Communities of Practice

A Humanistic Buddhist Response to Modern Crises

A Compendium Sharing the Experiences of Wollongong Communities of Practice

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In Collaboration with Nan Tien Institute of Higher Education

Chapter Structure

Foreword - **Stephen Hill**

Introduction - **Juewei Shi and Priscilla Wong**

The Problem?

1. Making a Difference - **Alex Trauth-Goik and Jade Hutchinson**

2. Environment and Sustainability - **Tom Halbert**

3. Critical Introspection and Education - **Jade Hutchinson**

4. Principles for Internet Use - **Alex Trauth-Goik**

How Compassion and Collective Wisdom Can Provide

5. Compassion and Self Compassion - **Sue Sumskis and Chelsea Cappetta**

6. Collective Wisdom with Peace and Harmony - **Magali Goirand and Bruce McKenzie (Pending review)**

7. Collective Wisdom and the Private Sector - **Elizabeth King**

8. Conclusion - **Jade Hutchinson and Alex Trauth-Goik**

"WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

Humanistic Buddhist Response to Modern Crises (FOREWORD)

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> "*We used to live in a Society.*
> *Now we live in an Economy.*"

> - **Hugh Mackay (2007)**

As we stretch forward through the first decades of the 21[st]Century, society confronts extraordinary transformation – where, day by day, new powers of our increasingly digitised world confront, overwhelm, confuse and change us.

Meanwhile, hanging like the Sword of Damacles[1] over us, we live within what is now termed 'The Anthropocene'[2] period of human history where the very physical processes of the planet on which we all depend are being altered by human action – and the resources which sustain life are being steadily depleted towards the alarming potential of our extinction, or at the very least, massive

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[1] An allusion based on an anecdote reported by Cicero in the 4th Century BC to the imminent and ever-present peril faced by those in positions of power. Damocles was an obsequious but favoured courtier in the Court of the paranoid tyrant, Dioysius II of Syracuse. To favour him Dionysius had Damocles lie on a gold table surrounded by every possible richness - but hanging over his head was a *sword* attached by only a horse hair - thus showing Damocles that imminent threat still awaits even when surrounded by the wealthiest of support.

[2] The impact of humans on the very basic dynamics of our planet is now so great that an official expert group reporting to the 2016 35th International Geological Congress in South Africa, recommended declaration of a new geological epoch, the 'Anthropocene', beginning, arguably in 1950—a depiction of the new period of the earth's history when humans are actually changing the earth's environmental dynamics at a global planetary level. The 'Anthropocene' is now increasingly popularly accepted as a useful distinction when talking of our current Age as it emphasises the unique IMPACT we now have on planetary processes (Fukuhara, 2018).

global conflict to seek to guarantee *our* lives and society by capturing advantage which fundamentally depletes the lives and opportunity of others.

The signs of stress are all around us – in particular amongst the young, those who have most to lose from a fast transforming future. Environmental anxiety is widespread and now the source of youth-led movements calling for change, which their 'elders' have been dawdling over through a lack of adequate political vision and serious commitment. More generally, Hugh Mackay – in presenting one of the earlier Communities of Practice guiding talks (See Hugh Mackay, 2019), pointed to the endemic plague of *anxiety* which pervades modern society.

At heart, and at a global level, the values we live by, the objectives we pursue, have been taken over by values of the global economic system within which we all now must live – values ultimately constructed of self-interest, competitive advantage, and greed. Community, social care, harmony, compassion are marginalised accidents within such a 'grammar' of life – yet these are the values of the assertion of our *humanity*, and it is *only* within this assertion that we have the collective power to make a difference, and escape the destructive future which otherwise threatens to engulf us.

Indeed, the world is starting to wake up. The United Nations, since 2016 has developed an internationally measured 'Happiness Index' to substitute for GDP as criterion of human welfare (Helliwell et al., 2018), an initiative which has then been followed by the *economically-focused* organisation, OECD (Algan, 2018, p 287). Governments such as New Zealand, under Prime Minister Jacinda Arden, are already implementing a peoples' "Wellbeing Budget" announced in May 2019 which provides for projects to tackle climate change, digital transformation, social exclusion, poor health, housing and domestic violence rather than prioritise growth and economic benefit per se (Tamkin, 2019).

But, whilst beautiful green shoots of change, these actions still only scratch lightly on the surface of the face of change which must be fundamentally transformed. Action has to come back to the person, to the power of humanity within community … to 'my street'.

Under the wisdom and guidance of Ven Dr Juewei Shi, and with the commitment to make things happen of Priscilla Wong and numerous volunteers, the Nan Tien Institute has been confronting this paradox – finding and asserting our humanity whilst wrestling our way out of the self-interest paradigm which captures daily life, exchange, and political values.

This *humanity-focused enterprise* has been the source and the agenda of the Nan Tien Communities of Practice Program – expressed in particular since late 2018 and into 2019 through four targeted programs of Opening Talks to provide inspiration, and follow-on Workshops to foster clarity about the issues raised, to cultivate response, and to form action-oriented communities and friendships – all staged within a meditative and reflective context. At the heart of all is focus on the power of our *humanity*, specifically, as reflected in the core values and long-standing wisdom of Humanistic Buddhism, self-reflective mindfulness, integrity, care, compassion – connection with our social world of others. For it is here that meaning and power to act is housed. Not only that, but as Susan Sumskis and Chelsea Cappetta demonstrate in Chapter six of this compendium, as a survey of 100,000 people across 63 countries demonstrated, empathy and compassion is a two-way street – associated with higher levels of overall subjective well-being, prosocial behaviour and collectivism – at core, 'loving kindness'.

The compendium presents a series of articles written by the Facilitators of Communities of Practice (CoP) Workshops which were conducted in the fourth of the CoP Series - on 22nd April 2019 at the Nan Tien Institute and Temple.

The previous CoP programs had prepared the way.

> The first, guided by indigenous elder, Aunty Fran Bodkin, focused on 'knowing' – with lessons from the 'Deep Time' experience of indigenous society.

> The second, guided by President of the Nan Tien Institute, Emeritus Professor Bill Lovegrove, AO, focused on 'The Power of the Mind – from both current research information and personal experience (Professor Lovegrove is a Psychologist).

The third program, guided by Hugh Mackay, AO, renowned social surveyist and popular writer on social issues, guided us to an understanding of the causes and character of present-day "Anxious Society", together with an understanding of *"healing"* this disarray of our human and social strength: at the heart is caring engagement with others, 'community' and our 'humanity.

The fourth CoP wrapped up these earlier programs by focusing on how 'We Can Make a Difference'. There were three Guiding Speakers, each presenting a different facet of what matters to make change happen towards a more humanity-shaped world.

The first was Reverend Bill Crews, AM, Anglican Minister and Founder of the Exodus Foundation which takes care of the Homeless in Sydney – now expanding internationally. Bill Crews' critical message was about the value of compassion and care, but in particular, the importance of actually *doing it*, rather than remaining in discussions or plans for some time in the future.

The second was myself, Emeritus Professor Stephen Hill, AM, focusing on the power of culture, creativity and care to *heal*– in the specific case I spoke of, the desperately traumatised orphaned children from the massive Tsunami which struck Aceh, Indonesia on Boxing Day 2014, killing over 220,000 people. We discovered that the strength that brought the children out of the silence of their trauma into connectedness and mental strength was *in* the culture, the meaning and the *social world* surrounding them - demonstrating the more general power for asserting a voice over our future more generally which lies in meaning and community, a resource available to us all if only we look and seek to create it.

The third Guiding Speaker was John Hatton, AO, famous independent politician and 'National Living Treasure of Australia' John Hatton, who is a 'reformer' to his roots, is particularly honoured by personally taking on corrupt politicians, police and the Mafia to create a Royal Commission into the Police in 1995 which revolutionised police integrity for NSW. John Hatton demonstrated in his talk, the power of *integrity*, the necessity of

human courage and persistence, uniting competing communities … and 'Making a Difference'.

