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Applied Buddhism: The Three Trainings and the Benefit of Integrating Wisdom (*Prajñā*) and Ethics (*Śīla*) with Mindfulness in Secular Contexts

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Applied Buddhism: The Three Trainings and the Benefit of Integrating Wisdom (*Prajñā*) and Ethics (*Śīla*) with Mindfulness in Secular Contexts

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Abstract

While the Buddhist path is classically described as the Three Trainings of ethics, meditation, and wisdom, starting in the 1980s, mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have emphasized Buddhist-based meditation to the exclusion of the other elements. Recently some MBIs have incorporated elements of ethics and, more rarely, of teachings from the wisdom aspect. This paper explores teachings on wisdom and ethics that could be considered for inclusion in MBIs to increase their effectiveness, based on the highly developed psychological model of how we create and can work with painful afflicted mental states (*kleśas*) from the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools that have been studied in the Central Asian and East Asian traditions to this day. Teachings from these two schools have been little used in the development of MBIs. Thus, the benefits of applying their distinctive teachings will be examined. The approach explored here is to use a non-normative pedagogy in secular contexts, aided by a method of contemplative

inquiry based on the wisdom-related analytical meditation of the Indo-Tibetan tradition, to support personal inquiry into Buddhist teachings to enhance personal transformation beyond what is possible with the relative exclusion of wisdom and ethics. Parallels with Constructivist and Humanistic Theories of Learning, the emerging pedagogy of Contemplative Education, and the Cognitive Appraisal Model of Emotions will be explored to illustrate the potential effectiveness of the approach proposed here.

Introduction

There is an ongoing dialogue about the relationship between secular mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and the Buddhist traditions from which they have drawn, especially since MBIs have generally used a limited portion of Buddhist methods and teachings. The highly developed Buddhist path is classically described as the Three Trainings or the Noble Eightfold Path, with the latter being arranged in the Three Trainings but in a different order. The Three Trainings are ethics (*śīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).[1] The Eightfold Path is arranged in the order of wisdom, ethics, and meditation.[2] The MBIs have drawn primarily from the Buddhist methods of meditation and from only a limited portion of those.

In the Buddhist view, all Three Trainings are important for bringing about personal transformation since they synergistically interact, support, and deepen each other. As discussed below, there are signs that the field of MBIs is beginning to explore the potential benefits of including elements of ethics into their programs and, to a lesser extent, elements of wisdom. Since the inclusion of the wisdom aspect is particularly underdeveloped in the MBIs, this paper is primarily devoted to exploring wisdom-related teachings that could be considered for inclusion in MBIs to increase their effectiveness by supporting and enriching the benefits of meditation they already provide for their participants.

This exploration will be based on the highly developed psychological model of how we create and can reverse painful, afflicted

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[1] Sanskrit terms will be used in this paper, unless otherwise noted.

[2] Stated in the order in which they appear in the Noble Eightfold Path, wisdom includes right view, and right intention, ethics includes right speech, right action, and right livelihood, and meditation includes right exertion, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

mental states (*kleśas*) from the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools of Indian Foundational Buddhism, particularly as presented in the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakośa*) root text and auto-commentary of Vasubandhu (late fourth to fifth century CE).[3] His root text, the *Abhidharmakośa,* presents the views of the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma.[4] His auto-commentary, the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, often critiques the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma from the perspective of the Sautrāntika school. The name "Sautrāntika" means "Followers of the Sūtras," i.e., "Followers of the Discourses [of the Buddha]," and thus they are not followers of the Abhidharma texts, which they view as texts written later by learned monks, and not spoken the Buddha. This view did not prevent the Sautrāntika from setting forth their own highly articulated understanding of the teachings of the Buddha, as exemplified in Vasubandhu's auto-commentary.[5] The Central Asian and East Asian Buddhist traditions have viewed his Sautrāntika-oriented commentary as the pinnacle of the teachings of Foundational Buddhism.[6] Thus, Vasubandhu's presentation of the Sautrāntika will be the primary focus here, but the Sautrāntika school agrees with many teachings of the Vaibhāṣika. Therefore, this exploration will often present their shared teachings.

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[3] Charles Willemen et al., *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism* (Leiden, New York, Köln Brill, 1998), 240–41.

[4] The Abhidharma (Sanskrit), or Abhidhamma (Pāli), refers to the body of Buddhist texts that systematize what was taught in the *sūtras* or discourses of the Buddha. The term Abhidharma has a range of meanings that include "concerning the teachings" or "higher teachings." See Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 5th rev. ed. (Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2015), 8-11.

[5] The Vaibhāṣika are called the "Followers of the *Detailed Exposition*" because they are named after the main Abhidharma text of their school, the encyclopedic *Mahāvibhāṣa* or the *Great Detailed Exposition*.

[6] See Erich Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature and the Origins of Buddhist Philosophical Systems*, trans. Sophie Francis Kidd (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 150. Also see Frauwallner, *Studies*, 89-95.

It appears the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika teachings have been rarely applied to MBIs or explicitly mentioned in the literature.[7] In Ville Husgafvel's assessment of the Buddhist traditions that have contributed to the development of MBIs, he concludes that the influence of the Theravāda tradition has been overstated systematically and the influence of the East Asian and Tibetan traditions has not been fully recognized. He notes that the East Asian Chan/Zen/Sŏn/Thiền traditions and the esoteric Vajrayāna practice traditions of Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā of Tibetan Buddhism have had a significant influence on some MBIs.[8] The Vajrayāna is understood to be part of Mahāyāna, thus it not a surprise that the Tibetan-influenced MBI of Sustainable Compassion Training (SCT) also explicitly states that it draws its theoretical view from the Mahāyāna, in addition to drawing from the Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā meditative traditions.[9] As a result of this overall situation, the purpose here is to explore how the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika teachings of Foundational Buddhism can be used to enrich MBIs, based on Vasubandhu's texts,

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[7] For example, John Dunne discusses Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* and the general Abhidharma tradition at some length regarding the relationship between non-dual mindfulness in the Mahāyāna and MBSR, but not in a way that would warrant mentioning the terms Vaibhāṣika or Sautrāntika. See John Dunne, "Toward an Understanding of Non-Dual Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011).

[8] Ville Husgafvel, "The 'Universal Dharma Foundation' of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: Non-Duality and Mahāyāna Buddhist Influences in the Work of Jon Kabat-Zinn," *Contemporary Buddhism* 19, no. 2 (2018): 277-78.

[9] Paul Condon and John Makransky, "Sustainable Compassion Training: Integrating Meditation Theory With Psychological Science," Hypothesis and Theory, *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020). Another example is the Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT). See Marcia Ash et al., "A Model for Cognitively-Based Compassion Training: Theoretical Underpinnings and Proposed Mechanisms," *Social Theory & Health* 19, no. 1 (2021): 46.

particularly as preserved and taught to this day in the Indo-Tibetan tradition.[10]

Why then apply the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika teachings to the development of MBIs rather than, say, just the Theravāda Abhidhamma teachings, especially given that all three schools—the Theravāda, Vaibhāṣika, and Sautrāntika—developed from the same Sthaviravāda school. Though they share a common Abhidharma base, they developed in quite different ways. Erich Frauwallner observes that they

> have a common core in the old, basic stock of their Abhidharma… It is, however, equally obvious that the development and transformations of the doctrines we are here dealing with, while treating the same problems, attempt quite different solutions and represent individual developments in the respective schools.[11]

K. L. Dhammajoti elaborates:

> In comparison with the Sarvāstivāda and other northern schools [such as the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika], the doctrinal development in the [southern] Pāli canonical *abhidhamma* texts is more archaic and, in a way, more faithful to the doctrines of the *sutta*-s…The Northern canonical *abhidharma* texts, on the other hand, made distinct advance, formulating new doctrinal categories not traceable to the Buddha's teachings.[12]

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[10] My own training has been in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. Through the auspices of Nitartha Institute, I studied the entire *Abhidharmakośa* and its auto-commentary with Acharya Lama Kelzang Wangdi of the Tibetan tradition, who used a range of Indian and Tibetan commentaries.

[11] Frauwallner, *Studies,* 124-25.

[12] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma,* 323.

Such divergence reflects centuries of separate development after the Sthaviravāda split into two schools in the mid-third century BCE that led to the Theravāda school, on one hand, and the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika schools, on the other hand. Classic texts emerged in the fifth century CE in all three traditions that represented the culmination of seven hundred years of separate development in these two northern and southern lines: Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* or *Path of Purity* in the Theravāda, Vasubandhu's auto-commentary in the Sautrāntika, and Saṃghabhadra's *Nyāyānusāra* or *In Accordance with the Truth* (which was based on Vasubandhu's root text) in the Vaibhāṣika. Saṃghabhadra, the younger contemporary of Vasubandhu, endeavored to counter Vasubandhu's Sautrāntika critique of the Vaibhāṣika, but was eclipsed by Vasubandhu's text in Central Asian and East Asian Buddhism.

The differences in the qualities of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* are instructive. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli states that the *Visuddhimagga* is "probably best regarded as a detailed manual for meditation masters, and as a work of reference."[13] Frauwallner states it is structured as a path to liberation that then "corresponds to the spirit of Buddhism."[14] Ñāṇamoli's words "work of reference" refers to its comprehensive coverage of the teachings in the Buddha's discourses and the Abhidhamma, but the text is not structured as a thorough-going philosophical system as is the case with Vasubandhu's text.[15] The latter is also oriented to attaining liberation, but approaches this through presenting a highly structured philosophical system that embraces innovation in its effort to develop its system in great detail. Vasubandhu includes a systematic presentation of

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[13] See Buddhaghosa and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga*, 1st BPE Pariyatti ed. (Seattle, WA: BPE Pariyatti Editions, 1999), xliii.

[14] Frauwallner, *Studies,* 130.

[15] Frauwallner, *Studies,* 70.

meditation, but it is subordinated to the overall philosophical structure of his text.

The relative conservatism of the Theravāda and the openness to innovation in the northern schools are reflected in the Theravāda view that all seven canonical texts of the Abhidhamma are the word of the Buddha, while the Vaibhāṣika insisted that the Abhidharma was compiled by his students, though, in theory, their compilations were based on the words of the Buddha. The Sautrāntika went even further by not accepting the Abhidharma as the words of the Buddha.

In the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika presentation of the afflictions, confused conceptuality in the form of "improper mental engagement" (*ayoniśo-manaskāra*) is viewed as one of the three main causes for the arising and perpetuation of afflicted mental states. This is counterbalanced by the teaching of the Three *Prajñās*, the Three Wisdoms (or Understandings), which is an elaboration of the wisdom component of the Three Trainings, namely, the wisdom of study, the wisdom of reflection, and the wisdom of meditation. The first two are conceptual and are used as antidotes to the confused use of conceptuality. The third includes conceptuality as well, but is understood to culminate in non-conceptual wisdom. Conceptual wisdom is thus understood to support the arising of the non-conceptual wisdom of meditation through helping to clear away confused conceptuality. This impacts and interacts with the affective dimension of human experience, which is integral to this process as well, both in terms of what are considered to be afflicted or wholesome affective experience.

These considerations have implications for our understanding of the nature and role of mindfulness, namely, that there is a dimension of cognitive understanding in meditation that can be supported by conceptual tools. George Dreyfus has articulated this point in an article on the cognitive dimensions of mindfulness. While he readily acknowledges

the benefits of non-judgmental, present-centered mindfulness,[16] he argues that the classic meaning of mindfulness (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*) is "to remember, recollect, keeping an object in mind," whether it be a present, future, or past object. He proposes:

> Mindfulness is then not the present-centred non-judgmental awareness of an object but the paying close attention to an object, leading to the retention of the data...to make sense of the information delivered by our cognitive apparatus.[17]

He proposes that, within the diversity of Buddhist approaches to mindfulness, the general understanding is that mindfulness

> is not the goal but a means to a more explicitly cognitive end. Its main point is not to obtain a calm and focused state, however helpful such a state may be, but to use this state...<u>to free our mind from the habits and tendencies that bind us to suffering</u>...[T]he identification of mindfulness with present-centred non-judgmental awareness ignores or, at least, <u>underestimates the cognitive implications of mindfulness</u>...[18] [Emphasis added]

He also proposes that the cognitive process of developing a clear understanding of one's experience is initially conceptual, but that mindfulness can play a decisive role in shifting to a deeper, non-conceptual level of understanding. Hence, if cognitive understanding that arises from meditation is initially conceptual, then such understanding

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[16] Georges Dreyfus, "Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Non-Judgmental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 44.
[17] Dreyfus, "Is Mindfulness Present-Centred?," 47.
[18] Dreyfus, "Is Mindfulness Present-Centred?," 51-52.

can be nurtured by learning conceptual models of the mind and exploring them in one's experience.

