Mindfulness and More - Contemplative Pedagogy in Context: A Holistic Look at the 'Active Ingredients' in Spiritual Teaching

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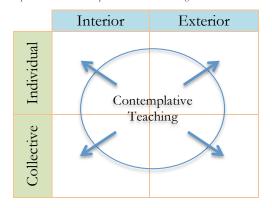### A Deep Life Mentoring

Introduction and Motivation

Most contemplative science research to date has focused on the individual "practitioner," and what he or she "does," usually mentally, and isolated from any larger relational or social context, to achieve specific results. Moreover, much research focuses on MBSR and other several-week long mindfulness training paradigms. One advantage of this paradigm is its relative simplicity and consistency across research protocols. One disadvantage, however, is that it de-emphasizes or ignores much of what may be central to the efficacy of traditional contemplative methodologies.

One way in which contemplative humanists can aid the work of contemplative scientists is by advancing the specificity and range of variables that scientists might examine. This poster aims to expand the territory of contemplative science in three ways:

- First, by focusing attention on the role of teacher, culture, and social system in effecting transformative change in individual practitioners.
- Second, by highlighting specific items in each of these categories that may constitute "active ingredients" – likely variables in need of isolation and testing by contemplative scientists, some of which are beyond the current range of the mindfulness paradigm.
- Third, this poster aims to expand contemplative science by pointing backwards and forwards to the more esoteric, and sometimes more elusive, contemplative methods and results that have been its inspiration.

Analysis and Examples

One shorthand way to attempt to ensure that an analysis of any event is as inclusive as possible of its meaningful elements is to use a simple quadrant map. The quadrants are formed by columns representing "interior" and "exterior" perspectives, and rows representing "individual" and "collective" objects and subjects.[1] In the center of this map we place the focus of our analysis: events of contemplative teaching. In so doing, a sample of the meaningful "active ingredients" worthy of further consideration by contemplative scientists in each quadrant are revealed and organized:

Individual Interior: The Teacher's Subjective Experience.

1. The teacher's degree and type of contemplative realization.
2. The teacher's developmental psychological stage – many theories exist, this active ingredient argues that some form of developmental perspective must be provided in order to account for, at the very least, part of the reason why some teachers are more effective and reaching some students than others.
3. How a teacher manipulates his or her own attention and physiology when engaging with students.
4. The teacher's values, intentions, and goals when instructing a student.
5. The current mood, psychological state, and degree of attentiveness of the teacher.

Individual Exterior: What the Teacher Does

1. Pointing-out instructions – direct, experiential descriptions of the contemplative insight as it occurs for the teacher which then catalyzes similar recognitions in students.
2. Giving and Testing Koans
3. Socratic Dialogue (e.g. Pierre Grimes, Philosophical Midwifery[2])
4. Devising Self-enquiry "experiments"[3]
5. Performance of empowerments and other ritual interactions.[4]
   a. "Permission," *rje-gnang*
   b. "Gathering of Mantras," *sngags-btu*
   c. "Oral Transmission," *lung*
   d. "Discourse," *khrid*
6. Textual reading, interpretation, and elaboration.
7. Teaching through Difficult Behavior – contemplative "pushing" (e.g. the extreme version of this is "Crazy Wisdom" and its effect through cognitive dissonance and intense emotionality).
8. Teaching by Being – contemplative "pulling:" learning by consciously or unconsciously "templating" off of the presence of the teacher.[5]

Collective Interior: Interpersonal Interaction and the Intersubjective Domain

1. Collective Consciousness / Intelligence in the field of students and teacher: e.g. synchronistic non-intentional communication which facilitates learning and development within a group.[6]
2. The construction of a "view" – the cognitive framework of shared values and shared meaning between teacher and student used to, for example:
   a. establish that contemplative development is possible and that receiving contemplative instruction is worthwhile;
   b. interpret contemplative experience and refine or deconstruct various understandings of "self," "other," and "world."
3. Phenomenological Comparison and Iterative Instruction – such comparison and instruction leads to mutual understanding between teacher and student and occurs especially in private interviews with a teacher with regards to a specific technique (e.g. *vipassana* meditation).
4. Inspiration to proceed through the contemplative path, however one proceeds. For example, multiple Tibetan Buddhist traditions hold that without the inspiration derived from a healthy relationship with a spiritual mentor, advanced contemplative development is impossible. Teachers may use many different methods for inspiring a student.[5]
5. Community: What is the level of realization, etc. of the surrounding group of contemplative practitioners?

