

SUMMER 2020

two truths

ARTIST BOOK

o t o m a k O a k i R

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Thesis Artist Book
Two Truths

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01

introduction

I feel that I am standing in the middle of a triangle – experience, book, and archive that make up this research, and the collection of the past was how I got inside the triangle. Gratitude to Donna Faye Burchfield, my advisor Thomas DeFrantz, my thinking partners Ishmael Houston-Jones, Jesse Zaritt (also writing advisor), and portfolio advisor Jillian Peña.

This is what:

I researched.

I am researching.

I am seeking.

I am questioning.

I hope to find in this lifetime, well...
maybe in my next life, let's see.

An idea led me to many places and the research expanded. I questioned to create more questions. Conventional “answer” seemed never enough. Then I realized that this is where I want to be. I love the journey, the process. The joy is in the search.

02

words

Body / Movement awareness practice

Dance
Modern Yoga
Qi gong
Feldenkrais
Alexander Tech.
and more....

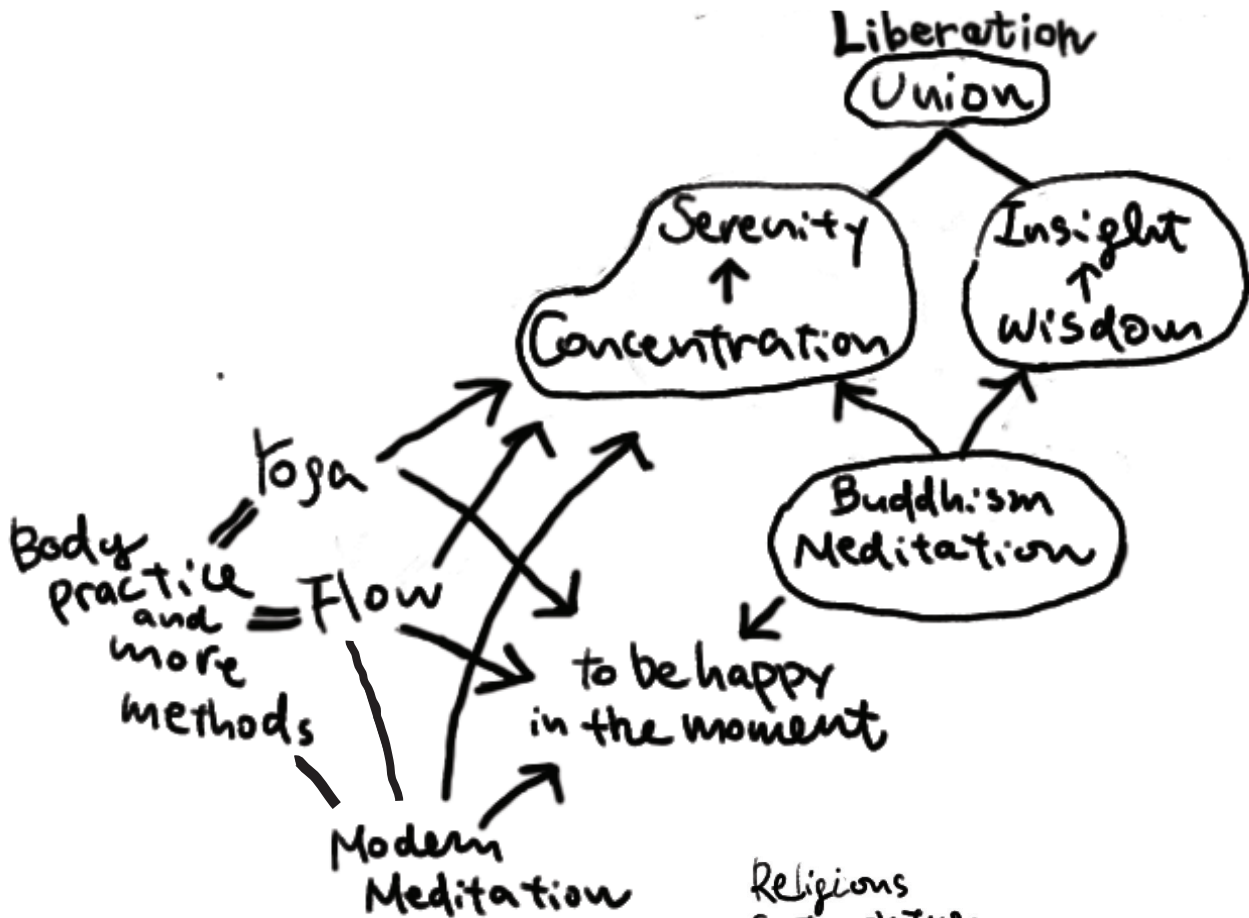
Classic Yoga
• Pranayama
• Asana
• Sitting Posture

Buddhism
• Walking Meditation
• Prostration
• Breathing
• Sitting

Ritual
movement / dance

more
• Visualization
• Mantra
• gesture

and
more..



Religious Contemplation

- Christian Prayer
- Hindu Kirtan
- Jewish Kabbalah
- Sufi Contemplation
- Eastern Orthodox Prayer
- And many more ... 9

more

- TM
- Trans
- Rituals

Dancers practice
to be in their
bodies,
to connect.

Dance suggests to
us that beauty is in
the movement.

We move,
connect and feel.

We experience
time, space, and
emotions
through movement
in our body and
mind. They create a
new passage.

