical foundation, the traditional goals and objectives as well as many other vital elements may lead to a "watering-down" of the Buddhist teachings and a hindering of the integrity of the tradition. For others, MBSR has been regarded as an example of "skillful means" that offers the first step on the path of the cessation of suffering. Some Buddhist modernists view MBSR highly, as it has stripped away all unnecessary cultural and historical baggage and only focuses on the core. Other non-Buddhists further celebrate the revealing of this "useful essence" that had been hitherto "obscured by the Buddhist religion". Last but not least, the "coming together of practices derived from Buddhism with the methods of modern Western cogni-

tive science" has been viewed as "a true advance that will supersede and render redundant the traditional Buddhist practices" (Gethin 2011; Willams and Kabat-Zinn 2011, 14).

To conclude, as an MBSR teacher explained in an interview conducted by Julia Cassaniti during her field work in Thailand, "actually it's all about religion and culture. But if I wore my white Buddhist outfit and prayer beads to teach about it, people would call me crazy!" (Cassaniti 2017, 150).

Chapter Four

The Second-Person Perspective

The Problem of "Adverse Effects"

The first-person experience has always been at the core of the modern Mindfulness Movement. In Kabat-Zinn's words, mindfulness can only be understood from inside out and there is no higher authority than the "richness of the present moment held gently in awareness and the profound and authentic authority of each person's own experience, equally held with kindness and awareness." (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 298) It is simply not enough to talk about mindfulness as a mere concept for mindfulness itself lies beyond the dual conceptual mind, and thus can never be fully grasped through rational reasoning or pedantic investigations. The medicalization of mindfulness process, as Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues claim, attempts to bring the first person experience under scrutiny through modern science, to translate the subjective experience into objective data, thus not only bringing together the two epistemologies emerging from different cultural contexts, but also bridging first and third person perspectives in clinical settings. This has given rise to the new discipline "contemplative science" as a field of interest apart from natural science (for example Sparby 2017; Dorjee 2016; Wallace 2007). Although all advocators try to avoid a clear-cut dichotomy, they more or less agree that the former places emphasis on inner mental transformations and the latter gives more attention to improving outer physical environment (Kabat-Zinn and Davidson 2011).

However, this picture of the medicalization of mindfulness is still far from being complete. While reading through the discussions on mindfulness published in the last three years, I noticed an interesting development. What has been of great public attention since 2014—as a consequence of its successful integration into public sectors, such as the healthcare and education

systems in USA and the UK—are the more serious and systematic efforts into the scientific investigation of mindfulness. Few mainstream authoritative scientists and their relative institutes have evaluated the vast amount of mindfulness research already at hand and the result is rather frustrating. It seems that the scientific study of mindfulness has been a relatively muddy field occupied by low quality research. Inaccuracies are many, one of them being that positive results of mindfulness interventions are very much over-reported (for example Coronado-Montoya et al. 2016; Goyal et al. 2014). Public media has pushed this tendency one step further, presenting mindfulness as purely healthy and positive, leaving no trace of its negative associations.

Needless to say, mindfulness meditation does have what we call "adverse" effects (Lumma 2015). These have already been reported in a very early psychological investigation on *vipassanā* meditation by Jack Kornfield in his PhD thesis composed in late 1977. These adverse negative effects include pain, anger, fear, hatred, mood swings, tension, paranoia, nightmares, and hallucinations as well as uncontrollable bodily movements (Kornfield 1977).

Meditation can have temporary "negative effects" on our mental health, because first of all, these Buddhist meditation techniques are not designed to make people feel better in the modern sense. Different forms of meditation function differently and the *vipassanā* technique transmitted in the Theravāda lineages is primarily applied for the purification of mind in order to free oneself from mental defilements. These defilements, classically referred to as the "poisons," include clinging and attachment, aversion and hatred, as well as ignorance. The purification process has never promised to be a pleasant experience. Many of these defilements must first be brought out of the unconscious into consciousness, before they can be released and cleared away. There was a metaphor, given by the famous meditation master Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche (1975-), that our mind is piled with defilements like a wall "full of shit". Initially, the excrements accumulated on the walls is dry so it does not smell much. In order to clean it up, we have to first pour water onto the wall. It then suddenly seems that the situation has been totally worsened and the excrements begin to smell very badly and become sticky. The same thing happens when we first begin to direct our awareness inward onto our mental defilements. It is highly likely that we go through an intensified "negative experience" while embarking on the path of purification.