Following these three Introductions, we heard, as first response, the voice of youth, presented by Alex Trauth-Goik, opening discussion to the Panel of Speakers with the question, "how can we go about working to foster intergenerational understanding and develop a broader appreciation for how these societal changes affect each of us differently?"

It was within these inspirational and guiding contexts that the Workshops of CoP-4 were held, the focus of the rest of this compendium.

As the reader will see, they focus on community, compassion and harmony – the core values of Humanistic Buddhism applied into the modern world, based on meditative practice and creativity and in discussions of connecting mind and heart (Ven Miayou Shi and Ven Youji Shi) working with compassion (Sue Sumskis and Chelsea Cappetta), ranging across spiritually-based environmental practice (Tom Halbert and Ven Juewei Shi), how organisations become mindful – leading to collective wisdom (Elizabeth King), equipping youth with humanistic values principles to navigate the digital, social and educational landscape (Alex Trauth-Goik and Jade Hutchinson), and … ultimately, *happiness.*

I wish to offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all Workshop Facilitators – and Writers in this compendium. The book is born in 'doing it' based on the values of Humanistic Buddhism, and offers an excellent resource for others – to also helps to develop their own *practice* to 'change the world through assertion of our humanity'[3], and thus not only survive, but *thrive* in the land our society has created.

I offer particular debt of gratitude and congratulations to the editors in chief Alex Trauth-Goik and Jade Hutchinson for taking the initiative to bring this Nan Tien Communities of Practice Workshop compendium to life.

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[3] This expression captures my own (as author of the Forward) basic message as presented in the Communities of Practice program at Nan Tien, and in writing the 'Kyoto Manifesto for Global Economics' published last year. See Stomu Yamash'ta, Tadashi Yagi and Stephen Hill (eds), Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018.

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Introduction

Juewei Shi & Priscilla Wong

"*A bodhisattva is always thinking, studying, and listening in order to deepen his wisdom and understanding of life. With these skills he teaches others and helps them find joy*"

- **Venerable Master Hsing Yun**
The Eight Realizations of the Bodhisattva Sutra

It is with immense gratitude that we thank the editors for this fine compendium of the "We Can Make A Difference" event held on 22nd April 2019. The day was the culmination in a series of four separate Communities of Practice events held in late 2018 and early 2019.

The team behind the Communities of Practice series met in 2012 when we invited a small group of volunteers to work together, bringing the Buddha's ancient wisdom into the modern world. This "community" grew organically through friendship and practice - creating book clubs, artworks and exhibitions at Buddha's Birthday Festivals across Australia.

In 2018, the team reflected on our development and the power of the community that had been built over the years. While troubled by the increasing crises facing the world, we were continually encouraged by individuals and communities working to tackle these issues from innovative directions. At the same time, we were inspired by the symbolism of the opening of the Nan Tien bridge in July 2018 - connecting our spiritual home at the Nan Tien Temple with our modern, academic home at the Nan Tien Institute.

Building on the twin pillars of wisdom and practice, we invited friends to join us in establishing a wider "Community of Practice". The community was blessed to be able to access the collective wisdom of distinguished scholars, leaders and fellow members of the community. At the same time, the community was invited to put into practice the habits and skills which could allow this wisdom to develop deeply and permeate widely.

The workshops held throughout the Communities of Practice series have been consistently acclaimed. They provided an important space for the development of friendship and ideas on a multitude of contemporary issues. All of the workshop facilitators who also author these chapters freely gave of their time and expertise. We are immensely grateful for their dedication, generosity and leadership - each a true embodiment of the selfless "bodhisattva" whose compassion and wisdom are dedicated to the service of all beings.

This Compendium provides some insights into the community's collective response to modern crises. We invite you to take these insights and continue to practice by bringing your skills and wisdom into your wider homes, workplaces and communities. It is with the warmest of hearts that we wish you courage and strength in your journey along the difficult but essential "bodhisattva" path. Rest assured, the community is united in this journey and together "We **Can** Make a Difference".

Making a Difference: The Youth Perspective

Jade Hutchinson & Alex Trauth-Goik

"If Buddhist youths want to awaken the people of our time and bring a breath of fresh air to Buddhism, they first have to be humble and prepare themselves. They have to study diligently and extensively in order to guide others toward the right view. They can be in a position to do good for the society only when they are familiar with various skills and technologies."

- **Venerable Master Hsing Yun**

Introduction

We live in an extraordinary age which is both complex and confusing, hopeful and debilitating, comfortable and contradictory. The horizon of our shared future has never been more uncertain, and the world's youth are becoming keenly aware of this fact. The goal posts of life, once portrayed to us by our parents as seemingly immobile, now shift ceaselessly as if built on quicksand. Today's youth have effectively been turned into a generation of "absolute beginners" when plotting their life trajectories and reaching traditional adult markers (Arrington & Basurto, 2018: 92). Our educational system is stuck stagnate, preparing young people for a future of work in careers forecasted to be co-opted by automated systems. While labour-intensive industries are met with the changes of automation, competition for intellectually-dependent occupations is commensurately constricted for young people. These conditions are observed by generations past as not only expected but historically common place. Granted, young people are often depicted and remembered as overly provocative, progressive or passionate. Captured in film or photo routinely complaining about their own conditions and even seen as brash or naïve in their efforts to address them. Even if this were true, it does not account for the advent of the internet and its impact on every future generation from now.

The Advent of the Internet

As an innovation in information replication and social connectivity, the internet is both revolutionary and indispensable. The advent of the internet is shaping humanity's potentiality as a species. As both casual observers and digital architects we are able to materialise anything, coordinate everything, weaponize information or save ourselves from consequences once unforeseen (Singer & Brooking, 2018). Born with a virtual Cornucopia in every cotton pocket, the young carry it with indifference. Blind to social media's specialist designs which renders attention transfixed on social status, young people struggle to see the potential of the device affixed to their grip (Andreassen, et al. 2017). Unswayed or incentivised to engineer social media with consideration for the young plastic minds they shape, administrators, marketers and technocrats impetuously mass-produce impulsivity, dependence and desperation into social psyches. As the content between the dark web and social media seamlessly feature in one another, youths are greeted with traumatic images of real-violence (Lovink, 2019). Our willingness to pay attention to these facts or circumvent the impact on youths with systemic education, is minimal. Aside from intermittent interjections, little is invested into conveying to youths 'the tension between user-generated content creation and corporate power structures' of social media companies (Erstad, 2016). As light is cast over this entanglement of attention, social expectation and economic incentives, the consequences are beginning to reveal themselves. For those as young as eight years old, social media has, in part, brewed mental illness and self-harm (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018).

Mental Illness: A Simple Diagnosis or Symptom of the System?

By the time many young people graduate from high school, they will have known someone who has taken their own life due to an undiagnosed or untreated mental health issue. The rate of anxiety, depression, and suicide is rising among the youth - how did this happen? (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). The mental wellbeing of young people is confronted by innumerable social, physical and cultural expectations and perturbed by the ubiquity of these expectations on behaviour and attention. Mistakenly, the circumstances that weave mental illness into a population is even less acknowledged than the diagnosis. Mental illness should not just be considered a proscribed diagnosis, but a symptom of genetics and circumstance that demands further consideration (Maté,

2010). The proliferation of anxiety, depression, behavioural addiction, drug addiction, self-harm and suicide among young people is a series of clues for investigation, not an "open and shut case" (Maté, 2010; Hari, 2015). Exclusive care is not taken to the mental well-being of the young, mental illness bridges the inter-generational divide. Generations side-by-side are intertwined in these circumstances and must come together in consensus on a number of issues.