But then what happens
when the body gets
injured or sick?
Or gets old?
What happens then?

What happens to dancers
when they can't dance
anymore?
What happens to people who
can't feel their bodies?
What happens when we lose
our body?

**What happens when
the body dies?
What happens when
we die?**



Buildings:
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New York
2020

**These are
my questions.**

What is
happiness?

I thought maybe it was flow. But it was only momentary.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explained that flow was true happiness. But happiness is impermanent. Pleasant sensations are suffering of change. Things that initially give us pleasure do not continue to do so. We cannot hold on. Once we have happiness, it won't last. We grasp. We want more. Pleasure turns into craving and attachment.

I thought maybe it could be found through modern mindfulness, but it's deeper than that.

I wanted to research and learn about meditation without religious aspects – a stripped out version. Through researching modern mindfulness, I found that the main purpose of most of the western versions are to help people live better in the present moment. They observe sensation and thoughts as they arise in the body and mind. They meditate to be happy at this moment, to be here right now. That is great.

Though I had questions. Is it a business to profit capitalism? Is it serving only privileged people? Does the method not include people from different social contexts? Can a teacher be made by a teacher certification? Is it respecting the culture where it originally came from?

I was not
satisfied.
It felt too
temporary.
I was
looking for
something
more.
I wanted to
go deeper
or maybe
higher. It felt
too shallow.

What about
the meaning
of life?
What about
mortality?
Why are we
here?
Where are
we going?
Why are we
doing this?
I felt stuck.

Every direction I took, I got
stuck. I realized that I was
searching for the meaning
of **THIS**...
existence and liberation.
I wanted something more.
Life seemed deeper.
I am trying to grasp
something to make sense of
THIS life.
I am looking for something,
so that **THIS** makes sense.
Everything is changing.
Nothing lasts. Everything is
impermanent.

I decided to go back.

What is it to discover
wisdom that leads to
serenity
and
insight?

The nature of dance
is to disappear.
Dance is reminding
us that phenomena
are impermanent,
including the body.

**Dance reminds us
that we need to take
care of our bodies
for our wellbeing.
We have to nurture
our bodies. Dancers
know that when the
body is healthy, the
mind feels happier.**

Though at the same time, dance reminds us how much we are attached to this body, and judge. We constantly talk about our bodies. We dress up, decorate our body with stones and metals, put colors on our face, change our hair color. We worry about how we look to the others. And the body divides us. People are divided because of skin color, sex, or body types. We judge others based on how they look externally.

Why are we
here?

Why do we
keep doing
this?

We are all human with a physical body, made out of the same flesh, bone, and blood. We all want happiness, not suffering. We all have rights to be happy regardless of race, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. **Recognize the existence of inequality.**

Why do we keep **cycling**?

photo:
GreenTara
by Rika
Okamoto
New York
2020



Dancers are tuned into the physical body through dancing. Dancers are practicing mindfulness in the **body** by dancing. The first step of mindfulness. They already know it by doing.

Body will disappear, just like dance disappears. The body gets old day by day. Dance is aware of that.

D a n c e
lives in the
moment.
And if you
look at our
lives in a big
picture like
a view from
a helicopter
above, our
lives are just
like **dance.**

Our five senses
are tools to
directly cognize
external matter.
We receive
senses through
body parts, and
the mind creates
thoughts and
feelings.
Be aware of the
body's sensation.
Tune into the
body.
Check in with
the body.
Begin to see
what is going on.

Dance is
mindfulness of
body.

Breath is
mindfulness of
body.

Then we see the
mind naturally.

Count the breath

One cycle out and in, it goes up to ten.

If you become good at it, you can start watching thoughts.

What is thought? Where does it come from and where does it go?

Follow the breath

Breath is slower. Inhale follow the breath nose> throat> heart> navel> thigh> sole of feet. And exhale opposite - Breath flowing through whole body.

Visualize that the breath goes out a short distance from your nose.

Place

Follow the breath, and thread the breathing.

Be more aware of internal sensation of the body.

Analyze

Investigate the breathing process. Ask questions.

Breath is not just the air or wind but all elements, color, smell, taste, tactility, sensation.

The air goes in my body
and it becomes a part
of me. When air goes
out, it is not a part of me
anymore. Somebody else
can breathe the air and it
becomes part of them.

**Begin to see that we are
impermanent. It is constantly
changing.**

When I eat a raisin, is it still a raisin
or body?

The air I breathe in, is it my air, or
your air or nobody's air?

What do I consider me, or my body?

I perceive things as self or others.

photo:
Life
by Rika
Okamoto
New York
2020



Then **feelings** and
mind.

Understand-
ing their nature,
causes, functions
and effects.

**Suffering has two factors,
external and internal cause.**

Self is designated in
dependence on the
continuum of body and
mind. With this **I**, all of
us want happiness and do
not want suffering.

There is somebody in charge,
who is directing body and mind.
There is an appropriator inside my
body and mind.
Self is the appropriator.
All of us have a sense of self or **I**.

I is designated in dependence on
mind and body.
Who is this **I**?
What is causing **I**,
and who is creating **I**?
Mind is designating **I**
- my body, my feelings, my wealth,
my air.
I want to eat.
I feel sad.
I am dancing.
Who is saying this?
I can't find it.

Does **I** exist as either
mind or body?

Or the collection of
mind and body?

Or different from
mind and body?

Or neither body nor
mind?

A misconception of **I** is that it is inherently existing. It is not established by way of its own entity. **I** is set up as conceptually dependent on mind and body.