The goals and objectives of this practice are not particularly in accordance with the "positive results"—such as the improvement of general well-being in present life—that are often expected by many contemporary practitioners. Even understandings of health are not the same between the Buddhist context and Western psychological context. However, this does not

mean that mindfulness cannot improve our general well-being[44]. According to Sumalee Mahanarongchai, the ultimate and definite way to cultivate health in Buddhism is "to create the impartial attitude sharpened by mindfulness." When one can experience things as they really are, the mind will be devoid of attachment for a second and that leads to the reactivation of the "flow of consciousness and vital life force in constancy" (Mahanarongchai 2015, 95). It has also been recognized since the very beginning that meditation does have certain "side effects" (or "auxiliary benefits") which lead to a blissful mental state and contribute to better physical and mental health. This can be seen in the description of various *dhyāna* ("absorption") states. The practical benefits of meditation, such as the increase in concentration, better memory and stress-reduction, were "discovered" around the twentieth century when traditional meditation practitioners came into contact with the West, and also when Western meditators had to provide interpretations of their "exotic" experiences in their original everyday language. This translation process was later adopted by modern scientists, where the list of the practical effects of mindfulness kept expanding and refashioning itself with more sophisticated terminology (for example Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn 2008, 1351).

Recent studies have shown that these positive effects have been largely over-reported and those "negative" ones have been left without serious investigation. The good news is that, according to many of MBIs advocators, we can go well through these "negative effects" with the guidance of a qualified teacher (Van Dam et al. 2018; Van Gordon, Shonin, and Garcia-Campayo 2017). Although many books and apps have offered detailed guidance for do-it-yourself meditation practices, the simple act of being aware in the present moment and experiencing things as they really are is already indeed "a radical act" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 297). It is necessary to have "huge amounts of support and guidance" from a teacher in order to keep participants engaged in the practice and the stability of the insight gained can only be deepened "in a context of total support which is none other than sangha" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 297). This opens up a new dimension, namely the sec-

[44] A new expanded understanding of "health," promoted as the general "well-being" of the human beings emerged out of these discourses. See for example Wallace, "The Buddhist Science of Human Flourishing" (2011), and Barker, "Mindfulness meditation: do-it-yourself medicalization of every moment" (2014).

ond-person perspective[45], as a vital element in completing the picture of the conceptualization of the medicalization process.

Why Do We Need a Qualified Teacher?

The role of a teacher is essential to the traditional Buddhist context. A student-teacher relationship may be relatively different within the three major Buddhist schools. A teacher in the Buddhist context is frequently referred as *Kalyāṇamitta*, a Sanskrit word commonly translated as "spiritual friend," or "good friend"[46]. Having a proper instructor is essential for Buddhists to walk on the path of liberation. In the *Upadda Sutta*, once Ānanda exclaimed that having a good friend (Skt. *Kalyāṇamitta,-mitra*) is already half of the life of purity, the Buddha replied, "[d]on't say that, Ānanda. Having a good friend, having good companions, and being inclined to good friend is the whole life of purity, not the half" (Thanissaro 1997). Besides, a good friend is also the first quality listed in the "five qualities which are conducive to the emancipation of the mind (Pāli *ceto-vimutti*)."