While different Buddhist traditions place different emphases on the elements of the Three Wisdoms, the Sautrāntika teachings and the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma clearly view conceptuality as a valuable tool on the path, even if it is transcended in the end. Conceptuality is particularly important at earlier stages of development, and thus would be helpful in programs like the MBIs, which are oriented to a general secular audience.

When engaging in meditation, insights can naturally arise with regard to one's experience. One can see patterns, cause-and-effect relationships, how painful experiences arise, how a sense of well-being arises, and so on. Participant insights can range from explicit, conceptually formulated knowledge to an implicit, intuitive, unarticulated understanding. Both types can help participants reduce their negative affective states and shift them in a positive direction, along with shifting the verbal and physical manifestations that arise from those states. Buddhists models are intended to give systematic expression to such insights as an aid to the path. It is proposed then that these models of insight are implicit in the mindfulness methods being used in MBIs and are integral to their effectiveness, since the MBIs rely, in part, on the spontaneous insights of participants into those models. The question then arises: Would it not be more beneficial to present such models to the participants in an explicit, non-normative way for their consideration?

The Buddhist psychological models naturally have connections with secular models. It could not be otherwise. If these models are effective, they need to connect with the underlying processes of the human psycho-physical continuum. However, the Buddhist tradition has the strength of explicitly stating the importance of integrating ethics, meditation, and wisdom, with wisdom including conceptual knowledge of

models for how the mind functions and connects with one's bodily actions.

Thus, it is proposed that sharing elements of such models can support, clarify, and increase insights gained from meditation in MBI programs, though there are questions of how to do this skillfully. The third wave of cognitive behavioral therapies exemplify the importance of using philosophically based theoretical models. These include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which utilize mindfulness meditation and techniques in varying ways and to varying extents. Steven Hayes and Stefan Hofmann write:

> While new concepts and methods are important, in our opinion, there is a more profound set of changes that has been introduced by the third wave. A subtle but important change is that there is now greater recognition of the central importance of philosophical assumptions to methods of intervention and their analysis. Science requires pre-analytic assumptions about the nature of data, truth, and the questions of importance, and some of the differences between the waves and generations of CBT work were philosophical, not empirical.[19]

[19] Steven C. Hayes and Stefan G. Hofmann, "The Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and the Rise of Process-Based Care," *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* 16, no. 3 (2017): 245. The first wave was behaviorism or behavioral therapy. The second wave was Cognitive Based Therapy (CBT) that was oriented to reducing or eliminating unwanted psychological and emotion states. The third wave is CBT that is oriented to "human psychological prosperity and the thriving of whole persons, not merely psychopathology" (p. 245).

This leads to the important question of how to skillfully apply Buddhist "philosophical assumptions" in secular contexts, which will be explored below.

As for the structure of this paper, the basis and main topic of this paper—which will be used as an example of elements of the Buddhist "Training in Wisdom" that might be beneficially included in MBI programs—will be Vasubandhu's detailed psychological model of the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools of Foundational Buddhism, regarding how we create and can reverse painful afflicted mental states (*kleśas*) and the related unskillful actions that arise from them. This main section consists of eight sub-sections that will not be listed here for sake of brevity.

This main section is preceded by five sections on (1) the historical context of the relationship of MBIs with the Three Trainings, (2) using a non-normative pedagogy to support personal inquiry in MBIs, (3) the pragmatic purpose of the Buddhist teachings and the importance of personal inquiry, (4) understanding the Three Trainings as sequential and the implications of this for including ethics in MBIs, and (5) an example of a contemplative exercise for working with wisdom and ethics using a non-normative approach.

Following the main section, the seventh section will be an exploration of similarities between this Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika model and the cognitive appraisal model of emotions. The parallels are striking and support the value of using such elements in MBI programs. The eighth section is a concluding summary on increasing the effectiveness of MBIs through use of teachings from the trainings in ethics and wisdom.

1. Historical Context of the Relationship of The MBIs with the Three Trainings of Buddhism

The first generation of mindfulness-based interventions has been characterized as focusing on meditation and making minimal use of Buddhist ethics and wisdom. Since there is extensive evidence that such MBIs contribute to health and psychological well-being, such programs can be considered a positive thing from a Buddhist perspective.

Given the documented benefits of the early MBIs, Van Gordon and Shonin have stated that this dialogue on the relationship of MBIs and Buddhism

> has less to do with whether MBIs have demonstrable efficacy, and more to do with whether (i) there is sufficient transparency and scrutiny concerning the claims made by some MBI proponents regarding the authenticity of the technique they purport to teach, (ii) there are contexts in which a more traditional intervention-based form of mindfulness would be more appropriate or efficacious, and (iii) some prospective mindfulness practitioners would welcome more choice in terms of the degree to which an MBI follows the traditional practice model.[20]

Briefly, with regard to the first point, there are Buddhist concerns that this process of adaptation might produce distorted forms of Buddhism and that such truncated forms might be presented or perceived as the extent and intent of Buddhism. As an example, Allan Wallace expresses such concerns in an exchange with Bhikkhu Bodhi who replies that

> in this present age we should take the attitude: "The Tathāgata has no closed fist of a teacher," interpreting this

[20] William Van Gordon and Edo Shonin, "Second-Generation Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Toward More Authentic Mindfulness Practice and Teaching," *Mindfulness* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1.

> statement to mean that we should let others take from Buddhism what they find useful for secular purposes...[21]

He goes on to say that it is fine if psychotherapists, pain clinicians, peace activists, businessmen, and surgeons can draw upon Buddhist mindfulness practice to help others, but concludes

> The problem for me only arises when such people say, "This is the Dhamma; this is what it all boils down to: how to be fully here in the present."[22]

This paper will focus on Van Gordan and Shonin's latter two questions, particularly with regard to the potential benefits of including elements of the training in wisdom.

Some MBIs have begun to explore the potential benefit of including elements of the training in ethics and wisdom. Van Gordan and Shonin note that, starting in the early 1980's, First-Generation MBI's focused on mindfulness, with some minimal inclusion of ethics. After nearly 25 years, in 2005, Second-Generation MBIs (SG-MBIs) began to emerge that

> focused on contemplative approaches involving ethical and empathic awareness, such as loving-kindness and compassion meditation. However, in the last six years, a third phase of research appears to have gradually emerged, concerned with investigating Buddhist wisdom-based

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[21] B. Alan Wallace and Bhikkhu Bodhi, "The Nature of Mindfulness and Its Role in Buddhist Meditation: A Correspondence between B. Alan Wallace and the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi" (unpublished manuscript, Winter 2006), 14, Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies, Santa Barbara, CA.

[22] Wallace and Bodhi, "The Nature of Mindfulness," 15.

> concepts such as non-attachment, impermanence, non-self and emptiness."[23]

This third generation of MBIs is related to the third wave of CBTs noted above, given their increased recognition of the importance of the theoretical or philosophical basis for such programs.

Van Gordon and Shonin observe that these three phases of MBIs correspond to the Three Trainings in the order of meditation, ethics, and wisdom. There thus appears to be an organic process in the field of slowly realizing why the Buddhist traditions has used all Three Trainings for personal transformation, and that there are benefits from adapting all three in a synergistic way to secular contexts.

Schmidt discusses a set of concerns about including such Buddhist teachings in secular programs regarding "whether MBIs constitute an illegitimate promotion of a particular worldview or way of life."[24] He concludes that "the psychological skills and benefits potentially facilitated through MBIs are of such an *all-purpose* or *primary nature*" (emphasis in the original) that these "benefits will improve one's ability to pursue one's conception of the good—more or less—whatever the precise content of that conception might be," and thus MBIs are "compatible with a very broad range of lifestyles and not at all committed to a spiritual, meditative or self-denying lifestyle." [25]

Schmidt advocates that MBIs "promote strongly secular and 'axiologically thin' versions of mindfulness practice."[26] Rather than "thinness," it is proposed that the important considerations are the

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[23] Van Gordon and Shonin, "Second-Generation," 2.

[24] Andreas T. Schmidt, "The Ethics and Politics of Mindfulness-based Interventions," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 42, no. 7 (2016): 451.

[25] Schmidt, "Ethics and Politics," 451-52.

[26] Schmidt, "Ethics and Politics," 451.

effectiveness of the material and the way in which it is taught. Offering MBIs with thicker axiological content could provide increased benefit when offered in an appropriate way that maintains a secular approach. In such a case, there is no need to limit the effectiveness of MBIs to some pre-conceived, minimalistic level of axiological content. The SG-BMIs are in the process of experimenting with, and evaluating, such "thicker" MBIs. It will be beneficial to experiment with variations in the type and amount of content that are included in programs to assess the relative effectiveness of different approaches.

2. Using A Non-Normative Pedagogy to Support Personal Inquiry in MBIs

An important consideration in the pedagogy for including increased Buddhist material in a secular context is to present the material in a non-normative manner. There is variation in the degree to which programs acknowledge their roots in the Buddhist tradition. Programs might view the decision to acknowledge or not acknowledge their Buddhist or other connections as a matter of skillful means. An increase in the amount of Buddhist content used in a program would seem to increase the appropriateness of acknowledging a program's connection to Buddhism. In any case, it is proposed that, in the case where a program's Buddhist connections are acknowledged, it would be skillful to explicitly state to the participants that the material is not presented as a normative view that participants should accept, but rather as material they are invited to inquire into in light of their own experience. It can be made clear that there is no presumption that they will agree with any particular teaching, and they are encouraged to respond to the material in whatever way that arises for them.

The material can also be presented as part of the human heritage that many have found insightful and transformative, as having

connections to other systems of knowledge such as various Western psychologies, and as material the participants can engage to see if they find it useful for them. The material may well challenge their existing ways of understanding themselves and the world, but it is up the individual participants to sort out what to make of this challenge.

Three theories of learning can be helpful here: Constructivist, Humanistic, and that of Contemplative Education. For example, the approach outlined above has elements of Constructivist Theory of Learning, according to which learning is

> a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate...The psychological approach focuses on the ways in which meaning is created within the individual mind and, more recently, how shared meaning is developed within a group process.[27]

This model of learning does not include contemplative practice, but its identification of conflict between one's existing models and new models of understanding as central to the process of learning is pertinent to the type of personal transformation that MBIs can bring about. This is why exposure to new models for understanding oneself and the world, in this case drawn from Buddhism, can be beneficial for participants, but it is the individual who does the work of negotiating their relationship with new models of understanding.

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[27] Catherine Twomey Fosnot, *Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), ix.

The Humanistic Theory of Education is also useful here. This approach is interested in educating the whole person and views human nature as basically good.[28] It "emphasizes the importance of the inner world of the learner and places the individual's thought, feelings, and emotions at the forefront of all human development," and "learners are seen...as human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs, and sentiments, should be respected."[29] By contrast, undergraduate students, especially transfer students, often express alienation from their learning experience in high school and the various colleges they previously attended. It is healing and affirming for such students to be in learning environments that encourage them to value their inner experience and apply their own insights to the topics at hand.

This healing is especially possible when contemplative practices and exercises are included in the learning process since these methods foster such personal insight. Contemplative practice is not typically used in the Constructivist or Humanist approaches to education, but the emerging pedagogy of Contemplative Education within universities does, which can also be combined with values from the other two approaches. It is also important to use a non-normative approach when teaching such subjects as Buddhism psychology in a university setting.