Intergenerational Change and Differences

The exponential rate of change has made intergenerational understanding and communication a difficult endeavour. This is not to say that generations past have not experienced axiomatic change, crippling socio-economic conditions or mental instability. However, it can be said that automation and the internet are in themselves axiomatic innovations with unprecedented and untold future consequences. As young people do not occupy decision making positions, the sentiment that mainstream politics is unresponsive and uncaring to the change afoot is now widespread (Sindell, 2017). Despite a renewed focus on these issues within the 2019 Federal budget, older Australians are still capturing a growing share of Australia's wealth, while the standard of living for the youth is deteriorating (Wood, 2019; Daley & Wood, 2014). In lock-step with this unbalanced economic development, environmental anxiety is being felt keenly by the youth of our society as they watch the repercussions of a worsening climate begin to mount. The reckless pursuit of capitalist accumulation characteristic of the current global economic order is damaging both the Earth and the prospect of our collective future. In the early months of 2019 we saw the youngest members of our society take the greatest political action towards changing this dynamic by protesting in their thousands—but to no avail – and climate change is just one of many issues that demands inter-generational empathy and coordination.

Conclusion

The challenges facing the Youth of the 21[st]century are daunting, ubiquitous, and interconnected. Yet at the same time our access to information has never been greater. The necessity for higher levels of intelligence, compassion and tolerance are increasing to match the world's growing complexity. Humanistic Buddhist principles may enable us to learn, improve, adapt and thrive, these will become the new canons of the digital age, leading to a more harmonious and fulfilled

social existence. This is undoubtedly an age of opportunity, if only we were to imbue our young people with a greater sense that it is so. The greatest difference the youth of the world can make is by expanding society's collective consciousness from a narrow focus on individualisation and consumerism, towards a holistic understanding of the world and the people living on it as being one integral whole. If the youngest members of our society are both aware and able to take action, the intergenerational divide is all that separates us from this end. In the words of Edward Arrington and Grace Basurto (2018: 100) "*We need more voices not fewer; heterogenous rather than singular meanings, plurivocality rather than expertise.*" Now is the time for the members of all generations to come together to assert our humanity, acknowledge the broader relationship between technology and society (Hill, 2018: 321), work collectively for solutions to these problems, and realise a future that all can benefit from.

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Spiritual and Environmental Preservation Practice

Tom Halbert

"Just as we get sick physically, the Earth is sick too. When people are sick, they need to be treated and saved. When the Earth is sick, it also needs everyone to care of it and save it. To save the Earth, we must begin with environmental preservation. On the other hand, protection of nature depends on humanity to self-awaken, which also starts with preservation of the spiritual environment"

- Venerable Master Hsing Yun

What is it?

The Spiritual and Environmental Preservation Practice (SEPP) is a plan for sustainability, a journey towards a viable way for human beings to live on planet earth, and a way to address the modern crises. It contains eight practice areas or ingredients required to take up this viable way of living. These are;setting out; keeping on; foundations; creativity; propagate; travel; equip; and community. The eight work together in supporting us to practice our spiritual path while actively engaging with environmental preservation.We can see similarities with VenerableXuan Zang, the Tang Dynasty monk who took the perilous and difficult journey from China to India. He had the vision to start off, the vow to continue against the odds, the spiritual wellspring of Dharma to draw from, the flexibility to adapt on the journey, the support of community, all of which contributed to him completing the journey. Like Venerable Xuan Zang, we too must use the eight ingredients to navigate our modern-day journey of sustainability.

The Situation

On the one hand there is the modern crises. On the other, there are ways of viable living. These exist side-by-side, but apart from one another. The modern crises comprise such phenomena as;

global warming, inequality, pollution, social isolation, land degradation. This is where we use what we want without heeding the consequences of our actions, short term or long term. Respect for all life is minimal. In contrast, viable ways of living encompass things like; spirituality, renewable energy, for Benefit Corporations, regenerative land use, and you can think of many more. At this time, the modern crises dominate. They arose from the current global systems that operate from an ego-driven, self-centred societal base, from working in isolation, from grasping for unlimited wealth and power and from ignoring the problems at hand. The effects of these crises make it plain that we are heading for an unlivable situation. The SEPP and its viable practice-concepts must become the new normal.

In addition to what is happening in the world, there is also the situation that is happening within us. On the one side it is how we feel about the crises, how we are affected by the crises. There can be grief, helplessness, despair, shutting out or anger. This can affect our capability to engage. On the other side, looking at the viable way of living, we can feel hope, optimism, have faith and be encouraged. Our emotion and thought shift between these two frames of mind. A bit of a roller coaster ride!

What Could Be

Utilising the viable ways of living that are currently available, we can keep the planet liveable. The spiritual aspect of the SEPP practice-concept was inspired by the talk 'Spiritual and Environmental Preservation' (Venerable Hsing Yun, 2010). The relationship between spiritual and environment is clearly laid out in this talk. As Venerable Hsing Yun says, "The purity of the mind is the greatest environmental preservation because Buddhism believes the establishment of the notion of environmental preservation should start from the human mind." In addition, he imparts the spiritual message that we should say "I am a Buddha". Explaining that, "Not only is 'I am a buddha' helpful for oneself, because of 'I am a buddha', I will treat others and the world's myriad phenomenon with compassion and cherish it. This is spiritual preservation, which is saving the Earth" (Venerable Hsing Yun, 2010).

With the environmental aspect, we see that the 99% of what is needed to address the modern crises is at hand, ready to go, ready to be employed, with more successful initiatives being added day by

day. The Global Opportunity Explorer directory shows an example of this (GOE, 2019). The 1% that is needed to activate the 99% can be found in the SEPP. In other words, the causes and conditions required for viable living are at our disposal if we care to foster them through the SEPP. Thus, amongst many other initiatives, this SEPP is a path to actualising a sustainable way of living on the planet.

Getting From Here To There – The Practice

This is the 1% that needs to be activated. This is the 'how to'. The shifting from non-viable   ways of living to viable ways of living, requires us to change.

Of course, there are many people, organisations and initiatives that are participating in this 1% already. No doubt you are participating in this in many ways at the moment. It may be through recycling, having solar panels on your roof, buying certified organic, going meat free some or all of the time. But don't we know in our hearts that there is more to be done? More, by more people. Deeper by more people. Shifting our consciousness, our capabilities, our heart. The SEPP is a pathway to travel on this journey from here to there. It is practised unashamedly from a spiritual wellspring: a spirituality inseparable from our earthly life.

As a practice, the SEPP assists us to align our actions with our intent, supports us in our efforts, motivates us to persist, emphasises a spiritual practice in everyday life, gives us confidence that our efforts will bear fruit, navigates obstacles, provides a foundation of ethics, equips us for the journey. All in all, it creates the conditions for action. It examines how the 99% can be raised into action. It helps us come to terms with the rollercoaster of emotion and mindset. So, whilst acknowledging our feelings about the crises, we are able to go forth with Dharma joy to bring the 99% to fruition.

Eight Ingredients to the SEPP

The SEPP practice-concept must be exercised continuously. It takes time to learn, to form new patterns, to put into action. A practice keeps the causes and conditions humming along in order to

produce the result. The following are brief descriptions of each of the eight ingredients in the SEPP practice-concept.

Setting Out

Accomplished by the three Vs, setting out is the start of the practice and fine tunes the starting point for our existing practice. We identify where we want to go. We harmonise our relationship with the modern crises. We level up our intention and commit to avow.

Vision- Visualise the preservation of the pure land on earth, the viable way of living.

View– View the modern crises critically. To hold a dharma view of the crises and shift from aversion to having a heartful response with which to venture forth.

Vow– Make a vow that energises us. By embracing the **vision** and the **view,** a wish to address the crises is allowed to arise. Transforming the wish into a vow will set a strong foundation for going forth in the practice. As an example, "I Tom, vow to keep the planet liveable for all".