Having the guidance of a qualified teacher is particularly important in the context of meditation. As suggested by celebrated Vipassanā teacher U Ba Chin, a teacher is needed because we need someone to "show us how to formulate a working hypothesis and how to set up an experiment and how to judge the results" (Chit Tin and Dhaja 1997). We have to keep in mind that meditation is sophisticated work. The ultimate goal of meditation is to transform the mind and to transcend the very habitual patterns of the mind that constitute our ordinary understanding of our *self* and *ego*. This is not an easy task. A well-experienced teacher should be there to protect us from getting into troubles and will offer the map for further progress. As described by Alan Wallace,

"the mind […] is very delicate. If you are meditating on your own, mak-

[45] It is necessary to note that the concept of a "second-person perspective" is not necessarily associated with mindfulness teachers. This idea has also been promoted by scientists in offering a better approach to measuring mindfulness, not only from the objective or subjective perspective, but also from how people close to a subject view their "changes." This involves "measures based upon the subject by another individual knowledgeable about the subject" (Davidson and Kaszniak 2015). Here I use this word to refer *exclusively* to teachers of mindfulness, as is done in Kabat-Zinn's work. The polemic on the measurement of mindfulness has been reviewed by van Dam et al. "Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation" (2018).

[46] In the Buddhist context, a teacher is referred as a good friend, however a good friend does not only refer to a teacher, but also a peer group within the community.

ing it up as you go, you might be lucky. But if you do any type of meditative practice intensively, it's like setting out on a ship. If you're just one degree off, you can wind up hundreds of miles away from where you intended to go. Over the last thirty-five years […] I've encountered a number of people who have run into very deep psychological problems, including psychosis. Usually it occurred when they were not practicing under the guidance of a skillful, knowledgeable, and compassionate teacher. An open and trusting relationship with a teacher is a great safety net. " (Wallace 2011, 146)

Kabat-Zinn, following the tradition of Zen Buddhism, emphasized that "what is involved in mindfulness practices is […] of direct and authentic full spectrum first-person experience", that should be "nurtured, catalyzed, reinforced and guided by the second-person perspective of a well-trained and highly experienced and empathic teacher" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 292). This is called the "direct transmission" of realizations as the fruit of meditation. In this way, the presence of the teacher—the second-person perspective—is vital in guiding the students through the "adverse effects" which occur within the meditation practice and in ensuring the "quality" of the MBI programs.

What Makes a Teacher Qualified?

In the Theravāda context, one must first approach a *giver of meditation subjects* to receive one *special meditation subject* out of the forty, depending on which works best according to one's own temperament. Only the fully Enlightened One possesses all qualities of being a *good friend*, and the best suitable *giver of a meditation subject*. When Buddha is no longer available, one may approach any of the eighty great disciples who are still alive. When they are not available, one shall take it from someone with cankers destroyed, then from:

> "a Non-returner, a Once-returner, a Stream-Enterer, an ordinary man who has obtained jhana, one who knows three Pitakas, one who knows two Pitakas, one who knows one Pitaka […] If not even one who knows one Pitaka is available, then it should be taken from one who is familiar with one Collection together with its commentary, and one who is himself conscientious"

To conclude, it must be "a teacher who knows the texts, guards the heritage, protects the tradition, and who follows the teacher's opinion rather than his own" (Buddhaghoṣa, transl.by Ñāṇamoli, 1976, 100)."

This situation has naturally changed greatly in the context of clinical

mindfulness where it has developed out of the conventional understanding of Buddhist tradition. There are two essential requirements in order to fulfil the requirements of being a mindfulness teacher. According to Kabat-Zinn, they are (a) "the periodic sitting of relatively long (at least 7-10 days and occasionally much longer)". A "teacher-led retreat" is considered necessary for one's personal development in meditation, understanding, as well as "effectiveness as a teacher" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 295-296), and also (b) the incorporation of the daily practices of mindfulness into all aspects of one's ordinary life. These two mutually reinforce each other.