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[28] Dhammajoti observes that both the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda traditions hold "the doctrine of the original purity of *citta*," of the mind, "because meditational practice is seen as a process of removing the mental hindrances so that *prajñā* can...shine forth unobstructed. He cites a Theravāda example from the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, "This mind, O *bhikkhu-s* [monks], is luminous." See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 262-63.

[29] Mohammad Khatib, Saeid Najafi Sarem, and Hadi Hamidi, "Humanistic Education: Concerns, Implications and Applications," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 4 (2013): 45-46.

A prominent writer in this field—Judith Simmer-Brown who is a colleague of mine at Naropa University where contemplative education has been cultivated since its founding in 1974—writes:

> Contemplative education employs mindfulness in the classroom, but also adapts a variety of contemplative practices—contemplation, awareness, and compassion meditation—to the secular university setting in order to enhance learning and empower students' discovery of their own inherent wisdom...adapting aspects of our meditation training to a nonsectarian, pluralistic classroom, removing the religious or "faith-based" elements,...combining mind-training with academic study.[30]

This approach often uses first-person and second-person inquiry in addition to the third-person inquiry traditionally used in universities. Second-person inquiry involves interpersonal interactions in group processes—like dyads, triads, or an entire class—through which the participants seek to learn from each other. First-based inquiry involves self-reflection and critical inquiry into one's worldview, values, needs, motivations, affective mental states, assumptions, the causality involved in what has happened in one's life, and so on. First person inquiry includes personal reflection on what one is studying, bringing to bear one's life experiences, one's current worldview, and so on to the topics at hand, which may be challenged by what one is studying.

This process of self-reflection is clearly conceptually mediated and can occur without meditative practices, but students can find that the

[30] Judith Simmer-Brown, "Contemplative Teaching and Learning: Opportunities for Asian Studies," *ASIANetwork Exchange: A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts* 26 (2019): 6, 8-9.

addition of meditation and contemplative exercises deepens their learning, self-knowledge, and confidence in their own insights.

Such practices can be understood to include the possibility of non-conceptual knowing or, at least, more intuitive forms of knowing. The idea that there is non-conceptual knowing is contested. Simmer-Brown asserts such knowing is a major dimension of first-person inquiry:

> First-person inquiry places emphasis on the wisdom within one's own personal experience, in the form of personal, nonverbal insight cultivated through specific meditative and artistic disciplines. It is distinguished from mere opinion or reaction by its critical subjectivity, and it grows in power and illumination through training in focusing the mind and cultivating non-conceptual insight. What makes this inquiry critical is its ability to step outside of habitual patterns of thought with an emphasis on present-moment awareness and clear cognition...This form of inquiry has long been suspect in western academic circles, maligned for its mere subjectivity, irrationality, and non-veridicality.[31]

This "ability to step outside of habitual patterns of thought" is an important facet of contemplative practices. Research has been conducted on the capacity of such practices to de-automatize or decondition maladaptive "reflexive and habitual patterns of cognitive and emotional reactivity."[32] From the point of view of the traditional teaching of the Three Trainings, ethics, meditation, and wisdom are all mutually

[31] Simmer-Brown, "Contemplative Teaching," 10.

[32] Yoona Kang, June Gruber, and Jeremy Gray, "Mindfulness and De-Automatization," *Emotion Review* 5 (2012): 192.

supportive and integral to the process of de-automatizing one's habitual patterns, as explored below.

3. The Pragmatic Purpose of the Buddhist Teachings and the Importance of Personal Inquiry

There are a number of discourses (Pāli: *sutta*; Sanskrit: *sūtra*) of the Buddha in the Theravāda school of Foundational Buddhism that bear on how to relate to the Buddhist teachings. In the *The Water-Snake Simile Discourse,*[33] the Buddha gives two similes of the water-snake and the raft that, according to the translator Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro, "focus on the skill needed to grasp right view properly as a means of leading to the cessation of suffering, rather than [as] an object of clinging, and then letting it go when it has done its job."[34] That is to say, the Buddhist teachings should not be an object of clinging, as with prideful knowledge; rather they are tools to use for progress on the path that are to be relinquished in the end. In the raft simile, it is striking that the teachings of Buddhism are compared to gathering "grass, sticks, branches and foliage" to create a makeshift raft to cross the great raging river of *saṃsāra*¸ that one then lays aside once across, once liberated.

This pragmatic attitude towards the teachings is further illustrated in the *The Shorter Instructions to Māluṅkya Discourse*, in which the monk Māluṅkyaputta insists the Buddha must answers fourteen questions such as whether the universe is finite or infinite, whether a Buddha exists after death or not, and so on. The Buddha replies with the parable of a man shot by a poisoned arrow who, despite his dire circumstances, asks for useless information, saying, "I will not let the surgeon pull out this

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[33] *Alagaddūpama Sutta* in Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 227-29.

[34] Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro, "Translator's Introduction: *Alagaddupama Sutta*: *The Water-Snake Simile*," (2004): https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.022.than.html.

arrow...until I know what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted - whether those of a vulture or a crow or a hawk or a peacock or a stork."[35] Instead of answering Māluṅkyaputta's questions, the Buddha declares to him that the way to end suffering is through the Four Noble Truths.

This pragmatic attitude is reflected in Bhikkhu Bodhi's view quoted above that Buddhists "should let others take from Buddhism what they find useful for secular purposes." Thus, from a Buddhist point of view, mindfulness programs can be encouraged to experiment with different Buddhist teachings and meditation techniques.

In a similar vein, there are Buddhist teachings on the importance of developing and relying upon one's personal understanding of the teachings. In the *Attadīpa Sutta*, *An Island to Oneself Discourse*, the Buddha teaches:

> Monks, be islands unto yourselves, be your own refuge, having no other; let the Dhamma be an island and a refuge to you, having no other. Those who are islands unto themselves...should investigate to the very heart of things: 'What is the source of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair? How do they arise?'[36]

This is also expressed in the teaching of the Four Reliances:

> Rely on the teaching, not the teacher.
> Rely on the meaning [of the teaching], not the letter.
> Rely on the definitive meaning (*nītārtha*), not the interpretable meaning (*neyārtha*).

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[35] *Cūḷamāluṅkya Sutta* in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses*, 534-35.

[36] See Maurice Walshe, *An Anthology from the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Part 3*, Buddhist Publication Society Online Edition ed. (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), 29.

> Rely on [non-conceptual] wisdom (*jñāna*), not on [ordinary] consciousness (*vijñāna*).[37]

Wisdom is understood as something that one needs to develop and directly experience for oneself.

The Three Wisdoms or *prajñās* of hearing, reflecting, and meditating, mentioned briefly above also exemplify the importance of personal, conceptually mediated reflection and analysis with regard to the teaching, which are understood to contribute eventually to direct, non-conceptual realization in meditation. The Three Wisdoms are taught in Foundational Buddhism, e.g., in the Theravāda,[38] Vaibhāṣika, and Sautrāntika schools,[39] as well as in the Mahāyāna.[40]

The idea that one needs to personally contemplate and investigate the teachings before accepting them is also expressed in the simile of a goldsmith testing gold. This simile occurs in a verse that is quoted in Kulika Puṇḍarīrika's *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra*, quoted from an unnamed *sūtra*:

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[37] See Robert A. T. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44, no. 1 (1978): 23-24.

[38] See *The Chanting Together Discourse* (*Sangīti Sutta*), at 33.1.10 (43), Maurice Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha, A New Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 486. Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, 438, at XIV, 12. Another important example of encouraing personal inquiry is the *Kesaputtiya Sutta*, commonly known as the *Kāmāla Sutta*. The *sutta* is so well known, I will not comment on it here. For a brief discussion of it, see Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 165-67.

[39] For Vasubandhu's description, see Lodrö Sangpo (tr.), *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu: The Treasury of the Abhidharma and its (Auto) commentary*, (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2012), 1893-94.

[40] See Karl Brunnhölzl (tr.), *A Compendium of the Mahāyāna: Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṃgraha and Its Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*, (Boulder: Snow Lion, , Inc, 2018), Vol. 1., 172, 286, Vol. 2, 613.

> As gold is burned, [cut], and rubbed,
> My word is to be accepted by examining [it] well,
> Not out of respect [for me, the Buddha].[41]

As for the implications for MBIs, from the perspective of Buddhism itself, it is important to invite participants to develop their personal understanding. They can be encouraged to use their own intelligence and life experience to question and determine if they find meaning in the material and methods presented.

4. Understanding the Three Trainings as Sequential and the Implications for Including Ethics in MBIs

While the Three Trainings are understood to interact as one progresses on the path, they are also presented as sequential stages of the path in the discourses of the Buddha. Discussing these discourses, Rupert Gethin observes:

> When it comes to spiritual development the *bhikkhu* [monk], in order to progress, will have to attend to *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *pañña* [i.e., ethics, meditation, and wisdom] more or less in that order. That is, it is understood that if one tries to develop *pañña*, it will become apparent that some measure of *samādhi* is a prerequisite; if one tries to develop *samādhi*, it will become apparent that some measure of *sīla* as a prerequisite.[42]

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[41] Mkhas-grub Nor-bzaṅ-rgya-mtsho, Thupten Jinpa, and Kilty Gavin, *Ornament of Stainless Light: An Exposition of the Kālacakra Tantra*, 1st ed. (Wisdom Publications, 2004), 153, Kindle edition.

[42] Rupert Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001), 208-09. He has used Pāli terms here.

As noted previously, the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path arrange the Three Trainings in a different order: wisdom, ethics, and meditation. Why the difference? It is said that wisdom occurs as the last element of the Three Trainings because it represents the culmination of the path, but the Noble Eightfold Path begins with wisdom because, as Gethin writes, "if one wants to go somewhere one must have an initial understanding of where one is and how one got there, along with where one wants to go and how to get there."[43] The training of wisdom is thus needed throughout the path and deepens as one proceeds. This then points to the interaction of the elements of the Three Trainings and the Noble Eightfold Path.

While the development of ethical conduct is incumbent on the laity and monastics alike, of the Three Trainings, ethics is the main training taught to the laity, which indicates the importance of ethics at the preliminary stages of training. The implication for MBIs is that it would be beneficial for participants to have elements of ethics included early on in their MBI trainings. A non-normative approach is crucial in introducing ethical issues in a secular context, raising them for consideration by the participants in light of their own experience, rather than presenting them as normative directives that participants should accept.

5. An Example of a Contemplative Exercise for Working with Wisdom and Ethics Using a Non-Normative Approach

Painful afflicted mental states often lead to what the Buddhist tradition views as non-virtuous conduct, which, in turn, typically leads to negative, painful results. We then tend to respond to the painful results with another painful mental state, and the cycle repeats itself. This process

[43] See Gethin, *Buddhist Path*, 217-19. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering* (Onalaska, WA, USA: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2011), 14-17.

continues until we gain insight into the cycle and work to transform it in a positive direction. This is a fundamental causal model in Buddhism that indicates the importance of developing wisdom and ethical conduct. Wisdom understands how this model works and how to reverse it, while developing ethical conduct is integral to reversing the process. Meditation helps cultivate both wisdom and conduct, and vice versa.

One can investigate this cycle in a series of contemplative exercises that divide the cycle in to four separate stages: (1) how does one give rise to painful mental states, (2) how does one's painful mental states give rise to unethical, harmful speech and bodily actions, (3) how does one's actions give rise to painful results, and (4) how does one react to painful results with new painful mental states. Within each exercise, one can ask participants not only how the stage unfolded in a painful way, but also how they could have understood the situation and acted differently to bring about a more beneficial result. This second question helps them develop untapped resources for responding to situations in the future. An extended example of a non-normative contemplative practice for working with the first of these four stages—how one gives rise to painful mental states—will be described below.

For a given exercise, participants can be asked to identify examples in their experience related to that stage of the exercise. For the first exercise, ask participants to identify painful mental states that arise regularly for them, such as anger, craving, jealousy, or self-deprecation. Ask them to avoid any that are particularly painful or traumatic. Encourage them to approach this task with self-kindness, with non-judgmental openness, and with curiosity about how they might work with these states. Ask them to pick one of the painful mental states they feel would be beneficial to explore. Then ask them to recall an occasion or occasions when this mental state arose. They will use these occasions in the contemplative exercise.