I recognize the
existence of I and of
self-centeredness.

I recognize
my **heart** and **mind**,
and they are
constantly **grasping.**

I recognize
my **thoughts** trigger
feelings.

**Introspective
awareness**

**Mindfulness
awareness**

“Delight at receiving money and possessions and dejection at not receiving or losing them.

Delight with receiving praise and approval and dejection when receiving criticism or disapproval.

Delight with fame and a good reputation and dejection when infamous and notorious.

Delight with pleasurable sights, sound, smells, tastes and tangible objects and dejection with those that cause unpleasant feeling.”

- The 14th Dalai Lama,

The Foundation of Buddhist Practice

I worried if I danced well or not.

Would people praise or criticize me?

Dance taught me about eight worldly concerns.

It goes around and around, and it keeps coming back.

As long as
anger, pride,
and **jealousy**
are in mind,
there will
always be
external
energies.

Getting
rid of one
enemy today,
tomorrow
another will
appear.

Attachment, aversion, ignorance.

If it's my body, I care. If it's the other's, do I care as much?

If it's my child, I worry, if it's the other's child, do I worry as much?

If it's my community, I care, if it's the other's, do I care as much?

Self and others, mine and theirs

Ignorance grasps
inherent existence – self

Recognize
suffering.
With compassion,
we want to free
others from
suffering.

Equalizing and exchanging
self and others.

**Love,
kindness,
generosity,
and compassion.**

Abide in
equanimity,
Free of bias,
attachment,
and anger.

**The antidote to hatred is
meditation on **love**.**

And compassion.

Mind is changing
every moment.

Beyond the existence
of a self, the nature of
self can be examined.
It changes from
moment to moment.



The assembly of the Forty-two Peaceful Dieties (zhi-ba'i lha-tshogs).
 Shawu Tsering of Sengeshong Yagotsangin Amdo
 Commissioned by Gyurme Dorje ©2002
 The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Penguin Books, 2005

We take photos and try to freeze a moment, but it never truly works because it's not its nature. A "moment" is not permanent. Dance knows that. Dance is teaching us that nothing is permanent. It means that it actually doesn't exist.

The more we get **attached** to **unchange**, the more we suffer.

As soon as we talk about our experiences, words begin to replace 'experience.' The actual feeling of the experience seems to fade. It's experiential. One cannot experience 'experience' without actually doing it at this moment. So we live and dance in this moment.

But what creates our experience? body? mind? or phenomena?



The assembly of the Fifty-eight Wrathful Dieties (khro-bo'i lha-tshogs).

Shawu Tsering of Sengeshong Yagotsangin Amdo

Commisioned by Gyurme Dorje ©2002

The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Penguin Books, 2005

Then **phenomena**.
Understand-
ing their nature,
causes, functions
and effects.

**Nature is constantly changing.
That is why it's beautiful.
All phenomena are impermanent.
That's why they are precious.
Did you notice that even a table
changes every day?
It's never the same, and it cannot
be repeated.
I begin to see gross impermanenc**

Phenomena seem to appear differently depending on our perspective. Each being's experience differs around phenomena.

Then what is real reality?

e.

Is the color of blue I see the same blue
as the bird sees it?

Is the scent of a flower that I smell the
same as the flower the dog smells?

Is the dance I danced the same as the
dance the audience sees?

**If they think what they perceive
through their senses is real, then
what is the true essence of the
color of blue, the scent of a flower,
or a dance?**

Is a cup broken in half
still a cup?

Or something else?

How do I know the thing
I see is a tree?

**Does an object have
an essence?**

Past and future are products of the
moment.

But is there a present moment?
By the time I say now, it is already
What is present?
I can't find.

One moment creates the next moment.
A moment is created by a moment.

I can only recognize them through
A complex interplay of causes and
experience.

the mind. Be here, at the present

y past.

oment.

nt before.

gh senses that I have.

d conditions results in our

Dependent arising₆₇

**Grapes grow
from seeds.**

**Space is
the absence of objects.**

**A path in a forest is
absence of trees.**

**Humans depend on
body and mind.**

**One would die, because
one was born.**

Phenomena are controlled
by one phenomenon, **mind**.
Phenomena exist in
dependence upon the **mind**.
Body, feelings, mind, and
phenomena are changing
moment to moment.
Phenomena are
i m p e r m a n e n t .
And all are dependent on
cause and **conditions**.

Physical egg
and sperm meet
and become
physical embryo.
Where does
mind come from?
Mind is
not physical.
Physical matter
cannot produce
mind,
nor can
the mind produce
physical matter.
The first time
when the mind sees
a flower,
does the mind
recognize it
as a flower?

Then, there is I.
The subtle I.
Inherent I
is extremely
subtle. And the
subtlest mind
transmigrates
to another life.

A lamp being lit from
another lamp.

**Clear and luminous
aspect of
the mind.**

**The subtle mind
itself is
pure.**

**Colorless water
that can be colored
or none
at all.**

**The subtlest mind
is
clear light.**

**Clear light
has no color,
no gender,
no self.**

The highest yoga tantra explains that there are two concepts of a person
- a person or self that is as we exist at this moment, which is the gross physical body and conditioned mind.
Then there is the subtle body and mind, which is a single entity. It is awareness.