Though it appears as a purely secular program, a strong personal grounding in Buddhism is necessary in order to be a MBSR teacher. CfM's "Principles and Standards," claims that a MBSR teacher has to be "a committed student of the dharma" (Kabat-Zinn and Santorelli, n.d.). In *Teaching Mindfulness: A Practical Guide for Clinicians and Educators*, it is further clearified that to be a MBSR teacher, one needs to have been engaging in daily meditation practices for at least three years; have participated in "two 5-day or longer mindfulness retreats in the Theravda or Zen traditions," and have engaged in a body-centered practice, such as Hatha Yoga, for three years (McCown et al. 2010, 15). In this way, MBSR teachers are qualified and authorized to translate Buddhist tenets and the meditation practices into a kind of "vernacular idiom" based on their long-term engagement with "Buddhist meditation traditions and in more mainstream and universal contexts exemplified by MBSR" (Kabat-Zinn and Santorelli, n.d.) On the institutional level, there is also close cooperation between MBSR and the American Vipassana centers. Special courses have been held in IMS and Spiritual Rock for MBI professionals (Brown 2016, 82).

The connection between Buddhism and MBSR has been made even more explicit in recent years. In 2017, Kabat-Zinn listed three further requirements for MBSR teachers, besides the (1) personal meditation experience, he proposed that one's (2) "own training trajectory with dharma teachers," (3) good "understanding of dharma," and (4) the "motivation to d this kind of work in the first place," were also important prerequisites for becoming a qualified MBSR teacher. (Kabat-Zinn 2017). Furthermore, Kabat-Zinn demonstrated examples of MBSR teachers and researchers who "were formerly or remain decades-long students of senior Buddhist teachers in various traditions." Some may have completed the traditional three-year retreat once or even several times, while others are themselves "currently senior Chan monks and nuns from China and Taiwan" (Kabat-Zinn 2017). In an interview conducted in 2015, Kabat-Zinn openly expressed that "if an instructor is well grounded in the meditation practices that underlie MBSR and MBCT, then the essential difference [between MBSR, MBCT and the

traditional Buddhist approach to teaching mindfulness] might be zero" (Kabat-Zinn 2015b)[47].

Embodiment as the Source for Translation

Mindfulness teachers are indeed required to guard the heritage of *dharma* in a certain way. The idea of embodiment, as the "experiential (rather than conceptual) knowing of mindfulness," (Teasale et al. 2002) is at the very center of the second-person perspective. It is the key element for grassroots cultural translations made by the mindfulness teachers. According to Kabat-Zinn, a strong personal grounding in the *Buddhadharma* is "hugely helpful." However, although MBSR and other MBIs take fundamental Buddhist frameworks (such as the Four Truths for the Nobles, the Eightfold Path and so on) as their teaching guidelines, Buddhism cannot be taken into the classroom "except in essence." This means that mindfulness teachers have to grasp essential Buddhist teachings on the experiential level. Through this, each teacher can present the tenets in the ways that they have been manifested within the realm of his or her own daily experience without referencing any Buddhist concepts. In this way, Buddhist terminologies have been discarded, yet the message behind them has been reactivated and granted new value, form, and meaning in the modern context.

Since embodiment is a very personal task, the translations that come out of the embodied first-person experience also take very individual forms. There are no standardized forms of translation but rather those that come naturally from one's own *dharma* history and vivid life experience. Mindfulness teachers take the formless lineage and are devoted to the universal *dharma* inherent in every present-moment awareness. The traditional Buddhist conceptual frameworks are deemed "maps." They are extremely helpful yet equally problematic, as they may hinder the "direct and original" process of student-teacher transmission. These transmissions require the "emotional

[47] There are also secular frameworks in place to control the quality of the mindfulness teachers. A sophisticated teacher training system has emerged in the last decades. Plenty of training programs are offered with the goal of helping the participants establish their "core skills, knowledge and attitude" (Crane et al. 2017, 995-996; also Crane et al. 2013; 2010), where all six specific teachings competences mostly around effective communication have been required. A novice will be supervised and evaluated according to the "good practice standards and guideline" made by the UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organization, as well as the "MBSR registration for certified teachers" managed through the US Center for Mindfulness Medical Health Care and Society. Moreover, for new teachers, there is also a system of supervision and inquiry conducted by senior and experienced teachers, as part of their professional training.

safety," support and guidance provided by the teachers and take place as a mutual "inquiry," or "dialogue" between instructors and participants (Kabat-Zinn 2005)[48].