In the Indo-Tibetan tradition of analytical meditation (Tibetan: *dpyad sgom*, "je gom") in which I have been trained,[44] this exercise would consist of three parts: (1) a short initial period of mindfulness meditation to settle the mind, (2) a more extended middle section of contemplative investigation to explore the subject of the session, and (3) a short resting meditation section at the end that lets go of the investigation and, if one is settled enough, can proceed without using any particular technique to be present, otherwise, return to one's usual mindfulness meditation. The resting meditation is quite important; being suffused with the experience of the middle section of investigation, it helps one integrate that experience in a non-verbal way, like mist soaking into the ground.

The Mandala Library dictionary at the University of Virginia defines analytical meditation as follows:

> A broad class of meditation, referring to practices that involve discursive analysis. Analytical meditations include 'insight meditation' (*vipaśyanā, lhag mthong*), but the classification is broader than this, as it includes meditations such as motivational contemplations. The term is one part of the basic dyad 'analytical meditation and placement meditation,' which together are intended to encompass all the kinds of meditation in the Buddhist path.[45]

The library defines "placement meditation" (*'jogs sgom*, "jog gom") as "A focusing or stabilizing meditation in which the mind is trained to stay on

[44] I was trained in analytical meditation at Nitartha Institute (founded in 1996) and have used it in teaching courses on Buddhist philosophy and meditation at Nitartha and Naropa University for over twenty years.

[45] See https://mandala.library.virginia.edu/terms/120030/overview/nojs.

a single object. Equivalent to "calm abiding" or "tranquility" meditation (*śamatha, gzhi gnas*)."[46]

A wide range of contemplative explorations can be used in the middle section, from more non-conceptual, experientially oriented exercises to more overtly conceptual exercises. Examples range from engaging with the vividness of sense experience, to exploring the impermanence of the room and building you are in using a sequence of guided meditation prompts, to a formal logical analysis of selflessness by oneself, all of them proceeding mindfully within a contemplative practice session. This type of analytical meditation uses the conceptual mind to orient participants toward exploring an area of experience such as sense perception, conceptuality, affective experience, understanding teachings, logical analysis, and so on. The Theravāda *metta*/loving kindness practice and the Mahāyāna "giving and receiving" compassion practice (Tibetan: *gtong len*, "tong-len") are examples of analytical meditation for cultivating positive affective states.

Though analytical meditation uses some level of conceptuality, it is often utilized to foster non-conceptual experience, employing conceptuality to lightly orient oneself in some experiential direction. The Mahāmudrā practice tradition is a highly developed system of analytical meditations oriented to cultivating what it considers to be deep levels of non-conceptual experience.

To apply analytical meditation for a contemplative exercise on painful mental states, the middle section of a three-part session could be organized into several sub-sections for a single contemplative session, returning to mindfulness meditation in between each sub-section to strengthen the contemplative quality of the entire session. Alternatively, if there is sufficient time, each of the sub-sections could be a complete

[46] See https://mandala.library.virginia.edu/terms/65089/overview/nojs.

three-part analytical meditation session, each followed by its own group discussion. Or the first two of the following four sub-sections could be done in a single class session, since they are closely related to each other (see below), then the last two could be done in a second class session to bring the entire set of exercises to a conclusion. Each sub-section would have a set of guided meditation prompts to help the participants engage with the contemplation.

The subsections could be sequenced as follows:

> 1. What were the conditions that gave rise to your painful affective state and how did the situation unfold?
> 2. Consider the same questions with regard to another episode or episodes related to the same affective state.
> 3. Can you see recurring patterns or elements in these episodes? Are there shared themes across the episodes?
> 4. Is there another way you could have understood and related to these situations that would have led to a more beneficial or less painful outcome for you?

This type of multi-faceted guided meditation presumes the participants have developed a facility with this form of practice, staring with simpler sessions and accumulating experience with a repertoire of such practices. In a case like this, one needs to adapt the exercises to the participants at hand, taking into consideration the extent of their experience with guided meditation along with other relevant factors.[47]

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[47] At Naropa University and Nitartha Institute, I have worked with groups of students who are taking a set of courses over multiple years who have time to develop skill in analytical meditation. It is possible to use extended guided meditations with them from time to time. It is also effective to use short, one-off exercises or to divide a larger topic into multiple short sessions.

The three-part structure can be used for simpler, easily accessible sessions, such as exploring the limitations of conceptuality by experiencing the difference between one's conceptualized expectation of tasting something and the actual sense experience of tasting it. I like to use dried cranberries soaked in orange juice to short-circuit expectations, but a simple dried cranberry works very well. Such an exercise is simple to lead but can have a major impact on the participants. This one has major implications regarding the inaccuracies of one's conceptualized interpretive projections onto the world.

With regard to the exercise on painful mental states, one would develop prompts for each sub-section. Besides obvious prompts like, "What did you say or do in the situation?" one can ask more provocative questions like, "Is there a quality that you are 'lying in wait' to spring your emotional pattern on the next unsuspecting person?" or "Is your engagement in this pattern really about the other person?"

Then there are many practical guidelines that could be mentioned:

* Use a calm, spacious, steadily paced voice that expresses warmth and a personal connection with the material.
* Ideally, use short prompts. Pause spaciously between them, proceeding in a stately manner.
* Be mindful of the quality in the room and decide if you need to adjust how the session is proceeding.
* Inform participants beforehand that, if someone finds a particular part of a session meaningful, they can continue to relate to it and stop following the verbal instructions for a while. Or, if a participant is not connecting with a particular session, it is fine to return to basic mindfulness practice, but to exert themselves to connect with subsequent contemplative sessions.

> * Building trust and rapport with participants outside the formal practice sessions is important for creating a contemplative environment for the practice sessions.
> * Etc. ...

The prompting questions one would use for the exercise sketched out above would be pregnant with implications related to Buddhist teachings. It is beneficial to let the participants discover insights on their own during the experiential exercises, without proposing what those insights might be beforehand. During a discussion group after the session, prompted by related insights by participants, one can introduce a Buddhist-based model for their consideration, using secular, non-technical, non-academic language, and presented from a non-normative point of view. The model can help the group synthesize and bring greater clarity to their prior insights. It is important for the facilitator to create an open space in which participants can respond to the model in whatever way they wish, agreeing, disagreeing, perhaps only partially, and so on.

Students often comment on how much insight they developed through engaging in such contemplative practice sessions and reflecting on them afterward. They report that this manifests in increased skill in working with painful mentals states, in shifting towards more beneficial states, and in responding more skillfully to life situations.

The approach here is to encourage the participants to consider the ethical dimension of their mental states and actions, and to give rise to new insights for themselves, without any presupposed normative perspective. This approach presumes we have a natural capacity for ethical reflection and insight, and that this can be nurtured.

6. Vasubandhu's Model of How We Create and Can Reverse Afflicted Mental State

From the teachings associated with training in wisdom, the teachings on Buddhist psychology from the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika traditions will be explored next regarding their potential application in MBIs. We will explore their understanding of the nature of afflicted mental states (*kleśas*), how they arise, and how to work with them. Since much of the material is not widely known, these topics will be explored in some detail. The suggestion here is not that these teachings should be included in MBIs in such detail as presented here, but that sharing some of the insights that these teachings engender could be beneficial for participants, in whatever way that could be creatively accomplished by the teachers of the programs.

6.1. What Are the Afflictions (*kleśas*)?

In the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika traditions, the process of the path to liberation is depicted as one of progressively purifying the mind and developing wholesome qualities by removing afflicted mental states (*kleśas*). Various Buddhist traditions have well developed descriptions of the way afflicted states arise and how they are to be removed. The Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika description of these processes explored below has differences and parallels with the Theravāda tradition that will be touched upon from time to time. There are also strong parallels with some western models of emotions, as will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section regarding the cognitive appraisal model of emotions.

The *kleśas* or "afflictions" are defined in the Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* as follows: "The afflictions are conflict because they harm oneself and others."[48] Dhammajoti writes that their "primary

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[48] See Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 213.

etymological sense of 'molest' or 'be vexed' is found in the early treatises and continues to be emphasized even in the late Abhidharma treatises."[49] This is illustrated in the *Entrance to Higher Teachings* (*Abhidharmāvatāra*) by the fifth century CE Vaibhāṣika master Skandhila who states: "Afflictions (*kleśa*) are thus named because they perturb and afflict the psycho-physical continuum."[50]

The Sautrāntika state that afflictions (*kleśas*) exist in two forms, a latent state called "subtle propensities" (*anuśaya*) and a manifest state called "entanglers" (*paryavasthāna*). The Vaibhāṣikas assert these three terms are synonyms and there are no latent habitual forms of the afflictions. As is usually the case, Vasubandhu agrees with the Sautrāntika; he accepts latent subtle propensities and states that they are the root of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*):

> We have said that the world in its variety arises from action [*karma*]. But it is because of the subtle propensities (*anuśaya*) that actions accumulate: in the absence of the subtle propensities, actions are not capable of producing a new existence.
>
> > Verse 5.a1: (Consequently,) the root of existence is the subtle propensities, [not action]. [Verse 5.1a][51]

As introduced above, the basic pattern for the creation of cyclic existence is threefold: 1) an afflicted mental state (*kleśa*) gives rise to 2) intentional non-virtuous action (*karma*) which leads to 3) negative results (*phala*). The importance of this threefold model is illustrated in the twelve links of dependent origination. A classic interpretation of these twelve links is that they consist of two cycles of this threefold process: the first starts

[49] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 365.
[50] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 365.
[51] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1655.

with the *kleśa* of ignorance (#1) and concludes with the result of sensation (#7), while the second starts with the *kleśa* of craving (#8) and concludes with the result of old-age-and-death (#12).[52]

The most effective place to disrupt and reverse this pattern is at the level of the afflictions since they are the root of the cycle. At the very beginning of the *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubandhu asks what the purpose is of writing the Abhidharma and he replies:

> Apart from the discernment of the dharmas [i.e., phenomena], there is no means to extinguish the defilements, and it is by reason of the defilements that the world wanders in the ocean of existence. So it is with a view to this discernment that the Abhidharma has been...spoken [by the Master]. [Verse 1.3. Emphasis added.][53]

Vasubandhu states that "the discernment of dharmas [i.e., phenomena]" is the definition of wisdom, *prajñā*.[54] Removal of the afflictions by means of wisdom—through the process of the Three Wisdoms supported by ethics and meditation—is thus central to the path to liberation as presented in the Sautrāntika teachings and the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma.

6.2. What Are the Different Types of Afflictions?

The most fundamental classification of the afflictions is the three unwholesome roots: desire, anger, and ignorance.[55] All unwholesome (*akuśala*) mental states are said to arise from these three. They are

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[52] See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 469-71.

[53] Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, trans. Leo M. Pruden (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988–1990), vol. 1, 57. Also see Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 207.

[54] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 514. Also see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 280.

[55] These are called the three poisons (*triviṣa*) in the Mahāyāna tradition.

taught together as a set of three in the *sutras* or discourses of the Buddha, as well as in the Abhidharma and treatises across the Buddhist traditions. Ignorance is the most pervasive of the three. It is said to be present with all the other afflictions. Desire and hatred are said to be contradictory; they cannot exist at the same time in the same mind.[56]

In the Vaibhāṣika tradition, the main presentation of the afflictions is the six subtle predispositions (*anuśaya*): desire (*rāga*), anger (*pratigha*), pride (*māna*), ignorance (*avidyā*), afflicted views (*dṛṣṭi*),[57] and doubt (*vicikitsā*). These are expanded to ten when the view affliction is divided into five:

1. "The view of the transitory collection," which wrongly engages the five aggregates as a self.

2. "The view that clings to an extreme," which wrongly engages the self that is imputed on the five aggregates as permanent or annihilated upon death.