“Conventional nature is its clarity and cognizance, the mind perceives and experiences.”*

This is where we live.
We are here, alive and experiencing life - suffering, pleasure and all.
Recognize precious human life, and human potential.
What can we do with our life?
What can we create?
Recognize suffering and suffering of others, because all humans have the right to be happy and have the potential to liberate.

**“Its ultimate nature is its
emptiness and inherent
existence.”***

Everything is real and is not real.
Both real and not real.
Neither real nor not real.
Recognize impermanence,
emptiness, selfless.

* The 14th Dalai Lama,
The Foundation of Buddhist Practice

**They live side by side.
Dependent arising.
One reflects the other.
They exist together.**

**One understands
happiness,
because one knows
sadness.**

If happiness is
derived purely
from the mind
itself, it will
be lasting
happiness.

It is love and compassion.

Meditate on impermanence
and emptiness.

Meditation is a union of
mental calm and clear insight.

It is not this or that.

**It
is
the
middle
way**

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03

research

1. Contemplative Studies
2. Flow
3. Modern Mindfulness
4. Dharma

1. Contemplative Studies

I learned about Contemplative Studies when I started pursuing Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teacher's training for my thesis research at the Mindfulness Center at Brown University. Contemplation is the focusing of attention in a sustained fashion leading to deepened states of awareness, concentration, tranquility, and insight. Contemplative Studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field that “focuses on the many ways human beings have found, across cultures and across time, to concentrate, broaden and deepen conscious awareness”¹ and dedicates itself to research education on contemplative practices and contemplative experiences. It integrates science, humanities and the creative arts broadly.

Scientific research in Contemplative Studies that is predominantly found in the fields of neuroscience, cognitive science, and

psychology investigates the “science of the mind” – human consciousness and varieties of the contemplative experience. It also examines the benefits and risks in health and healing on both individual and community levels.² Humanities research investigates how philosophers and thinkers have been questioning and exploring the meaning of life, and how religions around the world devote themselves to attain liberation through contemplative practice. Creative arts such as dance, theater, music, and writing also join this growing interdisciplinary field and explore mind/body contemplative experiences that are found in a variety of secular practices.

From Contemplative Studies, contemplative pedagogy and education emerges and integrates with Critical Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy “is a philosophy of education and social movement that com-

bines education with critical theory. Historically speaking, it is an approach to teaching and learning informed by Marxist critical theory and other radical philosophies with the intention of helping students to develop critical consciousness (“conscientization”).”³ Paulo Freire, in an interview with Ira Shor in *Liberation Pedagogy* states:

(Social) transformation is possible because consciousness is not a mirror of reality, not a mere reflection, but is *reflexive* and *reflective* of reality. As conscious human beings, we can discover how we are conditioned by the dominant ideology. We can gain distance on our moment of existence. Therefore, we can learn how to become free through a political struggle in society. We can struggle to become free precisely because we can know we are not free! That is why we can think of transformation. [...] the irony of consciousness that makes liberation possible. By studying our lack of freedom we can learn how to become free.⁴

Henry Giroux explains Freire’s concept in *Lesson from Paulo Freire: Critical Pedagogy* is an “educational movement guided by passion and principal, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize author-

itarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action.”⁵ Furthermore, Shor describes Critical Pedagogy as follows:

Habit of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse.⁶

Critical pedagogy emphasizes increasing awareness and consciousness, often expressed in and as social engagement and even political action.⁷

I believe that mind/body practices such as meditation and dance can play an important role in Critical Pedagogy to deepen awareness and consciousness to liberate practitioners from systematic thinking. The mind/body-based experiential modes of learning and practice cultivate active awareness of physical and mental environments in the present moment.

In *Introducing Contemplative Studies*, Luis Komjathy brings attention to the posture and the breathing pattern and technique in meditation practice and investigates the importance of the actual embodiment and physicality – the somatic dimension – in contemplative practice. He suggests that “the somatic dimension of contemplative practice may, in turn, help to overcome the mind-based and consciousness-based biases in much of Contemplative Studies.”⁸

Embodied practices such as meditation and dance have to be practiced and experienced to truly understand their essence and multiplicitous nature. In a think tank lecture by Komjathy for Contemplative Studies at Brown University, he explains that Contemplative Studies “recognizes the importance of third-person, second-person, and critical first-person approaches; it makes space for direct personal experience with specific forms of practice. In this way it challenges the denial of embodied experience and subjectivity within much of academic discourse.”⁹ An Ashtanga yoga practitioner David Swenson writes in his book *Introducing Ashtanga Yoga*: “If one wants

to know the qualities of an apple, it would do no good to draw a diagram and look at apples in a jar. But to bite into the fruit itself, one would gain an immediate experience of its essence. The nutritious effects of the apple would also be readily absorbed and assimilated as we enjoy its qualities.”¹⁰ By engaging embodied awareness practices, I believe that developing critical consciousness and liberation is possible.

At this point, I found that much of the research for Contemplative Studies has been located in the fields of science and humanities and studied within third-person traditional academic approaches. In recent years, institutions of higher education have started recognizing the benefit of mindfulness meditation and have begun to integrate it within their curriculums, but creative arts, especially dance are not yet recognized as embodied contemplative practices, as offering valuable contributions to Contemplative/Critical Pedagogy. My research is ongoing. I am hoping to integrate meditation and dance further with Contemplative/Critical Pedagogy and introduce them to communities in all areas of study to explore critical learning and self-inquiry for liberation of

consciousness.