One of the vexed issues of the current mindfulness debate centers around ethics. Upholding ethical behavior is one of the pillars of Buddhist practices. Many psychotherapists, after seriously investigating mindfulness's Buddhist origin (or being long time Buddhist practitioners themselves) published polemics pointing out the lacuna of ethics in modern Mindfulness Movements. Moral discipline, as one of the three pillars of Buddhism, acts as the foundation for concentration and wisdom. It is said that without solid ground in ethics, one cannot make good progress in meditation. Even in the work of the most open-minded modernizer Mahāsi Sayadaw, a great number of pages have been devoted to the importance of keeping diverse disciplines. In traditional retreat settings, discipline is the first teaching to be practiced.

This issue of ethics has also been "solved" by MBSR's developers by using the idea of "embodiment." Though practitioners of MBSR have until now not been asked to practice any specific disciplines, mindfulness teachers have been acting as "embodied ethics" throughout the course. The Hippocratic tradition—first "not harm"—is seen as mirroring the Bodhisattva vow —the vow to free all sentient beings from the cycle of rebirth—, and thus embodied within all those who work in clinical settings. In the context of MBSR, the ethical foundations are "more implicit than explicit," and this has been best expressed through the way the mindfulness teachers "embody it in our own lives and in how we relate to the patients, the doctors, the hospital staff, everybody, and of course how we relate to our own interior experience" (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 294-295). In this way, it is believed that an ethical foundation has naturally been built into the framework of the program.

To conclude, the discussion of the second-person perspective has not only added a new element to the conventional models of cultural translation, but has also offered us insights into the relation between the three authorities, namely, Buddhism, science, and personal experience, within the translation process. First of all, as we can see, in the requirements for MBSR teachers, Buddhism is the hidden authority behind the whole translation process. The MBSR teachers are required to have solid personal groundings in Bud-

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[48] There are two important unpublished works quoting this issue a few times. Ucok, "Dropping into being: Exploring Mindfulness as Lived Experience," (2007) presented on the 5th annual international conference on Mindfulness for Clinicians, Researchers and Educators: Integrating Mindfulness-Based Interventions into Medicine, Healthcare, and Society. Additionally, another manuscript by Williams et al., *The Inquiry Process-Aims, Intentions and Teachings Considerations*.

dhism and to embody core Buddhist teachings as the "maps" for guiding the participants. Meanwhile, MBSR has borrowed the authority of science, and has deliberately adopted it as a tool for MBSR teachers to encourage their participants to continue with mindfulness practices mostly by providing scientific evidence and its efficacy (Kabat-Zinn 2011b, 297-298). Last but not least, by emphasizing the transcultural authority of first person experience generated by a presumed "universal human capacity," mass grass-root translations conducted by MBSR teachers within their individual classrooms have not only been authorized but also appreciated. In short, investigating the second-person perspective has provided us with a new lens for looking into the source of cultural hybridity in the case of the medicalization of mindfulness process.

Conclusion

To wrap up, this short piece of work revealed another side of mindfulness by tracing the historical dynamics of the translation of Buddhist meditation techniques into modern clinical settings. The main goal of this work was to use the notion of cultural translation as a lens through which the relation between Buddhism and modern clinical mindfulness in the process of the medicalization of mindfulness could be examined. The primary concern was to avoid a clear-cut comparative approach, which took certain authorities as representatives of the orthodox Buddhist ideas, and compared their ideas with those that have been articulated in modern clinical settings. Within the discourse of mindfulness, scholars often make comments on whether the current medicalization of mindfulness process is a "watering down" of Buddhist dharma based on such a comparative approach. Yet, as noted in the introduction, this approach may artificially create an authoritative form of "orthodox" or "traditional" Buddhism (Purser 2015c). In fact, there has never been a unified, timeless, pure, and authentic form of Buddhism, and there is no authority to which one can easily appeal in order to legitimize one's own truth claims. The representation of Buddhism has been constantly reshaped by its interaction with Western culture and society, through which our understanding of the Buddhist tradition(s) has been greatly deepened, owing to the ongoing discourse on mindfulness.