3 "Wrong view," which is the negation of karmic cause and results, virtuous and non-virtuous conduct, the Four Noble Truths, and so on.

4. "Clinging to one's view as supreme," which refers particularly to clinging to the prior three views.

5. "Clinging to one's ethical conduct and yogic practice as supreme," which refers to mistakenly clinging to conduct and

[56] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 377.

[57] *Dṛṣṭi* means "views" but in this context it refers to afflicted views.

> practices that do not serve as causes of liberation as if they were causes of liberation.[58]

The Sautrāntika apparently accept these ten afflictions, since Vasubandhu does not depict them as criticizing this Vaibhāṣika teaching.

The main classification of the afflictions in the Theravāda Abhidharma is also tenfold. The first six of these ten are the six root afflictions of the Vaibhāṣika, but, unlike the Vaibhāṣika list, the additional four afflictions are not view afflictions, bur are 7. torpor (*thīnaṃ*), 8. restlessness (*uddhaccaṃ*), 9. shamelessness (*ahirikaṃ*), and 10. recklessness (*anottappaṃ*).

Both sets of ten afflictions include view, doubt, and ignorance, but view is particularly prominent in the Vaibhāṣika presentation. Works in English frequently refer to the *kleśas* as emotions, destructive emotions, disturbing emotions, negative emotions, and so, but these are not fully adequate translations; though the afflictions of view, doubt, and ignorance might give rise to emotions and be accompanied by emotions, they are not normally viewed as emotions. They can be described more as cognitive rather than affective afflictions, as discussed further below. It is thus proposed that translations that avoid using the term "emotions," like "afflictions," "defilements," "afflicted mental states," and so on, are more appropriate, inclusive translations for the term *kleśa.*

In addition, there is no Buddhist term that corresponds to the English term "emotion." The Buddhist term *vedanā* is often translated as "feeling," which could be misinterpreted as meaning "emotions," but Bhikkhu Bodhi writes:

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[58] See Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, pp. 1420, 1662-1664.

> Feeling [*vedanā*] is the mental factor which feels the object. It is the affective mode in which the object is experienced. The Pali word *vedanā* does not signify emotion (which appears to be a complex phenomenon involving a variety of concomitant mental factors), but the bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either pleasant, painful or neutral...[59]

To avoid this potential misunderstanding that "feeling" might mean "emotion," some translate *vedanā* as "sensation."

In any case, this issue of the lack of a word for "emotion" in Buddhism was discussed at some length by a group of Buddhist scholars, Western psychologists, neuroscientists and philosophers who met in a dialogue with the Dalai Lama, which led to the book *Destructive Emotions*.[60] In their exchange, the Dalai Lama expressed the view that "the Buddhist understanding of the nature of cognition...does not make the sharp distinction between emotion and cognition (or reason) found in Western psychology."[61] He noted that desire, anger, and pride have a strong affective dimension, thus indicating that the other three main afflictions—afflicted view, doubt, and ignorance—do not have a strong affective dimension, being more cognitive in nature, though they can occur with other strongly affective afflictions. Overall, his view was that all afflictions have both a cognitive and affective dimension.

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[59] Anuruddha, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*, ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. Mahāthera Nārada and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2000), 80.

[60] Daniel Goleman, *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them?: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003).

[61] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 70-71.

The biologist and cognitive scientist, Francisco Varela, later returned to the point that there is no term for emotion in the Tibetan language (or in Buddhism). He was surprised at the Dalai Lama's view that all afflictions have both a cognitive and affective dimension, "because it seems that thought, whether irrational or intelligent, is so clearly different from emotion."[62] The Dalai Lama then "challenged the philosophical assumption behind his question—that the natural category was the Western contrast between emotion and thought, rather than to see them as integrated, as in the Tibetan system."[63] Thus, it is the Dalai Lama's view that all afflictions have both an emotional and a cognitive dimension, though a specific affliction might have a stronger emotional or cognitive character. The book goes on to note that the findings of neuroscience support the Dalai Lama's view, with the psychologist and author Goleman observing:

> The brain, it seems, does not make any clean distinction between thought and emotion, as every region in the brain that has been found to play some role in emotions has also been connected with aspects of cognition. The circuitry for emotion and for cognition are intertwined—just as Buddhist posits that these two elements are inseparable.[64]

Why then has the West conceptualized "emotions" as a distinct from cognition or reason, while Buddhism has not? In response to this question, the Dalai Lama proposed that "the fundamental goal of Buddhist practice is the achievement of nirvana" and

> what you're really concerned with is what specific mental states impede the accomplishment of that end. That's what

[62] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 158.

[63] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 158-59.

[64] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 159.

> the six primary [afflicted] states and twenty derivative states...all have in common. Some are emotions and some are not, but it doesn't really matter. What's important is they all share that common factor of being impediments.[65]

The Dalai Lama continued:

> My conjecture, in terms of trying to understand why the West places such a strong emphasis on identifying emotion is that, going back to the [Western Age of] Enlightenment, even as far back as Aquinas, there is an enormous priority placed on reason and intelligence. What can impede reason? Emotion.[66]

The range of Buddhist traditions would agree that emotions can be a major obstacle, but would not agree with treating the intellect as divorced from emotions or the affective dimension: they are deeply intertwined with each other, as will be explored below.

6.3. The Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of the Afflictions

In referring to the "five view afflictions," Vasubandhu indicates that the other five of the ten afflictions are non-view afflictions. A view is defined as a "judgment after contemplation of the object"[67] This is understood to apply to both right view and afflicted view. The five non-view afflictions then do not involve such "judgment after

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[65] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 159. Vasubandhu enumerates nineteen secondary defilements, but there are twenty in the Mahāyāna Abhidharma of Asaṅga. See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 365. For the Mahāyāna, see items 29-48 on pages 8-9 and note 33 on p. 97 in Walpola Rahula, *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy) By Asaṅga*, trans. Sara Boin Webb (Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2001).

[66] Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, 159.

[67] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 287.

contemplation." The five view afflictions involve conceptuality. Doubt also involves conceptuality, since one is considering several options and weighing their pros and cons. Whether desire, anger, and pride involve conceptuality will be discussed below, but they clearly have a strong affective dimension. The other seven do not, though they may be accompanied by strong emotions of desire, anger, or pride, and their derivative forms like jealousy, malice, and so on. As already noted, ignorance is not normally considered an emotion. However, from the Dalai Lama's point of view, these other seven afflictions also have emotional affect of their own, though it is weaker.

Dhammajoti applies the categories of emotional and cognitive dimensions of mental states to the ten afflictions of the Vaibhāṣika tradition. He categorizes all ten as having a cognitive dimension, but categorizes only ignorance, desire, anger, and pride as having both cognitive and affective dimensions.[68] Dhammajoti thus agrees with the Dalai Lama that all afflictions have a cognitive dimension, but, in proposing that the view afflictions and doubt are just cognitive, not affective, he differs from the Dalai Lama's view that all afflictions have both cognitive and affective dimensions.

This may be due to a difference in emphasis. In Skandhila's definition of the afflictions cited above, he states that that "they perturb and afflict the psycho-physical continuum." It is thus proposed that this quality of perturbing and afflicting the psycho-physical continuum indicates there are affective and cognitive dimensions in all the afflictions, but the manifest intensity of this emotional dimension varies significantly among the individual afflictions. In addition, the afflictions interact such that the more cognitive afflictions have an active role in giving rise to, justifying, and increasing the intensity of the

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[68] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 378.

more affective afflictions, while the vividness of the more affective afflictions renders one's views more convincing and real.

With regard to why Dhammajoti combines ignorance with the other three strongly affective afflictions, this can be discussed in terms of its distinctive qualities and its place in the Vaibhāṣika presentation of the path of liberation. Ignorance plays a central role in the creation of all the other afflictions. Vasubandhu writes, "All defilements...accompany ignorance and become active through ignorance."[69] The Vaibhāṣikas insist that ignorance is not a mere absence of knowledge. The Vaibhāṣikas master Saṃghabhadra describes ignorance as follows:

> There is a distinct dharma which harms the capability of understanding (*prajñā*). It is the cause of topsy-turvy views and obstructs the examination of merits and faults. With regard to dharmas to be known [i.e., that one should know] (*jñeya-dharma*) it operates in the mode of disinclination, veiling the thought and thought-concomitants. This is ignorance.[70]

What is it that ignorance does not understand? According to the *Abhidharma-saṅgīti-paryāya-śāstra*, one of the seven texts that comprise the Abhidharma Basket of the Vaibhāṣikas, ignorance does not understand

> the very beginning and the very end of saṃsāra, of karma and its retribution, of cause and dharmas generated by cause, of the Triple Gem [of the Buddha,

[69] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 981.

[70] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 377.

> Dharma, and Saṅgha]..., of the four noble truths, of skillful and unskillful dharmas, etc.[71]

One could describe ignorance as a basic bewilderment that is an active propensity to generate the other afflicted states that then lead to acting in unskillful ways that then produce painful consequence.

To continue with the question of why ignorance is included with the strongly emotional afflictions of desire, anger, and pride, in the Vaibhāṣika presentation of the path, it is said that (1) the five view afflictions and doubt, along with (2) the forms of desire, anger, pride, and ignorance that happen to be associated with view and doubt, are all relinquished by the path of seeing. It is said that it is on the path of seeing that one first has a direct, non-conceptual realization of the Four Noble Truths. This seeing uproots, once and for all, the complete set of afflictions associated with conceptuality. These are understood to be the most harmful, painful, coarse afflicted states.

What remains are subtler, latent habitual forms of desire, anger, pride, and ignorance. These are to be removed on the path of meditation (or cultivation), which requires extended, repeated effort to overcome the engrained, habitual nature of these remaining afflictions.[72] Once all the remaining subtle afflictions are removed by the path of meditation, one attains liberation, which is called "the path of no more training." By contrast, the path of seeing is short, lasting only fifteen moments in meditative equipoise, leading directly to the path of

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[71] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 376. For an extensive list of what ignorance does not understand according to the *Pratīityasamutpāda Sūtra*, see Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1178, n. 418.

[72] On the path of meditation or cultivation, see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 519-521. He notes that "that meditation constitutes the most important aspect" but is not the only aspect of the this path of cultivation.

meditation, but this is only possible due to significant sustained effort prior to the path of seeing.

Ignorance is thus grouped with desire, anger, and pride not because it is itself strongly emotional, but because all of them are deeply engrained and difficult to remove. Ignorance is more of a cognitive than an affective affliction, though it is not "judgment after contemplation the object" like the five view afflictions. It is murky. It tends to emerge as mistaken thinking that can developed into strongly held mistaken views.

6.4. What Causes Afflictions to Arise?

In the process of afflicted mental states giving rise to non-virtuous intentional action that leads to negative consequences, one could stop a particular episode of this process if one prevents a given affliction from arising in the first place. This is the most beneficial point to intervene in the process. If one has not avoided giving rise to an afflicted mental state, one can endeavor to intervene in the process by working (1) with an affliction once it has arisen, (2) with one's intention if one has proceeded to forming a non-virtuous attention to act, (3) even amidst acting upon that intention, (4) with one's misguided delight in succeeding with one's non-virtuous actions, and finally (5) with the painful consequences of one's actions.[73] There are thus many opportunities to work with the unfolding of this painful process and different types of skillful means to apply during these various stages. However, learning to prevent the arising of an affliction in the first place is the most beneficial place to intervene. Understanding how manifest afflictions arise is thus particularly beneficial.

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[73] Note that one could create contemplative exercises to help participants work with any of these stages.

According to the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika traditions, there are three causes for the arising of a manifest afflicted mental states. Vasubandhu writes:

> The afflictions arise from (1) not having relinquished one's subtle propensities (*anuśaya*). (2) the presence of an observed object, and (3) improper mental engagement [with that object]. [Verse 5.34][74]

This model will be examined from the Sautrāntika point of view preferred by Vasubandhu, in which the latent subtle propensity (*anuśaya*) form of an affliction (*kleśas*) is distinct from its manifest form as an entangler (*paryavasthāna*). The latent subtle propensity precedes, and is a cause of, the subsequent manifest entangler.