Keeping On

Attaining the spiritual skill that will allow us to handle the situation of the modern crises and to travel the path with compassion and wisdom. For instance, we may apply the dharma lesson that for every obstacle there is a remedy, or we may simply say prayers.

Foundations

The knowledge and practice of Humanistic Buddhism dharma. This keeps the dharma close to us so we can readily apply it in our spiritual and environmental preservation practice. For instance. the practices of the five precepts: mindfulness; non-self; impermanence; the eight-fold path; heartfulness; and oneness and co-existence.

Creatively Adapt

With circumstances changing we need to adapt and use creativity to adjust what we are doing. The flow of expressed wisdom and creativity is a natural talent of humans and can be fostered through

practice. We can access this through practices like presencing (Scharmer, 2007). With presencing, a mindfulness technique, we can sense the future as it emerges and co-create and actualise the viable ways of living. We can adapt to the modern crises by responding to shifts like artificial intelligence or climate change. We can adapt the SEPP path to respond appropriately.

Propagate

By engaging with others, we gain the benefits of working as a community. For instance, we can use initiatives like Turning Points Stories (Turning Points, 2019) to attract others to participate. These stories are told by community members who have faced a challenging situation in their life. Their story shows how some insight or application derived from a dharma lesson can be applied to overcome challenges and make a difference in our personal lives. Readers can relate to someone else's story and this opens the door to the possibility of their own individual change. We can also hold study groups or create online programs to make the SEPP accessible to the community.

Travel

Oh finally we get to do something! This is the action part. The SEPP fosters the causes and conditions for us to actualise the pure land, the viable way of living and to live in symbiosis with the planet. This encompasses such practices as measuring our sustainability actions, determining right action and right livelihood, addressing consumerism in our day to day life, advocating for change, or co-creating and participating in sustainability projects.

Equip

Equip ourselves for the journey so that we have the skills, the energy, the knowledge. This means being healthy, meditating, having faith, building competencies and capabilities, studying alternatives, amongst other things.

Community

As a community we can put things into action that we couldn't do individually. It is to provide support, to be neighbourly, to communicate heartfully and to be organised.

When to Enact the Spiritual and Environmental Preservation Practice

> *"If we do not wish to become refugees of climate and environmental changes, the most urgent task for humanity right now would be to ensure that environmental and spiritual preservation are well-practiced."*
>
> -Venerable Master Hsing Yun

Taking action is, at times, easy to put off. However, compassion and wisdom knows no delay. Being proactive, based on the evidence available and the information we receive every day, empowers us to take action now!

Conclusion

> *"Not only is the 21st century the era of environmentalism, it will also be a beautiful era of purified minds."*
>
> -Venerable Master Hsing Yun

I once asked Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "how can I best explain what Buddhism is about to people?". I was expecting a long and complicated answer. He said, "Do no evil, do all good, and purify the mind". The practise of Spiritual and Environmental Preservation fulfils this advice. The SEPP gives us the confidence to play our part in healing the modern crises and in contributing in a meaningful way to the pure land of viable living for humans.

In a proactive way it applies care to my family, my self, the community and the planet. It provides an effective way of consolidating our efforts as we work together in community, right here right now.

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Critical Thinking and Introspection in Education

Jade Hutchinson

Introduction

The quality of your thought reflects the quality of your action. Thinking about our thoughts affects our behaviour and predicts the success of our behaviour. Taking pause to view the way we think is a practice well-known to most people. How and what to do once we are paused in thought however, is lesser known. Education in critical thinking, introspection and its concomitant effects on behaviour, is the thread which sows the topics of this article together. This article contends that critical thinking and introspection are together, essential intellectual faculties for everyday life, and should be comprehensively institutionalised in Australian primary, secondary and higher education curriculums. The result may be a generational leap in cognitive ability, psychological stability and a deeper understanding of everything from self-discovery to career success.

I'll take a moment to highlight that I am **not** formally educated in primary or secondary education. I willingly admit my admiration for teachers and awe at their dedication to the onerous task of educating young people. I write from my own experience educating at the tertiary level, as a student in the education system and from my discovery, use and research on the following topics.

Communication

During conversation humans exercise highly sensitive sensory instruments, intuition and cognition to distinguish fact from fiction. Our finely turned sensory systems can produce and recognise a multiplicity of micro-expressions and complicated noises. In milliseconds, our highly responsive cognition differentiates these sensory signals automatically and systematically registers its meaning. Within a few seconds, we collaborate our interpretation of the speaker's appearance, with their choice of language and expression. This relationship of cognition and sensors forms an opinion about the information spoken by the speaker and the speaker's behaviour. If the behaviour of the speaker is congruent with the meaning interpreted from their speech, we are likely to believe

it. Any slight incongruence or sign of fraudulence however, and we revel a felt sense of dishonesty with our own micro-expressions, or out-right rejection. As the speaker, this detection of falsity comes with various social costs such as embarrassment and reputation tarnishing. Such social costs (should) motivate speakers to provide credible information in the future. For a more linear representation of communication, the Shannon Weaver model serves to simplify our socio-biological exchange, with a technological one (Businesstopia, 2018). Using language, this sophisticated feed-back loop of information sharing, interpretation and evaluation has allowed humans to critically think about information and how we interact with one another. Most significantly, this feed-back loop created a process of information distillation. Where observable truths could be shared, compared and tested through conversation to improve our lifestyle and longevity. The most useful information was distilled and reproduced for the benefit of future generations. This is known today as education. This form of interpersonal education however, is becoming increasingly challenged by the global expansion of the internet (Poushter, et al., 2018).

The Internet

The internet has been plugged into classrooms around the globe and is streamlining physical barriers of interpersonal education. Like millions of other remote-learning students, I am a prolific user and beneficiary of internet education. I am no longer burdened by the labour of being present in a physical classroom, constricted by the timing of lectures or the recording of information in real time. I can communicate with renowned international academics and access a plethora of peer-reviewed information in seconds, and control or personalise the rate of learning. This is not to say that interpersonal learning is not a rich or worthwhile experience. In fact, having interpersonal conversations are essential for anyone's intellectual or personal development. And an overuse of online social networks can become a detriment to your academic ability (Posso, 2016). If used appropriately and accurately however, the internet can be a rich source of education. This translates economically with digital literacy being the highest paid trait by employers, which is said to equate to an $8,853 higher mean salary than other employee traits (The Foundation of Young Australians, 2016).

Internet information is not without its burdens or traps. In the intellectually murky waters of the internet, knowing how to discern correct from incorrect information is an invaluable skill. Since

the 1990s, the world has become submerged in the digital tsunami of non-vetted information and opinion. Universal access to the internet has allowed anyone to contaminate its pages with malicious, emotional outbursts and fallacious, unproductive thought. Australian students are particularly susceptible to the internet's muddy content. This is because, in 2018, Australia held one of the highest population-percentages of internet users (88%) (Despinola, 2018), and is leading the world in internet users who re-visit the internet 'several times a day' (77%) (Poushter, 2016). Exposure to this proliferation of digital (dis)-information, promotes critical thinking as an important addition to higher education curriculums. However, this doesn't mean that university students know how to think critically. Martin Davies, co-author of the Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education, notes that critical thinking remains elusive, unfounded and inadequate in tertiary curriculums and pedagogy (Davies & Barnett, 2015). Davies states that critical thinking must be practically defined and taught explicitly as early as possible, so students can apply it vigorously (Davies, 2016). In the current internet age, with no micro-expressions to guide you, education, empiricism, self-reflection, scepticism and curiousness are invaluable assets to anyone's cognitive armament.