Besides a simple comparative approach, there are also many other different perspectives through which the medicalization of mindfulness process may be approached. One could solely investigate the scientific debates on its conceptualization, theorization and methodologies, considering how mindfulness can be measured and the quality and validity of the research; alternatively, one could also pay attention to the social implications of the rising popularity of mindfulness practices, such as how mindfulness has been addressed as as a source for the promotion of social reforms and how it has been "taken-over" by large enterprises to pacify their employees (for example Purser 2015a). Within this thesis, I chose to engage with the discussion

through a global history perspective, taking the medicalization of mindfulness as an example of cultural translation and paying most attention to transformations (rather than comparisons) by revealing how mindfulness has, step-by-step, been taken out of its original Burmese context and been re-adapted for western clinics.

I have offered detailed accounts on how the *translated*, namely, mindfulness meditation, has been selected, simplified, and then codified into a standardized retreat program, which then possesses the potential to move beyond the original social and cultural context. Furthermore, I have shown how the *translators*, Kabat-Zinn and the mindfulness teachers have translated the original Buddhist message into the modern context, into daily languages, into scientific epistemological frameworks, and into new economic relations. Besides this, I have pointed out three *authorities* engaged in the translation process—Buddhism, first-person experience, and science. The interactions among the three have formed a mechanism for securing the *authenticity* of the original message. In this way, I have deconstructed some popular public imaginations around mindfulness meditation by presenting its construction process over the course of history.

The main argument is that Kabat-Zinn, despite some of his groundbreaking work, is not as huge an innovator as is often depicted in the discourse. In fact, many of his ideas that were later popularized in the Mindfulness Movement find their conceivable predecessors even before mindfulness entered the West. Moreover, by adding the second-person perspective into the model of cultural translation, this work has unveiled some hidden connections as well as continuations, rather than raptures, between the secularized MBSR program and the Buddhism traditions. The mindfulness teachers not only take on the task of the traditional *dharma* teachers, but also act as the ground-level cultural translators mediating between Buddhist teachings and science and embodied personal meditative experience.

My initial attempt for this research was to provide an overview of all these discussions. However, in the end, I chose to focus exclusively on the historical development of the MBSR program. I found it useful to look into the process of cultural translation through a close examination of a single case. This method of investigation is particularly helpful to avoid the danger of over-theorization and over-generalization. Each mindfulness-based intervention program has its own distinct features which emerged out of special needs in a specific temporal and spatial context. Each scholar who has engaged in the mindfulness debates also has his or her own agenda. Often, we tend to focus too closely on the phenomena of our times. Yet time changes and even contexts are fluid. A fair comment on the form of "mindfulness" promoted by Kabat-Zinn and his MBSR program does not only come from

examining the ideas and concepts of the program alone. It is also necessary to look into the changing historical, cultural, and social context, and to identify the central translators and their motivation for these translations as well as how they have coped with the issue of authority and authenticity in the new context.

There is some more research to be done in order to expand this current piece of work. First of all, I agree that one cannot discuss mindfulness properly without personal meditation experience, since mindfulness itself is considered to extend beyond the conceptual mind. My personal participations in Goenka and U Ba Khin's *vipassanā* course have offered fresh insights into the source of many ideas that have been circulated within the modern Mindfulness Movements in the West. However, though I have read through a great amount of secondary literature, I lack direct experience with the "Mahāsi Method" and the ways in which IMS and Spiritual Rock have been transmitting meditation in real course settings. Moreover, though I have done a few personal interviews with MBSR instructors, I do not yet have the first-hand experience of being a participant in the program myself, which would give me first hand insight into how these translations have been done (for example Purser 2015; Rosch 2015). Though these are of course not prerequisites for a sound historical work, they could shed light onto the complexity of the phenomena as well as offer a solid foundation for a more just and balanced argumentation.