As for the first of the three causes, since latent propensities are always present but the manifest afflictions that can arise from them are not, the mere presence of a latent propensity is not a sufficient cause for a manifest affliction to arise. As for the second cause, the observed object, Vasubandhu writes:

> [Question:] The cognitive objects are given, in the Sūtra, as "those that give rise to mental contentment, discontentment, or equanimity." Are they such by their nature?
>
> [Answer:] No. The same cognitive object that gives rise to contentment for one person gives rise to discontentment for another person. All depends on the [mental] stream, on the dispositions of mind itself.[75]

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[74] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1718.

[75] See Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1024. La Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, vol. 3, 433.

That is to say, a given observed object does not have an intrinsic nature that gives rise to the same response in all people. A person's response depends on conditions unique to them. In particular, their response is said to depend on their mental engagement (*manaskāra*) with the object. For example, one person may have a habitual craving for horror movies and another person may have aversion to them. However, even when an observed object is present that has features that trigger a specific person, that person does not necessarily give rise to a manifest affliction toward that object each time. They might be happy about something else and do not put effort into generating an afflicted mental state toward the object. As with the mere presence of a latent predispositions, the mere presence of an observed object is not sufficient to cause a manifest affliction to arise.

Moreover, a manifest affliction can arise even in the absence of the object. In the *Mahāvibhāṣaśāstra*, the main Abhidharma treatise of the Vaibhāṣikas, it is said:

> Vasumitra explains that defilements can arise even for someone dwelling in a hermitage...In this case, there is no influence from an external object, but there are the forces of the cause — the yet unabandoned *anuśaya* [subtle propensity]— and improper mental application within the hermit.[76] On the other hand, even when in the presence of the cause (the latent subtle propensity) and the object-stimulus, one may not generate defilement on account of the absence of improper mental application.[77]

[76] One would presume that the retreatant had a memory of the object.

[77] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 385. Vasumitra was a master of the Sarvāstivāda school, which was the parent school from which both the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools emerged.

Improper mental engagement, which is how one mentally interprets and engages an object, is thus the crucial factor for the arising of a manifest afflicted mental state.[78]

One can have improper mental engagement with just the thought of an object or person, without the object being present, such as a difficult person in one's life. Understanding this is an important insight that can arise in meditation: it can dawn on one how one is generating pain for oneself when there is no need to do so. On the other hand, through engaging in loving kindness practice and the sending-and-receiving compassion practice, one could learn to generate those virtuous mental attitudes towards the difficult person who is in one's thoughts. This can lead to the even more provocative insight that one does not need to engage in improper mental engagement and experience painful afflicted mental states while being with them physically, working to generate loving kindness and compassion instead. Such insights and practices are part of the de-automatization of habitual patterns.

It is daunting to develop these skills. Having a cognitive understanding of these processes is a major support for transforming our painful emotional experiences, first within meditation, but eventually in difficult life situations. From the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika perspectives, coming to understand these three causes for the arising of afflicted mental states—especially understanding the role of improper mental engagement and learning to give rise to proper mental engagement instead—is integral to reducing afflicted mental states and increasing one's beneficial mental states and actions. Flashes of such insights are already occurring in the meditation of participants in MBIs, thus the

[78] There may, of course, be physiological components to a person's attraction or aversion to an object, e.g., for cigarettes.

implication here is why not include elements of such teachings in these programs to deepen their effectiveness?

The discourses of the Theravāda do not appear to teach a formal set of the three causes for the arising of the affliction in its *suttas*. However, they include a teaching on a pair of the three causes for the arising of an affliction: the observed object and improper mental engagement. It is said in a *sutta* passage:

> Bhikkhus, there are these two conditions for the arising of greed. What two? The mark of the attractive and careless attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of greed.[79]

"The mark of the attractive" is the equivalent of the observed object, indicating the quality of the object that elicits the improper mental engagement. "Careless attention" is Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the Pāli equivalent (*ayoniso manasikāra*) of the Sanskrit (*ayoniśo manaskāra*) translated here as "improper mental engagement."

While the subtle propensities (Pāli: *anusaya*; Sanskrit: *anuśaya*) are not explicitly mentioned as a third condition with this pair, the Theravāda tradition's understanding of the term *anusaya* (latent predisposition) and the related term *pariyuṭṭhāna* (entangler) is very similar to the Sautrāntika understanding, namely as latent and manifest forms of an affliction, respectively.[80] Thus the Theravāda effectively views the subtle

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[79] Bhikkhu Bodhi, translator, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 178.

[80] Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translate and explain the Pāli *anusaya* as "underlying tendencies [i.e., subtle propensities], in the sense that they have not been abandoned in the mental continuum to which they belong and because they are capable of arising when a suitable cause presents itself." They translate the Pāli term *pariyuṭṭhāna* as "obsession" (translated here as "entangler") and describe it as "where they [the latent

propensities as a third cause for the arising of a manifest affliction.[81] In short, the Theravāda is very similar to the Sautrāntika in identifying these three elements of subtle predispositions, observed object, and improper mental engagement, as major causes for the arising of manifest afflictions, though not as a formal set of three.

6.5. What is Improper Mental Engagement?

The Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika presentation of improper mental engagement and how it contributes to the rising of manifest afflictions is multi-faceted. While improper mental engagement is a cause of afflictions, it is not considered to be an affliction. The Sautrāntika master Yaśomitra describes improper mental engagement as the immediately preceding condition for the arising of an affliction.[82] That is to say, for a present moment affliction, there was improper mental engagement in the prior moment that helped cause the manifest affliction to arise in the present moment. Once an affliction arises, instigated by the preceding improper mental engagement, new moments of improper engagement continue to arise to nurture new, subsequent moments of the affliction.

While analyzing the relationship of improper mental engagement to the twelve links of dependent origination, Vasubandhu notes that improper mental engagement "undoubtedly" occurs simultaneously with the three links of dependent origination that are afflictions, namely, ignorance, craving, and grasping. However, Yaśomitra's sub-commentary clarifies that "it is not so that improper mental engagement has the nature (*svabhāva*) of grasping [and so forth]."[83] That is to say, improper mental

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anusaya] rise up to obsess and enslave the mind." See Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses*, 1241, n. 473, 65, n. 651.

[81] Also see Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, 585 (XVII 238).

[82] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1826, n. 329.

[83] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1169 n. 545.

engagement is not itself an affliction, but it continues to accompany and support the arising of a stream of moments of a manifest affliction.

"Improper mental engagement" is included in the general category of "mental engagement" (*manaskāra*), which is a universal mental factor that accompanies every moment of mind. Vasubandhu describes mental engagement as "the tilting or orienting or alerting (*ābhoga*) of thought (*cetas*): that which makes thought lean toward its cognitive object and restricts thought to the cognitive object."[84] The Vaibhāṣika master Saṃghabhadra describes improper mental engagement (*ayoniśo-manaskāra)* as a "mistaken" (*viparīta*) orientation" with regard to its observed object. He "compares the action of incorrect mental application to an object-field to that of boring a piece of wood: when this orientation of incorrect mental application occurs, the fires of lust are produced."[85] The drill is the improper metal engagement, the wood is the observed object, and the fire is the affliction that arises when the drill and the wood meet.

Improper mental engagement engages an object in a way that does not accord with the nature of the object. The object will have observable qualities, but the person interprets those qualities in a way that does not accord with them. For example, a cigarette has observable qualities like it delivers nicotine to the bloodstream and warm air to the lungs, but categorically attributing qualities like "desirable" or "beneficial" to them ignores the major harm cigarettes do to one's health. Thus, it is said that improper mental engagement projects a superimposition (*samāropa*),[86] a

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[84] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 514.

[85] Collett Cox, "Attainment through Abandonment: The Sarvāstivādin Path of Removing Defilements," in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, ed. Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello., Studies in East Asian Buddhism (Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 78.

[86] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1669. Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 261, 610.

false attribution (*adhyāropa*),[87] a provisional designation or conception (*prajñapti*),[88] or a false discrimination (*abhūta-parikalpa*) onto the object.[89] This means that the mental consciousness, the sixth consciousness, fabricates a quality that it projects onto the observed object. This process will be described in more detail below.

These projections of improper mental engagement generally involve conceptuality, though they can become so habitual that it is as if they are non-conceptually built into our perception of the object. Improper mental engagement consists of transient thoughts that arise in specific experiential contexts. Thus, improper mental engagement does not rise to the level of an afflicted view that requires "judgment after contemplation of the object."

Dhammajoti writes, "On account of its superimpositional function mental consciousness plays the key role in the saṃsāra process of defiling and purification."[90] The mental consciousness is the sixth of the six consciousnesses. It is distinct from the five sense consciousness that are considered non-conceptual. The mental consciousness is where conceptuality (and emotion) occurs. It can both create and undo problematic superimpositions, so it is involved in the process of both defilement and purification.

Yaśomitra adds that improper mental engagement is confused (*āvila*), it arises from delusion (*mohaja*), and is mistaken (*viparīta*).[91] Since improper mental engagement is "arisen from delusion," ignorance is the very cause of improper mental engagement. It is an expression ignorance,

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[87] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1987.

[88] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 2538.

[89] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 262.

[90] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 261.

[91] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1169, n. 344.

of not understanding karmic cause and result, virtuous and non-virtuous action, and so on.

The *Book of Analysis* (*Vibhaṅga*) of the Theravāda Abhidhamma Basket describes improper mental engagement as engagement of the Four Mistakes (Pāli: *vipallāsa*; Sanskrit: *viparyāsa*) and as engagement that is contrary to the Four Noble Truths:

> Careless attention [i.e., improper mental engagement] is deviant attention...takes the impermanent to be permanent, suffering to be happiness, what is non-self to be self, and the unattractive to be attractive. Or it is the mental turning, advertence, leaning, consideration, attention [to an object] in a way that runs contrary to the [four noble] truths.[92]

The Vaibhāṣikas understand the Four Mistakes to be included among the five afflicted views,[93]; thus all four are afflicted views. Again, the Sautrāntika apparently accept this Vaibhāṣika view. Since improper mental engagement is not an affliction, it cannot be any of the Four Mistakes. However, it seems improper mental engagement could be transient conceptual thoughts that reflect such mistaken views without rising to the level of being the assertion of a view.

The Sautrāntika master Yaśomitra makes a broad observation about another term, "mistaken *prajñā*" that helps here. He states, "It is not asserted that all *prajñā* that mistakenly observes [its object] is an [afflicted] view."[94] *Prajñā* is another universal mental factor that is thus

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[92] Thittila and Ashin, *The Book of Analysis (Vibhaṅga): The Second Book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, Pali Text Society translation series, (Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2010), 483 (Pali p. 373, topic 936). Translation from Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses*, 1593, n. 23.

[93] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1672.

[94] The Tibetan for this sentence is *log par dmigs pa'i shes rab thams ca lta ba yin par ni mi 'dod de/.* From Yaśomitra's *Abhidharmakośa-ṭīka* (*Chos mngon mdzod kyi 'grel bshad*) Derge Bka'

always present with improper or proper mental engagement. (*Prajñā* could be translated as "understanding" or "knowledge" here.) Mistaken *prajñā* and improper mental engagement would thus always occur together as mistaken thought, without being an afflicted view.

6.6. Two Ways Improper Mental Engagement Gives Rise to Afflictions

There are two ways in which improper mental engagement are said to give rise to afflictions. Saṃghabhadra writes:

> Sentient beings are of different natures; some with feeble defilements, others with strong defilements. For those with feeble defilements, there must first be the generation of false discrimination [i.e., improper mental engagement] before a defilement can come into play. For those with strong defilements, without depending on *vikalpa* [i.e., discrimination], a defilement arises as soon as it accords with the object.[95]

In the case of feeble or weak afflictions, some sustained conceptual activity of improper mental engagement is needed to give rise to the manifest form of the affliction; you "talk" yourself into the affliction. For strong, habitual afflictions, it is as if the improper mental engagement is built-in, such that the affliction manifests without any apparent prior improper mental engagement to prompt it. This will be discussed more below.