Introspection

Along with this demand for criticality, a popular-cultural pivot towards critical introspection has couched our growing interest in how we view ourselves. This has manifested in dozens of pro-psycho-social conferences and private courses, the production of hundreds of self-improvement books with 12 to 100 rules for life, thousands of yoga and meditation apps, and millions of podcast listeners snared by conversations about psychedelics. This cultural and intellectual thrust towards self-reflection is gaining momentum and popularity around the world. While the socio-cultural and economic investment in introspection is clear, its educational potential remains untouched.

What's the Difference?

While critical thinking and introspection seem synonymous, they produce very different cognitive-psychological-behavioural products. Perennial debates rage about the definitions, models and importance of critical thinking and introspection in education (Davies, 2015). As abstract intellectual and behavioural concepts, they stand for a multitude of cognitive, socio-cultural and

moral values and behaviours. For these reasons, this article won't define each mode of thinking, it will simply outline them for practical classroom use.

Critical thinking, as it is often promoted in tertiary education, is considered the rigorous outward analysis of information, with a view to logic, reasoning and scepticism. Critical introspection offers a wealth of mental pragmatisms, or tools for interpreting our internal response to outward information and experience. Together, they form an essential internal-external conversation, or intellectual *pas de deux*. Critical thinking is foundational to a student's character, well-being, academic progress and future employment but so is introspection! Guided critical thinking and introspection offers the necessary intellectual instruments to explore both the skill and depth of cognition. Said another way, if teachers only educate students in critical thinking and not introspection, this would be like an oceanographer only looking at the beauty and contour of ocean waves, without acknowledging the fathoms of rich current beneath.

Education

Critical introspection is mistakenly absent from the Australian education system. I say mistakenly, because the benefit of pairing introspection with critical thinking is so great. It is no mystery, that education in empiricism and self-understanding, reliably ascends society towards admired states of equanimity and empathy, desired levels of competency and economic benefit, and even reduces malice thoughts and ideological violence. (Kudo & Hartley, 2017; UNESCO. 2017; Ford, K. 2018; Radcliffe, 2018). Indeed, if this is the goal of education, critical thinking and introspection are skills worth communicating to young plastic minds.

Education on how to explore our common brain and personal mind must be guided by scientific literature. Knowing how to self-reflect productively can be difficult and it needs an educator. Organisational psychologist Tasha Eurich (2017) warns that 'we can spend endless amounts of time in self-reflection but emerge with no more self-insight than when we started'. Eurich agrees that there exists 'no relationship between introspection and insight'. Meaning that, if unguided or ill-advised, self-reflection does not amount to insight about one's self. In fact, in can become psychologically detrimental (Stein & Grant, 2014). Fortunately, this can be corrected through simple education. A study revealed that the difference between a positive or negative engagement

with self-reflection, can be as simple as asking yourself *what* kind of person you are, instead of *why* are you this kind of person (Hixon & Swann, 2014). This change in semantics pulls us away from the negativity of our past (why) and focuses us on our potential future self (what) (Hixon & Swann, 2014). Such guidance on how to think about ourselves positively could shape future lessons on introspection at the primary, secondary or tertiary level.

Critical thinking and introspective exercises can be adapted to almost every classroom. Challenges like those offered in Daniel Kahneman's famous 'Thinking, Fast and Slow', which encourage students to outwit cognitive biases and overcome perceptual and social tests of everyday rationality (see Mazie, 2012). Challenges like the prisoner's dilemma or game theory scenarios, offer opportunities for students to contend with their judgement, values, ethics and think strategically (see Chappelow, 2019 and Hayes, 2019). While these examples seem strictly tertiary, they are perfectly adaptable to the primary and secondary education classroom. The effects of these lessons can be reliably tested using the internet supported California Critical Thinking Skills Test (see Insight Assessment, 2019). Which formulates scenarios and demands reasoned judgement and self-reflective thinking before taking action.

This is not to say that critical thinking and introspection has been entirely left out of educational institutions in Australia. For instance, in 2019, at the Nan Tien Institute in Wollongong, Australia, a Communities of Practice (CoP) conference was held to host critical and introspective discussions on various topics such as compassion (See chapter Sumskis & Cappetta), internet use (See chapter Trauth-Goik & Hutchinson) and the environment (See chapter Halbert). The CoP effectively wove Humanistic Buddhist principles, such as honesty, truth and self-reflection, with academic observations on those issues threatening society in general and young people in particular, such as dis-information, unsafe internet use and where to source self-value (See chapter Hutchinson). As a consequence of this union, a series of principles, guides and observations were produced with the aid of community members. These intellectual products were ordered and organised to ink the pages of this book. The open dialogue and progressive approach present at the CoP, to address issues using critical thinking and introspection with the inclusion of all levels of the community, could be mimetically engineered into Australia's education system.

With limited budgets and constricted hours in the classroom, however, teachers are burdened with the task of implanting vital insight under tight timeframes. Teachers wield an almighty responsibility to input foundational knowledge into future generations. Therefore, teachers must equip students with the necessary intellectual tools to practically interact with the world, and themselves. Additionally, this would answer criticisms against primary and secondary education, such as the teaching of irrelevant or unpractical knowledge and surface level penetration of cognition. This is not to say that the education system has failed, however, it is not adequate to feature basic cognitive reflexes on a government website far from classroom chatter. This is not intended to denigrate the Australian education system, it is a recommendation from someone who appreciates its product.

The Australian education system must teach students of all levels to think critically about the world and one's self. Practical lessons in critical thinking and introspection should be informed by empirical literature and held tantamount to English, Science and Maths. In addition to its traditional counterparts, critical thinking and introspection will encourage a boundless sophistication of the mind, rather than compartmentalised thinking based on narrow subject matter.

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Principles for Internet Use:
Cultivating a Mindful Online Practice

Alex Trauth-Goik

The realisation of the harmonious world described by Buddhism must encompass the cultivation of mindful internet use. As the epicentre of knowledge and communication in the 21[st]century, the internet has become an influential component of our society now far more pervasive and omnipresent than all religions of the world combined. With every update, every increase in bandwidth, every fibre optic cable laid, our connection with the virtual world grows stronger and more profound. And yet, during such a time of unprecedented technological advancement, internet education and training in critical thinking remain woefully underdeveloped (see Hutchinson, chapter four). Through the internet, we expose individuals to a whole universe of fingertip accessible information, and with little to no instruction, expect they will be able to navigate a sensible course through a simultaneously bright, dark and perplexing space.

Internet Safety Strategies: Emphasising Harm, Undercutting Potential

Existing social media and internet safety strategies propagated by educational and government institutions are beginning to awaken to these developments and provide advice on how the dangers of the internet may be mitigated. The Australian Government Office of the eSafety Commissioner is responsible for promoting online safety for all Australians (eSafety Commissioner, 2019). Since its establishment in 2015, the eSafety Commissioner has undertaken research and supported programs aimed at addressing the widespread adoption of this new technology. In the past four years, the Commissioner has brought to light many negative aspects associated with our immersion with the internet, ranging from reports on cyberbullying, online hate and excessive gaming, to the management of screen time, addressing 'fear of technology' in older Australians, and curbing

access to pornography (eSafety Commissioner, 2019). Elsewhere, the mission of ThinkUKnow, an evidence-based cyber safety program facilitated by the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Microsoft Australia, Datacom and the Commonwealth Bank, has been to 'create a safer online environment for young people' (ThinkUKnow, 2019). Since 2009, the program has attempted to bridge the internet knowledge gap between adults and young people, focusing attention on what people 'say, see and do' online (ThinkUKnow, 2019). Cyber safety sessions run by ThinkUKnow are available in schools for students aged between 5-18 years. These programs are designed to develop digital literacy skills which are grounded in an overarching understanding of privacy, security and safety issues. Such an approach draws attention to the new phenomenon of unfettered internet exposure and the concomitant dangers, a necessary yet inadequate component of a truly holistic internet practice.