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1. Louis Komjathy, *Introducing Contemplative Studies* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 17.
 2. Harold Ross, "Brown University Contemplative Studies" <https://www.brown.edu/academics/contemplative-studies/>
 3. Komjathy, *Introducing Contemplative Studies*, 161.
 4. Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (London: Bergin & Garvery Publishers, 1987), 13.
 5. Henry Giroux. "Lesson from Paulo Freire." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (October, 2010): 17.
 6. Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 129.
 7. Komjathy, *Introducing Contemplative Studies*, 161.
 8. Ibid., 69.
 9. Louis Komjathy, "Contemplative Studies: An Overview and the Current States of Our Field" December 5, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgT67hRIH44&list=PLTiEfrOcz_4P-bcRwPx63EhYAXB44eOb&index=4&t=0s
 10. David Swenson, *Ashtanga Yoga: The Practice Manual* (Austin: Ashtanga Yoga Production, 1999), 6.

2. Flow

When I danced or practiced yoga, I often experienced the feeling of being in the zone. I knew that my experience of a heightened awareness of body, mind, and surroundings through dancing involved some kind of greater connectivity and a sense of contemplation, but I didn't know what it was. I didn't have a name for it. My attention was completely absorbed by the activity of movement. (It seemed like) I stopped thinking and that my relationship with time was somehow changed. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this human experience *flow* and there have been numerous studies on it since the 1970s. He “discovered” that real happiness does not depend on external events, fortune, or power, but, rather, on how we interpret them, that happiness must be cultivated from within.¹¹ His research shows that the feeling of true happiness arises when people are experiencing

deep enjoyment and creativity from being involved with every detail of the activities or their lives. His first research involved a few hundred artists, athletes, rock climbers, yogis, musicians, chess masters, writers, surgeons, and so forth – “in other words, people who seemed to spend their time in precisely those activities they prefer,” and he developed “a theory of optimal experience based on the concept of flow – the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.”¹²

Flow can occur with the combination of these elements:

- 1) A challenging activity that requires skill
- 2) The merging of action and awareness
- 3) A clear goal

- 4) Immediate feedback
- 5) Concentration in the task at hand
 - removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life
- 6) Sense of control over actions
 - sense of exercising control, not being in control
- 7) The loss of self-consciousness
 - specifically as freedom from concerns about evaluation by others or self-presentation.
 - yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after flow experience is over.
- 8) The transformation of time
- 9) Autotelic experiences

I remember that I used to tell people that dancing sometimes felt like therapy. Csikszentmihalyi writes: “The concentration of the flow experience –together with other elements – provides order to consciousness, including the enjoyable condition of psychic negentropy,” and further states that “the simple truth – that the control of consciousness determines the quality of life – has been known for a long time; in fact, for as long as human records exist.”¹³ Attention

is cultivated by focusing on an activity, and “attention determines what will or will not appear in consciousness.”¹⁴

The last key element (the number nine the list above) in order to have an optimal flow experience is to possess an autotelic personality.

The term ‘autotelic’ derives from two Greek words, *auto* meaning self, and *telos* meaning goal. It refers to a self-contained activity, one that is done not with the expectation of some future benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward. [...] When experience is autotelic, the person is paying attention to the activity for its own sake.¹⁵

According to psychologist Jeanne Nakamura, even though one of the elements of optimal experience is hypo-egoic – a psychological state characterized by relatively little involvement of the self – flow is seen to be both hypo-egoic and egoic, because flow state occurs with a loss of self-awareness and yet the aim is ultimately a growth of the self.¹⁶ One of the key elements of flow - autotelic experience - seems to suggest that one is engaging in the activity purely for the sake of the activity itself, but actually one

is receiving the benefit of an increased and heightened sense of “self” from the optimal experience. Nakamura explains further the distinction between the “I” and “me” when people describe the flow state as “I forget myself.” What is forgotten is “me”: the “self” that individuals think about, monitor, protect, enhance, and build as they move through life. In contrast, there is “I”: the phenomenal self that continues to exist and experiences finely tuned awareness during the flow activity.¹⁷ Csikszentmihalyi clarifies: “a painter who enjoys painting must have internalized criteria for ‘bad’ or ‘good.’ [...] Without such guidelines, it is impossible to experience flow.”¹⁸ During flow, another “I” continues to exist, experience and receive immediate feedback moving towards a goal.

The enjoyable activities that produce the state of flow and feelings of happiness can have negative consequences. Flow involves not only reduced awareness of oneself but potentially also reduced thoughts about other people, as well as broader social concerns that are not part of the flow activity.¹⁹ Some people could become dependent on the ability to experience flow activities

and not be able to pay attention to anything else. The self could become captive of a certain kind of order and is then unwilling to cope with the ambiguities of life.²⁰ Csikszentmihalyi warns us of the addictive quality to the power of flow. He observed many dancers and described that some dancers’ enjoyment of dancing is so intense that they were willing to give up other options in life for its sake. Some dancers he interviewed expressed that dance was a part of their life and a part of them that they could not live without.²¹ I remember that I experienced these exact feelings. Many dancers, including myself, have spoken of experiencing the feeling of the loss of identity when they stop dancing.