Collective Exterior: Physio-energetic Influences and the Social Systems Surrounding the Teaching Event

1. "Mind-to-Mind" Transmission, Shaktipat
2. Relational Styles – Rules of engagement for facilitating certain types of interactions.
   a. Teacher, Guru, Priest, Therapist, Coach, Consultant, Mentor, Preacher, Guide.[7]
   b. Dharma Instructor, Meditation or Ritual Trainer, Spiritual Mentor, Refuge or Vow Preceptor, Mahayana Master, Tantric Master, Root Guru[5]
3. Organizational Systems – How are power, division of labor, and delivery of teachers' time and services organized in the contemplative school or network?
   a. Teacher / CEO / Board of Directors
   b. Teacher as member of lineage and linear chain of command
   c. Democratic network of authorized teachers / voting members
   d. Independent Teacher without much organizational structure
   e. Contemplative Community and Communal Mentoring: Is such contemplative community present; and is it organized hierarchically or not? How do organized systems for peer-to-peer learning impact contemplative development?
4. Technology – The direct and indirect effects of technology-based interventions between teachers and students (e.g. how pre-recorded, web-delivered meditation instructions effect different results than the same instructions delivered in person).
5. Language: Does translation directly impact the degree of details of the impact of contemplative learning?

Conclusions and Contributions to Contemplative Science

This analysis will aid the field of contemplative science by greatly expanding its vision and vocabulary in several ways.

- First, by sketching the most comprehensive "whole picture" of contemplative development – so that specific, mental practices are viewed in light of their relationships to all other categories of active ingredients.
- Second, by stimulating further discussion amongst scientists and humanists around these very preliminary designations of active ingredients and their categories in order to 1) more clearly define the parameters; 2) highlight the need to create new instruments of measurement; and 3) suggest specific potential future contemplative scientific foci in both the natural and social scientific arenas.
- Third, this analysis has begun to articulate the necessary foundation for a *trans-lineage* understanding of contemplative development; that is, an understanding that does not simply put multiple contemplative lineages and traditions in sympathetic dialogue with each other (a *multi-lineage* approach), but which locates the shared values, developmental concerns, perspectives, and methods underlying the contemplative practices in each of these traditions, and elevates these over any one tradition or lineage in particular. This will aid contemplative science, and the Mind and Life organization's activities in particular, by creating the space and tools for extending its research focus beyond simply Tibetan Buddhist meditation practice and secular mindfulness programs to other contemplative lineages as well, *while maintaining continuity* with these programs and its basic research goals.
- And Fourth, perhaps most importantly, beginning to analyze contemplative teaching styles, methods, and contexts holistically will result in greater insight into what works best at delivering contemplative results for various types of students, making contemplative development easier, more thorough, and perhaps less time-intensive for more people.

References

[1] Wilber, Ken. *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World*. Boston: Integral Books, 2007. Print.

[2] Grübel-Postel, Julie, and Tom Easton. *OpeningMind.com*. Orülis Balboa Romo, 2008. Web. 24 Apr 2012. <http://www.openingmind.com/index.html>.

[3] Harding, Douglas. "Experiments." *The Headless Way*. The Shollond Trust, n.d. Web. 24 Apr 2012. <http://headless.org/experiments.htm>.

[4] Berzin, Alexander. *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher: Building a Healthy Relationship*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000. Print.

[5] Bache, Christopher M. *The Living Classroom: Teaching and Collective Consciousness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008. Print.

[6] Rinne, Melissa, Associate Curator of Japanese Art, Asian Art Museum. Personal Interview. 23 Feb 2012 – specifically referring to Zen and traditional Japanese teaching styles.

[7] McLeod, Ken. "What are you looking for in a teacher?." *Musings*. N.p., 22, Jul 2010. Web. 24 Apr 2012. <http://musingsbyken.blogspot.com/2010/07/what-are-you-looking-for-in-teacher.html>.