These strategies do well in addressing some of the new challenges facing populations living in a digital and interconnected age. However, they fail in articulating the historical significance of the internet. Evidently, each program frames the technology as something to be managed, controlled and restricted, rather than harnessed, extolled and encouraged. Such characterisation speaks only to the negative aspects of the internet, overlooking the tool's myriad benefits. Indeed, this approach may serve to ostracise more people than it attracts, particularly when considering the young audiences that such strategies often seek to target. These young members of our society have come to view the internet as a natural and preordained aspect of their existence. What is presently failing to be conveyed is a sense of awe for the tool that individuals, quite literally, now hold in the palm of their hand. Operating as the doorway to a limitless depository of knowledge and a simultaneous connective medium characterised by instantaneous communication (Dogruer, et al., 2011), the internet is a tool that, in ages past, the most powerful individuals would have killed for. Not the world's wisest sage, most sacred text, nor oldest library could contribute but a drop to the ocean of information dispersed within. If one subscribes to the famous words of Francis Bacon, "*Knowledge is power*", then this is an overwhelmingly positive outcome for the species. After all, the honest truth is that each of us—right now—can educate ourselves about anything. If wielded with malicious intent or by hands guided by the unconscious tug of human desire, the internet can undoubtedly propel negative reflections. But if wielded with purpose, the internet is nothing short of an accelerant for understanding oneself and others. An amplifier of human potential.

Advances and Exploitation: The Function of Online Business

Two trends are exacerbating the negative internet behaviours that many of us have come to adopt, obscuring this simple truth from sight. On the one hand, unlimited bandwidth and highspeed networks continue to envelop a growing proportion of the Earth. Soon there will be very few liveable spaces devoid of internet access (Weaver, 2018). In such a world, the offline/online dichotomy is evolving into something new entirely. Space and time continue to shorten, the virtual and physical blending into one integral whole.

Revelations concerning the underhand tactics employed by technology companies benefiting from the internet's expansion are occurring concomitantly alongside these advances. Embedded within a capitalist order and focused on competitiveness and profit margins, these companies rely on exploiting the new progress driving asset of the 21st century: Big Data (Peters, 2012). They employ the use of algorithmic selection applications that filter and sort big data into personalised media narratives entirely distinct from traditional media sources. Algorithms are increasingly conceived of as governance mechanisms with a political agency solely their own (Just and Latzer, 2017). They predominantly convey and reinforce commercialisation as the dominant value, simultaneously encouraging the atomisation of individual experience by locking us each into self-defined echo chambers (Just and Latzer, 2017: 251). Many of the best and brightest minds in our society have become co-opted within this project of tailored consumerism and personalised narrativization. It is no secret that tech giants such as Facebook, Amazon and Twitter employ a host of psychologists and behavioural scientists to exploit the weaknesses of our psyche and addict us to their platforms (Children's Screen Time Action Network, 2018; Lieber, 2018). Young malleable minds are those most prone to such tactics. Indeed, the sad truth is that in many cases these are the minds being targeted (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). Attesting to these trends in December 2017, the ex-vice-president of user growth at Facebook expressed his remorse for contributing to a tool that he believes is 'ripping apart the social fabric of how society works' through exploitation of 'a vulnerability in human psychology' (Wong, 2017). Given these recent developments, a dual approach that combines an appreciation for the negative and positive outcomes of internet use is greatly needed. An approach that builds and fortifies autonomous decision making and agency by embedding a reflective and self-conscious approach to internet use in the individual. *A mindful internet practice.*

Cultivating a Mindful Internet Practice:
The Experience of Wollongong Community of Practice

On the 22nd of April at the 2019 Community of Practice hosted by the Nan Tien Institute in Wollongong, Australia, a dedicated workshop of local community members endeavoured to create a list of principles that may help individuals formulate their own mindful internet practice. Workshop participants encompassed community and youth leaders, school students, academics, Buddhist monks, educators, and former and current business owners. The diversity of workshop participants provided for an enlightening experience, capturing a sense of how the internet touches and shapes lives in different ways. The central question underpinning the workshop topic was: "How is it possible to mitigate the harms produced through the development of the internet, by instead using the same medium to awaken a collective consciousness of human potential"? After the nature of these two seemingly polar-opposite concepts was discussed, participants split into working groups to explore and report back their conclusions about possible empowering principles for internet use. To focus equal attention on the negative and positive aspects of the technology, each group was assigned a specific aspect of internet usage to focus on, in the context of the central question posed. The areas of focus for the exercise were grouped either as:

Positively Oriented
- ❖ Self-education and self-actualisation using the internet
- ❖ Internet etiquette and compassion, in how we treat others online; OR

Issue Oriented
- ❖ Social media – focusing on mental health, social pressure, and manipulation of young minds by business
- ❖ Moving from "individual thinking" to "collective collaboration" through the internet
- ❖ How to maintain a healthy online/offline balance

The following list: 'Principles for Internet Use' is the direct outcome of the collaborative effort that made this unique workshop possible. The document is designed to help individuals and communities successfully navigate the digital landscape that now comprises an intrinsic part of the lived human experience. Only through gaining an understanding of how the internet maps and shapes the lives of individual members of a community can we hope to attain a more mindful online practice. It was our hope that this collaborative consultation and the principles formed as a result, will help mitigate the potential harms caused by the misguided use of the most important technology humanity now holds in its pocket.

Principles for Internet Use

1. Self-education

- ❖ Identify the distinction between information and education. The internet can only give you information, it cannot teach, a human is still involved at some stage of the process. The internet is a tool, and its use is beholden to the user.
- ❖ There are inherent biases associated with information found online. One needs to place the information they receive within a broader context.

2. Compassion and Etiquette

- ❖ Teach people how to 'self-protect' against anonymity and nastiness online
- ❖ Self-discipline in how you approach internet use and engagement
- ❖ Engage others in a discussion surrounding the language of 'compassion' and 'respect' online
- ❖ Providers (social media platforms etc) need to take responsibility for the rules governing their platforms

3. Social Media Usage

- ❖ Access to envy → Saturation of one's ability to access and compare themselves with unrealistic images and lifestyles
- ❖ Lack of education pertaining to how to deal with seeing stylized, filtered images on a daily basis
- ❖ Who are you following and paying attention to? What values do they espouse?

4. From Individual to Community Thinking

- ❖ 'E'-Community of Practice targeted at internet usage and online collaboration
- ❖ Sharing good deeds, acknowledging those that make their communities a better place (eg: people taking selfies of trash heaps they've cleaned up)
- ❖ How to overcome echo-chambers → create more forums for open discussion
- ❖ Be more vigilant monitoring the credibility of information which appears on your screen
- ❖ Global websites/forums with automatic translation to foster greater international cohesion and understanding

5. Balancing Online and Offline Worlds

- ❖ Create a distinction between 'online' and 'offline' and contemplate how the intersection of these realms can add value to one another
- ❖ Use the same online etiquette as you would offline
- ❖ Define individual limits on usage, what works for some might not work for others
- ❖ Time <u>use</u> not <u>waste</u>
- ❖ Recognising when being online is being productive versus for vanity. Are you adding value to your life or trying to find an escape from boredom?
- ❖ Identify specific times for disconnect (family time, certain days or times, etc)

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Compassion: Self-compassion, Receiving Compassion and Giving Compassion to Others

Susan Sumskis & Chelsea Cappetta

Introduction

A Communities of Practice workshop was recently conducted at the Nan Tien Institute offering participants the opportunity to define their own understanding of compassion, to think of examples of compassion in their life and to identify personal barriers to compassion. These activities were conducted for giving compassion to others, being compassionate towards self and receiving compassion from others. Compassion science has challenged the view that self-compassion and compassion are the same (Strauss, et al., 2016). Jazaieri et al. (2013) suggest there are three distinct orientations of compassion: compassion towards others, compassion for self and compassion from others. The Communities of Practice workshop helped to shape the production of this commentary and provide practical guidance for compassion in society. It will be referred back to throughout this article.