Researchers of sports psychology suggest that there may be a relationship between flow and dependence, specifically exercise dependence. Some researchers have attempted to define exercise dependence and proposed criteria for the diagnosis.²² Despite such diagnostic criteria, psychologists continue to debate over whether the condition actually exists, and whether exercise dependence is positive or negative. It could be positive because participation

can improve both psychological and physical strength and it could be negative due to the experience of withdrawal symptoms when exercise is withheld and the belief by participants that they cannot cope without their daily fix.²³

They suggest further research on this subject. I am noticing that there is much research on athletes in sports, but research focused on dancers hardly exists even though many dancers are devoted to their physical training as rigorously as athletes. I hope that the research on flow state dependence will also extend to dancers to foster conversations on their wellbeing in the future.

The optimal experience of flow is definitely experienced through dance. Focusing on a single activity and cultivating concentration brings an order of consciousness, and serenity emerges. I am questioning if the optimal experience of flow is actually the experience of true happiness as Csikszentmihalyi suggests because of the continuous existence of heightened egoic self, and negative repercussions from states of flow. Flow creates only momentary experiences of happiness and may generate un-

pleasurable emotions and obstacles after the enjoyable activities are over. Contemplative Studies suggests that the somatic dimension of contemplative practice may be the key to liberation of consciousness, but it doesn't seem possible because of the existence of the phenomenal "I". I hope to do more research on flow activities and contemplative practices including dance, and analyze the practices' contemplative states and effects.

11. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 2.

12. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 4.

13. *Ibid.*, 59. 20.

14. *Ibid.*, 33.

15. *Ibid.*, 67.

16. Jeanne Nakamura and Scott Roberts "Hypo-Egoic Component of Flow," *Oxford Library of Psychology: The Oxford Handbook of Hypo-Egoic Phenomena* (2017): 133-146.

17. Nakamura and Roberts, "Hypo-Egoic Component of Flow"

18. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 56.

19. Nakamura and Roberts, "Hypo-Egoic Component of Flow"

20. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 62.

21. *Ibid.*, 100.

22. Sarah Partington, Elizabeth Partington and Steve Olivier, "The Dark Side of Flow: A Qualitative Study of Dependence in Big Wave Surfing," *Sport Psychologist*, 23 (2009): 170-186.

23. Partington, Elizabeth and Olivier, "The Dark Side of Flow: A Qualitative Study of Dependence in Big Wave Surfing"

3. Modern Mindfulness

The illustration (Figure 1) from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind) shows examples of contemplative practices currently in use in secular, organizational and academic settings.²⁴ I was very excited to find this illustration at first because dance was included as a branch of contemplative practice, but at the same time, I didn't quite understand the criteria for inclusion in this collection. I wondered if this tree of contemplative studies is representing the activities that could experience states of flow, since flow can happen during almost any type of activity. The website explains that any practice as long as it is cultivating awareness and wisdom can be included in the tree. It felt a little vague on what kind of wisdom they were referring to.

The tree includes 'meditation' among the other contemplative practices. Flow and the meditative process can share

similar experiences of absorption. People who meditate may feel some sense of flow as a result of single-pointed concentration.

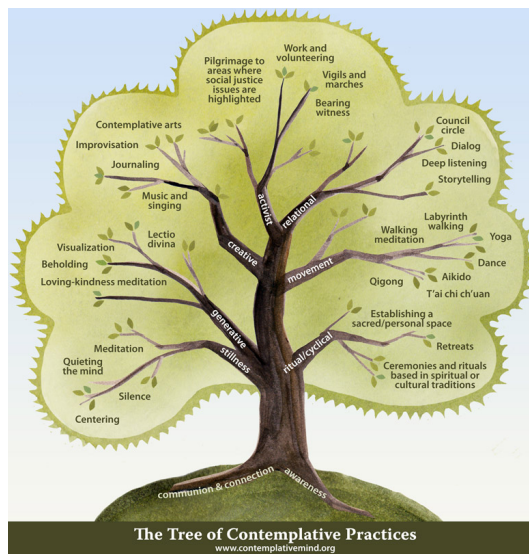


Figure 1
Maia Duerr and Carrie Bergman. n.d.
"The Tree of Contemplative Practices,"
The Center for Contemplative Mind Society

Mindfulness meditation has become very popular as a secular type of meditation in the West and the words themselves became keywords for health and wellness studies. The word “mindfulness” seems to carry elements of calmness, spirituality and hipness, and the number of people who are interested in practicing mindfulness is growing. At the same time corporate businesses associated with the catchword are also growing. I recently discovered that even Japan, where Japanese Zen Buddhism was one of the original inspirations and resources for western mindfulness meditation, started importing back the western secular form of meditation, introducing new words – “meditation” or “maendo-hurunesu.” Of course, Japanese already had its own language for meditation and mindfulness, but Japanese society seems to be attracted to the newer meditation practices reformed by western culture more than their old traditions.

I have been noticing that mindfulness and meditation practice are also frequently used in dance, improvisation, and somatic technique classes. Its popularity in dance seems to be increasing in recent years. It completely makes sense to

integrate mindfulness and meditation with movement awareness practices, since dance teaches practitioners to pay attention to the body, movement and senses from moment-to-moment. I myself have been practicing meditation on a daily basis since the 1990s.

But, I wanted to understand what exactly “mindfulness” is in the western secular context that “everybody” seems to be engaging. I decided to attend several programs of the well-established Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) curriculum; I enrolled in their eight-week course, retreats, and their teacher training certification at the Mindfulness Center at Brown University to deepen my research and knowledge.