A similar pair of ways in which afflictions can arise occurs in the Theravāda tradition: *sasaṅkhārika* or *asaṅkhārika*. The terms occur in the *Dhamma-Saṅgaṇi*, the first book of the Abhidhamma Basket. Caroline Rhys

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'gyur D4092, vol. Ngu, folio 105a4. Sangpo paraphrases this line as if it were part of Vasubandhu's text. See Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1683.

[95] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 262.

Davids translates the first term as "induced" and "prompted," while she translates the second term as "spontaneous."[96] Bhikkhu Bodhi translates the two terms as "prompted" and "unprompted."[97] Karunadasa translates them as "induced" and "spontaneously," respectively, meaning "induced by an external factor or by one's inclination or habit," or "occurs spontaneously."[98] Of the three unwholesome roots, he explains that these two ways of arising only apply to desire and anger, not to ignorance.[99]

Caroline Davids is helpful in understand the meaning of "spontaneously" here. It means "only that the subject of the thought experience it without being conscious of its mental antecedent *as such….*"[100] (Emphasis in original.) It is not that this type of affliction is without prior causes; it is just that we are unaware of them. Thus, the affliction seems to arise spontaneously, of its own accord.

When an affliction spontaneously arises, seemingly unprompted or induced, one may well generate a rationale for it after it arises, though the rationale may have very little to do with how or why it came about. In addition, afterward we overtly re-enact and reinforce justifications for our emotions and actions: "My partner is the cause of this suffering of mind because they…" or "I am justified in hurting them because they…" These actively support the repetition of the supposedly "spontaneous" painful mental state. These processes are especially likely when it is a strong habitual pattern. As suggested previously, one's pattern is as if lying in wait for the next "victim," looking for the slimmest excuse to fire; what the other person said or did or did not do may have had very little

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[96] Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics: (Buddhist Psychology) of the Fourth Century BC* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996), 34, n. 1, 35-37.

[97] Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *Abhidhammattha*, 36. Also see pages 47-48.

[98] Y. Karunadasa, *The Theravāda Abhidhamma: Inquiry into the Nature of Conditioned Reality* (Wisdom Publications, 2019), 104.

[99] Regarding ignorance, see Karunadasa, *Theravada Abhidhamma,* 84-85.

[100] Davids, *A Buddhist Manual*, 34-35, n. 1.

to do with triggering one's habitual pattern. Again, one could create contemplative exercises to help people explore their strong, recurring painful affective states that they view as spontaneous and outside their control.

Vasubandhu provides another way to classify afflictions in terms of (1) those that are "perpetual" (*abhīkṣṇika*, *ājasrika*, or *satata*) or "chronic" (*tīrva*) and (2) those that only "appear from time to time."[101] He explains, "The defilement that appears from time to time, even when its impetus (*vega*) is strong (*adhimātra*), can be overcome, but not the perpetual (*ājasrika*) defilement, even when it is flagging."[102] For the perpetual afflictions, he states that one does not tend to exert oneself to overcome them, and thus they go from weak to medium to strong in strength. It is this gradual strengthening of the affliction that eventually enables it to appear as if it arises spontaneously. The improper mental engagement is so deeply habitual and so quick to give rise to its associated manifest affliction that it appears as if there is no improper mental engagement there at all precipitating the affliction, as if one had no hand in causing the affliction to arise; it feels like one's sudden afflicted response is "natural" and "appropriate." The Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika clearly disagree with this: we have actively and repeatedly cultivated this affliction over time till it seems to arise without any prompting or responsibility on our part.

6.7. The Role of Conceptuality in the Arising of Afflictions

According to the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika, the really painful afflicted mental states are those associated with, and exacerbated by, conceptuality. Vasubandhu notes that, in general, conceptuality is

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[101] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1448-449.

[102] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1449.

required for mental pleasure and pain, as opposed to physical pleasure and pain:

> As a general rule, agreeable or disagreeable mental sensation proceeds from a conceptualizing activity (*vikalpa*), from the conceptualizing activity of "dear" (*priya*), or "horrible" (*apriya*), etc. On the contrary, bodily sensation is produced from an external object-field, independent of a psychological state.[103]

As described above, the most harmful, painful, coarse afflicted states are caused by improper mental engagement involved with conceptuality. As noted above, these conceptualized afflicted states are said to be relinquished upon attaining the non-conceptual path of seeing, which occurs in meditative equipoise.

By contrast, the afflictions relinquished by the next path, the path of meditation, are prompted by physical sensations, not by thinking about them. At this point on the path, four non-view afflictions remain: ignorance, desire, anger, and pride. These are said to be triggered by sense experiences of objects to which one previously had habitual afflicted responses They do not arise due to thinking about the objects, though conceptuality was previously involved in creating these deep habitual patterns that remain.

Yaśomitra explains that these remaining afflictions are triggered by a sense experience of pain or pleasure, but the afflictions

> cease instantly, because the Blessed One said, 'Oh monastics, it indeed occurs that mindfulness can deteriorate slightly for the Noble Ones, the learned

[103] Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 475.

> Hearers. However, it only appears quickly and then it is completely finished and completely comes to an end.'[104]

Once one of these habitual afflictions is triggered, the practitioner does not nurture it with improper mental engagement, so it ceases right away. One became skillful in disrupting and reversing the process by which the subtle predispositions arose as manifest afflictions during the prior stages of the path. One knows better than to engage in unskillful thoughts and storylines about the object that gave rise to a momentary flash of desire, anger, or pride. (It is said that ignorance does not manifest by itself here, but is always present with the other three afflictions.)

As indicated in Yaśomitra 's quote from the Buddha above, Noble Ones on the path of meditation can even prevent these spontaneous, temporary experiences of afflictions from arising if they have strong mindfulness. If their mindfulness is lax, the subtle propensities can arise as a manifest affliction in response to a sense perception, but it will cease right away since they will not nurture it with improper mental engagement. Yaśomitra gives examples two examples of this process: one can experience a flash of desire upon experiencing pleasure at seeing an attractive person, or a flash of fear when seeing a drawing of an evil spirit that one momentarily experiences as real. He gives the metaphor of seeing the illusion of a circle of light created by quickly whirling a fire brand in a circle, which immediately disappears once the whirling stops.

Though the material here is couched in terms of the Buddhists paths as presented in this tradition, it points to the important

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[104] The Tibetan for this passage is: *yud tsam par zad kyi/ 'di phyin ci log ni ma yin te/ bcom ldan 'das kyis dge slong dag 'phags pa nyan thos thos pa dang ldan pa la dran pa nyams pa cung zad 'byung mod kyi/ 'on kyang myur pa kho nas mi snang pa dang/ yongs su zad pa dang./ yongs su gtugs par 'gyur ro zhes gsungs pas so/.* From Yaśomitra's *Abhidharmakośa-ṭīka* (*Chos mngon mdzod kyi 'grel bshad*) Derge Bka' 'gyur D4092, vol. Ngu, folio 101A.3-4. Translated by the author.

understanding that one can work with painful mental states and accomplish major transformations over time. In particular, understanding the role of conceptuality in creating painful mental states and learning to question our interpretive projections is integral to one's emotional transformation. Thus, learning models of this process within MBIs and exploring them in contemplative practice is valuable. The process may be gradual, but the cumulate results can be dramatic.

6.8. Are the Qualities of An Observed Object That Trigger an Affliction Existent or Non-Existent?

It has been implicit at various points in the preceding material that the supposed objects of our most harmful mental states are considered by this tradition to be non-existent. These are the afflicted states that respond to fabrications, projections, or superimpositions created by our own improper mental engagement. To use the language of this tradition, the observed objects that trigger the afflictions to be abandoned by the path seeing are "not real objects" (avastuka). By contrast, the observed objects of the afflictions of desire, anger, pride, and ignorance abandoned by the path of cultivation are "real objects" (savastuka); they are sense objects to which we were habituated to respond in the past. These latter afflictions evaporate immediately upon arising since they have been previously weakened and we no longer respond to them with improper mental engagement. We know better.

For the first type of fabricated object, how does an object that does not exist nonetheless appears to exist in our experience? This process is described as follows. The mental consciousness, the sixth consciousness, fabricates a quality, projects it on the observed object, and then experiences that projection as if it comes from the object, as if our sense perceptions are providing an experience of a real quality that is "in" the object that the mind then reacts to with an affliction. We are shadow

boxing with our own projections. We are sparring with an imaginary opponent. One experiences these projections as viscerally real when the mind combines them with sense perceptions, strong belief, and intense emotions. There is a "basis of imputation" that is actually there, the observable qualities that most anyone would acknowledge, like the nicotine and warmth provided by a cigarette discussed above. However, the imputation onto that real basis of an additional projected quality of being categorically "beneficial" is not there. The existent, observable qualities serve as a "basis of imputation" for the non-existent fabrications that are the "imputations" imposed upon that basis.

As another example, if one experiences pride with regard to belonging to a "superior" race, the quality of "superiority" that one experiences as being present in oneself and that is the supposedly real observed object of that pride, is non-existent from a Buddhist point of view. For example, the Buddha explicitly criticized prejudice based on caste.[105]

Typically, there *are* real, observable qualities that one associates with this "superiority," such as the color of one's skin, one's hair and facial features, one's parentage, one's accent, the "educated" way in which one speaks, and so on. Some portion of these characteristics, but not necessarily all, can be commonly observed and agreed upon as existent by different people. Value judgements such as having intrinsic superiority are not observable in this way.

People implicitly take the existence of the basis of imputation as proof that the imputation exists, when, in fact, the imputation is non-existent. It is as if the imputation "borrows" existence or legitimacy from the observable qualities. Of course, there are many other elements at play in prejudice, such as economics, social class, power, self-identity, and so

[105] See *Assalāyana Sutta* in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses*, 763-70.

on, but the process of projecting non-existent qualities, combined with the vividness of the sense experience of the existent observable qualities and with strong emotional attachment to the projection, contributes powerfully to the belief in the true existence of superiority and inferiority, and to the sense of truly existing “difference” and “otherness” that is so integral to prejudice.

This belief in the fabrications of our mind is at play in the range of afflictive mental states. This is why all the afflictions are said to have a cognitive dimension in addition to their affective dimension; the afflictions involve a misinterpretation of experience that is cognitive in nature.

Given that this model of how we believe in our fabricated projects functions both at the intimate level of personal relationships and at the broad social level of systems of prejudice and oppression, this means the two levels can get deeply intwined. The intensity of a person’s struggles with their afflicted mental states can get enmeshed with, and can fuel, systems of prejudice, while these systems provide “rationales” for further inflaming the afflicted mental states of the individual.

From the point of view of this model, when one has an afflicted mental state, there will always be some way in which one has interpreted the given situation that has contributed to one’s afflicted mental state and harmful actions. Thus, one method for working with an active afflicted state is to inquire into what is the misinterpretation, the improper mental engagement, that contributed to that state. Identifying and challenging these interpretations are part of the method for weakening and reversing them. Since such afflicted episodes are experienced in meditation, insights into them also occur in meditation. Again, describing elements of such a model of the cognitive and affective dimensions of the afflictions to participants in secular meditation programs will help clarify and strengthen their natural insights.

7. Similarities with the Cognitive Appraisal Model of Emotions

There are currently two main classes of theories of emotions proposed by cognitive psychologists, social psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, cognitive scientists, and neuroscientists: cognitive theories and noncognitive theories.

> 1) Cognitive theories maintain that "emotions are always cognitive because they...involve appraisals or evaluative judgments of their particular objects in their content that can be explicated in terms of conceptually structured propositional attitudes..." The content of all emotions "need not be constituted of concepts" but "the content of emotion is nevertheless conceptually explicable even in those cases where it is not constituted of concepts."[106]
>
> 2) Noncognitive theories "deny that emotions must involve concepts in order to serve their evaluative function" and "prefer narrow neuroanatomical, mechanism- or code-based accounts" of emotions.[107]

The Sautrāntika model for the arising of afflicted mental states has similarities with the cognitive class of theories that will be explored based on Mikko Salmela's 2014 book *True Emotions*. One strength of the book is that, though it is focused on a cognitive appraisal model of emotions, it incorporates the types of evidence favored by the noncognitive theories. He describes this evidence as functioning at the "implementaiton level," which refers to how the emotions function physiologically in the brain.