Why don't you try out the workshop activities for yourself? Using paper and a pen or pencil, answer the questions according to your own understanding. What you are doing is going inside of yourself to explore your existing understanding. There is no "right answer", only your answer. Knowing what you currently understand opens opportunity to grow through further study to broaden your knowledge. These often-hidden beliefs and understanding within yourself can be discovered through answering what you really believe, rather than what you think is the right answer. Once you have discovered that, you have the basis for learning and growth.

Compassion

❖ What is your definition of compassion?

❖ What are some examples of compassion in your life?

❖ What are barriers to giving compassion to others?

Self-Compassion

❖ What is your definition of self-compassion?

❖ What are examples of being compassionate toward yourself?

❖ What are some barriers to being compassionate toward yourself?

Receiving Compassion

❖ What is your definition of receiving compassion?

❖ What are examples of receiving compassion in your life?

❖ What are your barriers to receiving compassion from others?

Compassion Challenge

❖ What is one thing you can do to improve the expression of compassion in your life?

❖ If not now, when? If not you, who?

Now that you have completed the activity, here is a brief discussion on compassion. You are encouraged to read further to really broaden and deepen your understanding of and capacity for compassion.

Compassion is generally understood as being a feeling that arises from watching another being experiencing misfortune and feeling 'moved' to alleviate the suffering (Goetz, et al., 2010). The ability to 'feel' another person's suffering is driven by evolutionary-biology and exists to ensure our own and others' survival. Compassion and kindness are universally recognised traits, and are important in personal relationships, professional relationships, and within the greater society.
The emerging field of compassion science has explored compassion from multiple perspectives and theories have emerged that there are social, personal and psychological implications for

wellbeing. A study of over 100,000 people across 63 countries found that higher levels of empathy and compassion are associated with higher levels of overall subjective wellbeing, prosocial behaviours, and collectivism (Chopik, et al., 2016).

Compassion Towards Others

Ironically, this modern conception of compassion closely aligns with the perspectives founded within traditional Buddhist doctrine. Buddhism recognises that compassion is not empathy alone, but a symbiotic relationship between what we think and what we feel that results in the need to relieve suffering (Dalai Lama, 2005). Recent study into the psychological process of compassion shows the mind-body connection that occurs: from awareness of another's suffering, through the autonomic and involuntary bodily response; to the recognition of the feeling within the body and the application of wisdom to make a judgement; resulting in the motivation to act or respond in a compassionate, caregiving manner (Goetz, et al., 2017).

Through the Communities of Practice workshop, participants defined compassion as simply 'helping others' and identified barriers to giving compassion as arising from a perception of having limited resources, judgement that produces fear about helping and feeling anger in the situation.

Compassion for Self

Research has identified self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness as being central to the meaning and purpose of self-compassion (Neff, 2003). Self-kindness, or having self-understanding and releasing self-judgement, is akin to the Buddhist concept of *loving-kindness*. Similarly, the understanding of suffering as part of the human experience (common humanity) and the practice of mindfulness to achieve clarity and perspective are also concepts seen in Buddhist values and practices. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programs began emerging in the 1980s (Kabat-Zinn, 1979) and sparked a 'movement' in the use of mindfulness and meditation in a range of applied psychology programs. Although not overtly aimed at increasing self-compassion, these early programs were found to have positive clinical outcomes in managing depression (Segal, et al., 2002); stress (Birnie, et al., 2010); shame and self-esteem issues (Gilbert & Procter, 2006)and even Parkinson's disease (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2010). More recent interventions that explicitly focus

on self-compassion and mindfulness practice have yielded positive results of openness, self-acceptance, and greater emotional wellbeing (Bluth, et al., 2016; Schure, et al., 2008).

During the Communities of Practice workshop, participants felt that having a sense of self-acceptance and letting go of negative thoughts about self are necessary precursors to being self-compassionate. Setting realistic standards, recognising strengths and being willing to nurture self are also important. Barriers to being compassionate towards self are caused by believing that compassion is not deserved and through prioritising the needs of others over self.

Compassion from Others

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of compassion is that of being open to receiving care and compassion from others. Learning to receive care can result in a stronger relationship between self and others and allow for a better understanding of how to extend care and compassion to others (Roeser, et al., 2018). Studies have shown that there is a link between fear of receiving compassion from others and negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, self-criticism and stress (Gilbert, et al., 2011). Interestingly, the ability to receive compassion may be behavioural, with recent research suggesting that those who have fewer childhood recollections of emotional warmth with their parents have a greater fear of receiving compassion and are less self-compassionate as adults (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016).

In agreement with the literature, workshop participants felt that receiving compassion from others was the most difficult. Receiving compassion was defined very simply as 'receiving help'. Accepting that there is a need to be helped was described as difficult and the barriers to this were identified as 'ego or pride getting in the way', 'setting the bar for help too high' (others are worse off and are more in need) and 'outright denial that there is a need for help at all'.

In today's society cultivating compassion is important because suffering is ever present and some might argue, increasing. All three perspectives of giving, receiving, and self-compassion are essential. If we can't give compassion to ourselves, or receive compassion from others, how can we give it to others? Compassion is the glue with which communities' bond and support their members. Developing a deeper understanding of compassion that encompasses self-compassion

and receiving compassion can have a positive impact on our prosocial behaviours (helping others, volunteering); our personal wellbeing (loving kindness, self-acceptance, positive mental health), and our hope for a more compassionate society. Workshop participants were asked to set a post-workshop compassion goal. Most personal goals were to give more compassion to others, perhaps echoing the perceived difficulties of self-compassion and receiving compassion.

"This is the compassionate belief—that we all have a responsibility for creating the conditions for everyone to exercise their human rights and realise their humanity as fully as possible"
(Bunch, 2002; 17); this includes self-compassion, and receiving compassion.

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Developing Collective Wisdom

Dr. Elizabeth King

'To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society.'

- Larry Fink

"The interconnected leader sees himself or herself as the generator of impulses into an interconnected system to realize the purpose of the organization."

- Dalai Lama

Background

Communities, societies and shareholders are losing faith in their organizations due to the unethical behaviour we see regularly reported. The societal response has resulted in the development of what are termed 'benefit organizations' or 'B Corps', which aim to address social and environmental issues parallel to creating shareholder wealth. These corporations are aligned withcalls for new models of corporate governance that address the purported damage by time-poor leaders and short-term organizational focus. One strong example is the position taken by BlackRock, the world's largest asset management company. BlackRock's CEO, Larry Fink, in his 2017 annual letter to CEOs of shareholders, espoused 'a sense of purpose' driven by the understanding that 'to prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society' (Oyedele, 2017).

The sentiments of BlackRock are echoed by consultants, directors and board experts seeking to create enduring organizations (Gustafsson & Clemente, 2016) that are effective in addressing the future challenges of our modern world. In line with these calls for 'profit with purpose' organizations, conferences, programs and literature on *mindful leadership* and *conscious capitalism* presume and promote mindful organizational forms. Organizations seen to exemplify

such forms have been referred to as "firms of endearment" (Sisodia, et al., 2014), and include Southwest Airlines, Medtronics, Accenture and Starbucks. These companies focus on recognition of long-term consequences of actions, simultaneous awareness of inner self, external reality and work impacts, as well as commitment to authenticity, truth and responsibility. The recommended new forms of organization reflect a broader interest in corporate governance and stakeholder models, involving pursuit of a triple bottom line within more long-term, sustainable and socially responsible forms of capitalism. Understanding what we would like to see in governance is a great start but how organizations can adapt to achieve this opens the question of how to increase our knowledge of development interventions to produce these outcomes, which we refer to here as 'collective wisdom'.