MBSR was founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn PhD, in a collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the 1970s. Komjathy writes: “‘Mindfulness Movement (MM)’ as an emerging contemplative tradition is primarily indebted to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his MBSR.”²⁵ The practice is presented as a secular and therapeutic method, and the technique has its original source in Buddhism. An eight-week scientific evidence-based program offers intensive training to assist people with

THE STRESS-REACTION CYCLE (Automatic/Habitual)

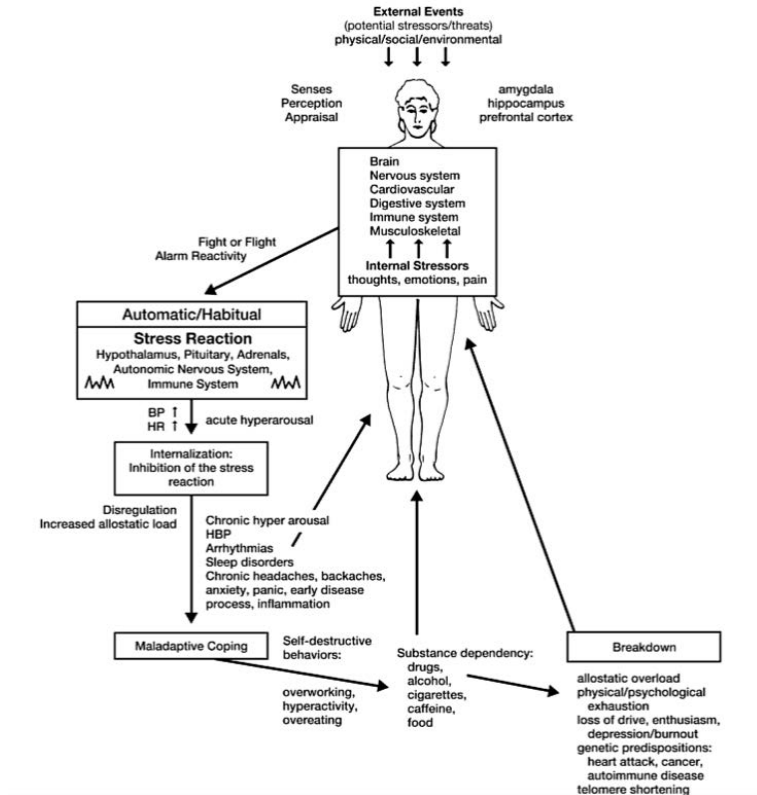


Figure 2

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Full Catastrophe Living:

Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness.

New York: Bantam Books.1990 revised in 2013.

COPING WITH STRESS RESPONDING VS. REACTING

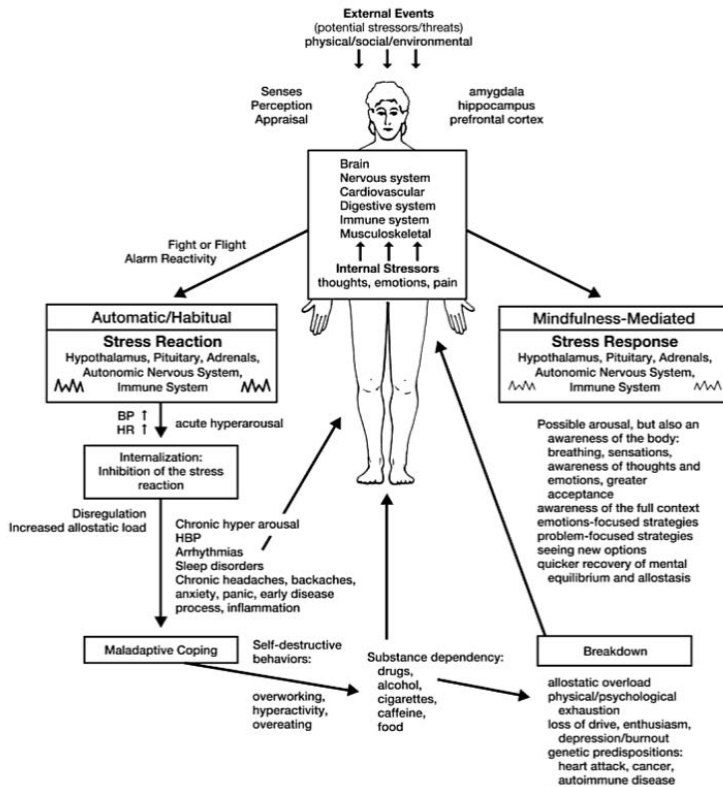


Figure 3
Jon Kabat-Zinn
Full Catastrophe Living:
Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness.
New York: Bantam Books.1990 revised in 2013.

stress, anxiety, depression and pain. The curriculum aims to cultivate the awareness of mind – patterns of behavior, thinking, feeling and action through a combination of sitting and walking meditation, body and sense awareness, body scan, and Hatha yoga. The program has been successfully utilized in a numbers of medical centers, as well as in schools, prisons, athletic training programs, and corporate workplace in the US. Jon Kabat-Zinn describes his definition of mindfulness: “the awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”²⁶

Secular mindfulness meditation cultivates moment to moment non-judgmental awareness and practices of “being” instead of “doing” in the present moment. Kabat-Zinn writes that “thinking is not bad, nor is it even undesirable during meditation. What matters is whether you are aware of your thoughts and feelings during meditation and how you are in relationship with them.”²⁷

Kabat-Zinn explains the benefit of mindfulness by demonstrating two types of stressors in the diagrams – chronic stressors as stressors that affect our health over extended periods of time and acute stressors

as stressors that come and go over relatively short periods of time, which are similar to triggers that cause a fight-or-flight response (Figure 2). In the case of acute stressors, for humans like us, we can think about what might have happened even after the immediate stressor is over, and the trauma from the event can stay for a long time.²⁸ Kabat-Zinn explains how mindfulness can improve our physical and mental health by possibly intersecting the stressors by being aware of habitual and automatic reactions. He suggests that instead of reacting to the stressors with automatic reactions, by being “mindful” we can recognize the reactions triggered, and respond and cope with the stressors differently. It could lead to seeing a situation more clearly, finding a different solution, or expressing and communicating emotions effectively (Figure 3).