His focus is on two other levels of analysis that are key to cognitive appraisal models of emotions:

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[106] Mikko Salmela, *True Emotions*, Consciousness & Emotion Book Series, (Amsterdam: Philadelphia, 2014), 4-5.

[107] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 5.

> * The Functional Level: This analyzes whether the process that leads from the intake of perceptual or conceptual information to the triggering of an emotional response always involves the function of cognition, or whether there can be a noncognitive function without a cognitive function being involved.
>
> * The Algorithmic Level: This analyzes the sequential steps that lead to the arising and unfolding of emotions, particularly with regard to whether there are different conceptual and non-conceptual steps or components in the process.[108]

He also distinguishes two major types of emotions: primitive "affect programs" and "cognitively complex emotions."

> * Evolutionarily primitive "affect programs" are unconscious, implicit, fast, reflex-like emotional responses that have nonconceptual content. They are "neurally hard-wired in identifiable circuits and locations of the brain." They include basic emotions like fear, anger, and disgust that are "homologous with the emotions of other vertebrates."[109]
>
> * "Cognitively complex emotions" are "rule-based, analytic, serial, controlled, explicit, conscious, slow, and cognitively demanding." They "operate on semantically [,i.e., conceptually] structured representations of objects, events, or states of affairs, without possessing a distinct, emotion-specific physiology." They are "associated with higher cognitive processing and social roles," and have complex origins, being "thoroughly infused with biological endowments, social and cultural norms, and contingent facts of our individual biographies."[110]

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[108] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 7, 20-21, 42.

[109] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 19, 30, 115.

[110] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 9, 19, 21, 24.

Another key term in this model is "cognitive appraisal," which is central to the cognitive model of emotions. It is described as "a process that detects and assesses the significance of the environment for well-being."[111] It is said that emotional experience follows after a cognitive appraisal. The cognitive appraisal is often conceptual or, at a minimum, expressible conceptually. This cognitive appraisal would seem to have a strong correlation with proper and improper mental engagement, which also trigger affective states that follow after them, namely, beneficial or afflicted mental states, respectively.

A key conclusion he comes to is that "cognition is always involved in emotional content at the functional level of analysis."[112] This accords well with the Buddhist view that all afflictions involve a cognitive dimension. He continues by saying that the content of emotion "can be divided…into two kinds, cognitive and noncognitive, at the algorithmic [i.e., sequential] level of processes."[113] The fast, unconsciousness affect programs are strongly non-conceptual, while the "cognitively complex emotions" have a lot of conceptual content, though Salmela warns against drawing too hard a line between conceptual and non-conceptual emotions, as discussed below.

The affect programs have similarities with the "strong afflictions" of the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika view. A strong affliction "arises as soon as it accords with the object," without depending on an overt conceptual cognitive appraisal. The "feeble" afflictions would seem to be a type of "cognitively complex emotions" since there first needs to be an extended period of cognitive appraisal, i.e., of improper mental engagement, before this type of affliction can manifestly arise. However, there seems to be a difference between the strong afflictions and the affect program emotions

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[111] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 56.

[112] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 42.

[113] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 42.

in that the former can be developed out of a feeble affliction through repetition, ossifying into a rapidly firing afflicted response to its associated object, rather than being "evolutionarily primitive." It would seem reasonable that Salmela is aware of such a possibility, but I did not find it explicitly mentioned in his book. However, some Abhidharma masters distinguish between an "innate" form of an affliction and an "acquired" form, which resembles, respectively, the "affect program" and the cognitively complex emotions distinction more directly.[114]

Salema notes that the emotions of the ancient affect programs "operate on at least partially different neural pathways than culturally learned fears in the human brain."[115] This allows some potentially beneficial activities to start quickly through the pathways associated with the primitive affect programs, like attentional reallocation to the new stimulus. However, he states that

> the different pathways of emotional processing become strongly connected in the normal development of the human prefrontal cortex, allowing us significant control over even those emotions that are elicited through [pathways associated with the affect programs]...[116]

Even though the affect program can quickly give rise to an emotion like fear that is unmediated by the mechanisms of the cognitively complex emotions, the latter can then assent to, or resist, the affect program response, and begin inflecting how the emotion unfolds. Salmela thus cautions:

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[114] In this context, "innate" means something positive or afflicted that one is born with due to having cultivated it as a habit in previous lives. It does not mean we have a permanent "innate" human nature of a certain type. "Acquired" means a quality one develops in a current life. See Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1689, 1184, n. 454

[115] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 4.

[116] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 55.

> [I]nstances of pure [conceptual or non-conceptual] types [of emotions] were found to be rare as most human emotions have contents that mix properties of conceptual and nonconceptual content, being more or less conceptual or nonconceptual on a continuum from strongly conceptual to nonconceptual.[117]

This would seem to be related to the Dalai Lama's view that all afflictions have both cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Salmela thus observes that "only a minority of human emotions" [118] are or the primitive affect program type, and that the cognitively complex emotions are the dominant form of emotions. This would seem to correlate to the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika view that the conceptually mediated afflictions dominate human experience, which are those that operate before being relinquished on the path of seeing. Then what is left on the path of meditation are the unconscious, rapidly firing affect program emotions, discussed above in relation to "strong afflictions," that take a long time to remove on the path of meditation. It would seem unlikely that the cognitive appraisal theorists would accept that one could uproot the affect program emotions. Research with very advanced meditators might be revealing in this regard.

Samela also notes the distinction between the appraisal that initiates an emotion and the process of emotion regulation that can follow. Even if the initiating appraisal is non-conceptual, as with an affect program, conceptual cognitive appraisal can then come in and effect how the emotion proceeds during the emotion regulation phase. He describes how this process of interaction of conceptual and non-conceptual elements is even more prominent in the cognitively complex emotions

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[117] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 42-43.

[118] Salmela, *True Emotions*, 115.

because they unfold over a longer time period than the affect program emotions. In the cognitively complex emotions, cognitive appraisal

> constantly updates information about the emotion-eliciting situation in relation to one's active goals as well as to feedback from the body and the world, modifying the emotional response accordingly...This means that processes of emotion generation and emotion regulation overlap and intertwine during an emotion.

This complex picture accords well with the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika view of how improper mental engagement continues to inflect how an affliction unfolds once it manifests. Conversely, both models allow for emotional regulation to counter the improper mental engagement and give rise to a more beneficial mental state. Thus, ongoing improper mental engagement not only sustains an afflicted episode, but can intensify or weaken the episodes. It can even change the type of afflicted emotion one is having, e.g., going from jealousy to anger, to craving, and so on. Or one can give arise to proper mental engagement, reducing the painful emotions and shifting them to a positive affective state, such as cultivating kindness for oneself and even compassion for the person who had been the recipient of one's afflicted mental state.

8. Conclusion: Increasing the Effectiveness of MBIs Through Increased Use of Teachings from the Trainings in Ethics and Wisdom

As discussed in the introduction, in the Buddhist view, though there are variations in emphasis among traditions, all Three Trainings in ethics, meditation, and wisdom are important for bringing about personal transformation since they synergistically interact, support, and deepen each other. The field of MBIs has begun to explore the potential benefits of including elements of ethics into their programs and, to a lesser extent, elements of wisdom. Since the wisdom aspect is particularly

underdeveloped, this paper has been primarily devoted to exploring teachings and related analytical meditation techniques connected to wisdom that could be considered for inclusion in MBIs to increase their effectiveness by supporting and enriching the benefits of meditation they already provide for their participants.

This exploration has been based primarily on the highly developed psychological model of how we create and can reverse painful afflicted mental states (kleśas) from the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools of Indian Foundational Buddhism**,** as presented in the auto-commentary to Vasubandhu's auto-commentary to his *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*. His text represents the culmination of seven hundred years of development separate from the line that led to the emergence of the Theravāda, with the result that the relative strengths of Vasubandhu's text and lineage is the articulate, systematic, thoroughgoing detail and innovations of its philosophical approach that can be used to benefit MBIs.

Numerous perspectives on the role and importance of the Training in Wisdom have been explored here. A crucial, recurring theme has been that the cognitive process of understanding (i.e., prajñā or wisdom) is integral to personal transformation, as in (1) understanding and explicitly utilizing a conceptual model of afflicted mental processes and in (2) using conceptually informed analytical meditation to experientially explore such a model. This is the case because the afflictions have an innate cognitive dimension; they are not just affective states. How we interpret ourselves and the world are integral to the affective states we experience.

Transforming afflictive states involves transforming their cognitive dimensions. Understanding the role of mistaken conceptuality in creating painful mental states and learning to question the interpretive projections that are involved is thus integral to one's emotional transformation. These teachings appear strikingly modern given their parallels with the cognitive appraisal model of emotions.

In a related manner, it has thus been proposed that a major reason that mediation aids personal transformation is that cognitive understanding—prajñā in its conceptual and non-conceptual forms—is a naturally arising, essential part of meditation, especially in insight meditation. It also spontaneously occurs in calm abiding meditation as conceptual cognitive understanding, even though one may set it aside for the duration of a session.

These considerations have not been fully recognized in the MBIs. As noted above, Dreyfus writes, “the identification of mindfulness with present-centred non-judgmental awareness ignores or, at least, underestimates the cognitive implications of mindfulness.” This process of ignoring or underestimating the role of conceptual understanding was vividly illustrated in a conversation I had with a Naropa Master of Divinity student who was a committed Zen practitioner and who was studying the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika material with me. I asked him if he ever discussed his personal insights of the type discussed here with his teacher or community members. He responded with one word: “Never!” I then asked him if, prior to coming to Naropa, had such insights been integral to his development on the path of Zen practice, even though they never discussed such things. His response was “Definitely!” Conceptual cognitive understanding developed by pondering his meditation and life experience had been integral to his path, even though the ethos was that one was not supposed to acknowledge or discuss such things.

This example suggests that there would be benefit in cross-fertilizing the methods of the different Buddhist traditions, as in MBIs influenced by Zen. It has thus been proposed that the effectiveness of MBIs would be enhanced by offering participants conceptually formulated psychological models with meditative techniques for exploring them in their own experience, using a non-normative approach that fosters personal inquiry.

MBIs have utilized only a limited set of Buddhist teachings and meditation practices, thus they could benefit by expanding what they utilize. Analytical meditation from the Indo-Tibetan tradition is an example of a contemplative method that can be used for experientially engaging the model of afflictions, as discussed above. A defining feature of this type of meditation is the use of conceptual mind to orient participants toward exploring some area of experience. As noted, it is often utilized to foster non-conceptual experience by employing conceptuality to lightly orient oneself in some experiential direction. It includes a very broad range of practices, some of which are already used in MBIs, such as *metta* loving kindness and sending-and-receiving compassion practices. Analytical meditation includes many forms of guided meditation that can range from short, easily accessible, and impactful contemplative exercises, as with exploring the relationship between sense experience and conceptuality, to more extended guided meditation sessions exploring episodes of one's afflicted emotions. It is proposed that the latter, extended guided sessions, could be especially helpful for exploring the model of how we create afflicted emotions and how we can develop well-being, though there are many practical considerations for how to offer effective guided meditations, as briefly discussed above.

In presenting many details of the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika model of the afflictions, I have made suggestions at times for possible ways of including this material in MBIs, but it will be the creativity and experimentation of those who are developing the MBIs that will be crucial here. In principle, it would be ideal for them to develop a deeper knowledge of a Buddhist tradition or traditions, but it may be more practical to collaborate with those already well versed in the study and practice of the traditions, whether they are Buddhist teachers or scholars. Examples of Buddhist scholars who are already contributing to the field were mentioned above, which included George Dreyfus, John Dunne, John

Makransky, and Judith Simmer-Brown. In addition, the experience with contemplative education of teachers in universities where intellectual study is combined with contemplative practice could be of help to MBIs, with adaptations as needed.

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