A number of great works have been done by Sharf, Purser, and Loy on the larger social context of the whole movement, and on how mindfulness has been well-integrated to the western capitalist social structures (Sharf 2015, 2014; Purser 2016, 2015a, 2015b; Loy 2016, 2013; Žižek 2001). In order to examine mindfulness's social impact, one could first look into how mindfulness has been a creative source for identifying social problems (Loy 2016, 2003), and in this way, how it has been perceived as an antidote for the endemic of modernity, sometimes promising to bring about new social changes (for example Kabat-Zinn 2017). Then, one could look at how mindfulness has been integrated into existing social structures, and how it has then been criticized as a part of modernity which contributes to the operation of the current "insane" system rather than to "correcting" it (Moloney 2016). As Bhikkhu Bodhi warned in an interview conducted in 2013 that "absent [of] a sharp social critique, Buddhist practices could easily be used to justify and stabilize the status quo, becoming a reinforcement of consumer capitalism" (Eaton 2013). The social aspect of mindfulness practices has been quite well-researched in recent years and could still be another very interesting research topic for further investigations.

In this thesis, I also did not include the different ways of conceptualizing

mindfulness. It would have been interesting to dedicate a chapter to how mindfulness has been conceptualized through various lenses. First of all, there are some great works by Western scholars prior to and after the emergence of the Mindfulness Movement which investigate how mindfulness has been conceptualized in Buddhist scriptures. Secondly, Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness has been classified as a practitioner's definition whose authenticity and authority came out of direct meditation experience. Thirdly, there are a few definitions of mindfulness that are closely associated with psychological and neuroscientific theories, which have been adopted by many researchers for their scientific and objective characteristics. Finally, there is a subtle understanding (and for some, a misunderstanding) of mindfulness which has emerged out of the methodologies adopted for measuring mindfulness (Grossman 2011, 2010; Baer 2011). The diversity of the conceptualizations of mindfulness reflects shifting authorities, from classical Buddhist scriptures to the universal human experience, to theories of science, and finally to scientific methodologies.

I am very grateful for all the encouragement and guidance from my supervisor and I am especially thankful for the support I received from family and friends. It has been a great learning period which has caused me not only to have a better understanding of the topic, but also of life. It has been challenging for me to explore all the various perspectives, balancing the arguments between the insiders and the outsiders, between different disciplines, and even between various epistemological frameworks. I am quite happy in my decision to engage with the debate through a historical perspective. Instead of commenting on which argument is closer to "truth," which is "correct," or not "harmful," I think that there is no one fixed authentic form that we can hold onto to be on the right side. Everything is fluid and changing. We always have to identify the larger background, the main actors, their motivations, and their interpretations of the situation, so that we can better understand how and why they chose a specific way to interact with the world in a particular time and place.

Yet one may also not be so preoccupied with the historical approach. As Marc Bloch points out in *The Historians Craft,* our obsession with origins is also motivated by the "mania for making judgment" (Bloch 1959, 2). History never equals reality. Historians merely pick and choose the scraps of evidence from the past that remain available to us and make a nice and logical story out of them. This work is not different from any others. I have built my version of the story upon the first and second hand documents that were available to me at this time. I have noticed that there are new memoirs relating to the development of MBSR (and the Vipassanā Movement too) which have been published in the last one or two years. Therefore there may be

new sources coming out in the next years which may complement or even rewrite certain parts of the story. After all, as Kabat-Zinn comments, "it is too early to tell" (Kabat-Zinn 2017). The clinical applications of mindfulness are still undergoing rapid changes and there is great potential to further deepen the current work.

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