Secular mindfulness meditation practices may expand to the cultivation of compassion, love, and kindness, a technique that originated from Buddhist tradition. Through this research, I started understanding that the intention of secular mindfulness is to help people live better in the present by simply observing sensation and thought as

they arise in the body and mind.²⁹

There has been numerous scientific research done on the outcomes of meditation in recent years. Meditation has proved to be an effective intervention for cardiovascular disease, chronic pain, anxiety, panic disorders, substance abuse, and reduction of depressive symptoms. It also seems to heighten perception, improve reaction time and responsive motor skills, and increase concentration and attention. Some doctors and hospitals are working towards allowing patients to be able to claim meditation programs to health insurance companies.

The other side of modern mindfulness:

- Trauma

Although there are numerous benefits, some researchers are warning us to be aware of some risks in modern meditation. According to neuroscientist Dr. Willoughby Briton at Brown University, some meditation participants report a sense of confusion, disorientation, fear, anxiety and panic, and experience the resurfacing of trauma during modern mindfulness meditation. Author of Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness, David Treleaven writes: “While trauma cre-

ates stress, mindfulness has been shown to reduce it. [...] For people who’ve experienced trauma, mindfulness meditation can exacerbate symptoms of traumatic stress. This can include flashbacks, heightened emotional arousal, and dissociation.”³⁰

Trauma can be considered any experience that is stressful enough to leave people feeling helpless, frightened, overwhelmed, or profoundly unsafe.³¹ Trauma can be developed by individuals without knowing that they have it. Treleaven explains that when we think of trauma, we must be aware of the conditions in a social context where people are living. People of color, women, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, or people with poor working conditions are more likely to develop trauma or PTSD over the course of their lives. In the United States, nearly one in five women will be raped at some point in their lives, and Black people are four times as likely as White people to die because of an encounter with law enforcement.³² Trauma of all kinds including the violence of racism and living under a military occupation can create shame and self-judgement that can arise even during seemingly simple act such as

sitting in meditation.

Treleaven recommends that anyone offering meditation practice needs to be informed and be sensitive to the risks that may surface in people with traumatic stress, and needs to deepen their understanding of different social, political, economic contexts and conditions.

Mindfulness can be valuable for trauma survivors. It is recommended to modify the session according to the participant's needs, and work with a professional who is specializing in trauma.

- Understanding the other culture

During my research in attending various meditation courses this past year, I sensed that there was some confusion among participants and even among some teachers regarding mindfulness meditation in the secular context. The concept of mindfulness comes from Buddhism, but popular modern mindfulness that is usually practiced in the West is, I believe, not Buddhism, or any other religion, even though a spiritual component seems to be present during the practice. During the research, I observed that teachers and participants in class often

used gestures and language that have the remembrance of eastern culture, yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism or combinations of those, and it seemed that they actually didn't know the meaning of those gestures and language. I was reminded of Orientalism and cultural appropriation of eastern, indigenous and African cultures that began in the beginning of the 20th century.

A video was shown in one of the meditation classes that I attended. Computerized caricatures with "Eastern" outfits and props performed stereotypical gestures and rituals. They competed with each other over who could meditate longer. At the end, a beginner Caucasian male meditator won the competition and the video drew a big laugh in class. After the video was over, I spoke with one of my classmates and asked if she felt that the video was making fun of other cultures and races. She said she didn't notice. I wondered if the video had illustrated another minority race, if people would have noticed something.

I can't help but notice that currently, western mindfulness practices lack diversity and awareness. The participants in the meditation classes I attended were usu-

ally made up of a majority of white people, and as for teachers, there was almost no diversity. I felt uncomfortable from time to time attending some of the classes during my research.

Mindfulness meditation is growing into a multi-million dollar business to profit capitalism. It reminds me of what happened to yoga especially in the last 30 years. The exchange of cultures goes in many directions and we benefit from learning each other's differences, but I am questioning when appreciation crosses a line to become appropriation. I wonder at what point modern meditation turns into a tool for benefiting personal and capitalistic agendas, and becomes disrespectful to the culture and people that originated the practice.

24. Maia Duerr and Carrie Bergman. n.d. "The Tree of Contemplative Practices," The Center for Contemplative Mind Society, accessed May 2020. <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>.

25. Louis Komjathy, *Introducing Contemplative Studies*. (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 151.

26. Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990 revised in 2013), xxxv.

27. Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, 66.

28. Ibid., 310.

29. The Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron, *Approaching The Buddhist Path* (Somerville: Wisdom Publication, 2017), 254.

30. Davis Treleaven, 2018. *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2018), xvi

31. Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness*, xix

32. Ibid., 17

4. Dharma

Four Noble Truths

1. The truth of suffering
2. The truth of the origin of suffering
3. The truth of cessation
4. The truth of the path

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