Collective Wisdom

Collective wisdom is a form of mindfulness that emphasises the giving of full and proper attention to considerations of *collective purpose*. Promoters of collective wisdom are concerned with the link between mindful leadership and the establishment of a higher sense of organizational purpose in order to overcome misalignments that are evident between economic interests, social values and the sustainability of individual organizations and those of the broader economy, environment and society.

There are four key organizational elements that demonstrate collective wisdom:
- ❖ A sense of *higher purpose* (meaningful contribution, supportive mission and vision);
- ❖ *Stakeholder integration* (customers, employees, investors, suppliers and dealers, communities and the environment);
- ❖ *Conscious leadership* (social intelligence, values-driven 'servant leadership', integrity, compassion); and
- ❖ A *conscious culture* (meaningful purpose, care for multiple stakeholders).

These key elements have much in common with leadership models developed by Buddhist education frameworks. Such models draw on principles presented in the key Buddhist text 'The guide to the bodhisattvas of life' (Shantideva & Bachelor, 1981) where the interconnectedness of business, society and the environment is proposed. The model of leadership translated from

bodhisattva ideas is one where the leader serves others and aims to foster happiness (Tideman, 2011) The six perfections of the bodhisattva/leader are qualities that allow the leader to create happiness and well-being in the community (Shantidevi & Batchelor, 1981), and are further detailed in Figure 1 below.

Giving	**Moral discipline**	**Patience**
Effort	**Mental stabilization**	**Wisdom**

Figure 1: Six Perfections on the path to enlightenment

As principles of leadership, the Six Perfections have been translated as the ten 'talents' (qualities) of mindful leadership and integrated into leadership behaviours with 7 'practices' for transforming leadership by Bunting (2016). All of these integrate the Six Perfections into the practice of mindfulness.

A societal extension of the Buddhist frameworks, developed from the concept of the bodhisattvas (Givel, 2015) is evident through the Gross National Happiness Index (GNH) used to govern Bhutan (Bates, 2009). The GNH Index defines nine domains of interrelated factors which are understood to contribute to societal happiness (Tideman, 2016). These domains were originally articulated as four different aspects of interrelatedness in society which were to provide good governance and achieve sustainable socioeconomic development and the preservation of culture and environment (Galay, 1999). These "four pillars" (see Figure 2 below) of the GNH *index* were developed into nine domains of the Gross National Happiness *philosophy* and are seen to provide the circumstances to create happiness and enable measurements and indices of the impact of activities designed to produce it. The nine domains are: good governance, living standards,

community vitality, education, time use, psychological, well-being, cultural resilience, health, and environment (Pennock & Ura, 2011).

PILLARS   INDEX   DOMAINS

Pillar 1	Sustainable & equitable Socioeconomic developments

1. Living standards
2. Education
3. Health

Pillar 2	Preservation and promotion of culture

4. Cultural diversity & resilience
5. Community vitality
6. Time use
7. Psychological well-being

Pillar 3	Conservation of environment

8. Environment

Pillar 4	Good governance

9. Good governance

Figure 2: The 4 pillars and the 9 domains of Gross National Happiness

The various frameworks of 'B' Corporations, elements of organizations pursuing conscious capitalism, and Buddhist governance models all provide similar guidance for organizations

wanting to pursue profit for purpose. The question then becomes how we might change our collective habits using existing programs.

Existing Programs

Within the business community there are few leadership development programs available with objectives consistent with substantive motivations towards mindfulness. The critical articles on 'McMindfulness' and beyond by Purser and his colleagues (Purser & Loy, 2013) emphasise that there is often little faith in establishing corporate programs as effective vehicles for collective wisdom. Attention is more likely to be paid to the significance of social, political and environmental initiatives outside the corporate arena (Purser, et al., 2016).

Within this debate, the claims of system leadership and conscious capitalism theories of the birth of a 'new capitalism' are challenged by others, on the grounds that the aspirations are not achievable in the context of existing economic and institutional conditions (Aschoff, 2015); that embedded conflicts exist between multiple stakeholders; and that inherent tensions exist between such restrictive and more radical discourses of reform.

System leadership is associated with changing our collective habits of thought and action, understanding complex systems, initiating reflection and generative conversations, and moving from reactive problem-solving to co-creating the future. To support this type of behaviour, Scharmer and Kaeufer (2013) encourage development interventions that initiate deep learning cycles. For advocates of systems leadership, a crucial intervention supports the role played by activities to enhance 'sensing', 'presencing' and 'realizing' (Senge, et al., 2005). In terms of Scharmer's (2009) 'Theory U', this involves broadening contemplative awareness by releasing participants from established habits and categories of thought ('letting go') as well as facilitating embodied and creative emerging ways to respond to such experiences ('letting come'). However, facilitating mindfulness with these associated reflective skills within the standard approach to managerial development, which tends to be short-term training aimed at motivating long term behavioural change, is problematic. The Mind and Life Institute in Virginia USA, founded by His Holiness the Dalia Lama, conducts a program based on contemplation and ethical precepts for leaders, typically delivered in a week-long retreat program focused on the use of contemplation to

develop ethics, empathy and leadership skills and to promote the same outcomes at both an individual and collective level. The Nan Tien temple in Wollongong, Australia, takes a similar approach with some business schools teaching practical wisdom (Rooney, et al., 2010) with an experiential emphasis. However, all these approaches are confronted with the tension faced by leaders between available versus required time to invest in self-development.

A sustained apprenticeship model where development is ongoing and embedded within work, has been suggested as an alternative approach to workplace training (Hyland, 2015). This approach aligns more closely to the extensive effort serious mindfulness practitioners apply to improving themselves and the lives of others. The apprenticeship model offers a mentor and continuous education to support the achievement of outcomes promised by the ethically directed mindfulness - enduring peace and happiness. If programs to address the need for collective wisdom are to be developed, they may be designed in reference to qualities of knowledge, capabilities and behaviours.

Knowledge

Within collective wisdom forms of mindfulness, the central intellectual concerns are with:

- ❖ Incongruities brought about through organized irresponsibility and conflicts between social, ecological and economic goals;
- ❖ Notions of impermanence that relate to organizational entities and systems in which integrative solutions are not sought, and in which there are ongoing challenges involved in letting go of the past while letting the future come; and
- ❖ Questions around identification which involve the restriction of individuals and organizations identifying with the narrow interests and concerns of their own institutional arrangements and survival at the expense of a more expansive view of social and ecological sustainability and survival.

Capabilities

Within collective wisdom, capabilities to be developed involve:

- ❖ Awareness of incongruities within impermanence of, and entrapments, through restricted identifications with economic, social and ecological purposes;

- Attention to systems of stakeholder management and cultures that are both multi-national and creative in encouraging and supporting substantial matters; and
- An acceptance of the inevitable tensions and paradoxes that includes a curious, creative and proactive commitment to coping with the anxieties and conflicts this creates, and encouraging a search for possible solutions.

Behaviours

Regarding collective wisdom, the challenge of identifying core competencies at the level of the organization is accompanied by the requirement to include within this identification, considerations of shared purpose, beliefs and culture regarding *why* work is done rather than simply *how* work is done. This requires:

- The capture and operationalization of behavioural outcomes in relation to collective awareness of the incongruities, impermanence and limitations of institutional self-definition of purpose, specifically in regard to how it blends economic, social and ecological concerns;
- The routines, practices and structures established by institutions to ensure that they attend to such concerns; and
- The cultural values and institutional politics established to ensure that the tensions this involves are acknowledged and accepted and that the requirement to live with these tensions and explore partial/possible solutions is carried out with curiosity and compassion.

There are significant challenges involved in determining the collective behavioural accomplishments needed to establish this type of sustainable learning organization. Despite the lack of completeness, addressing the challenge of describing observable behaviours may foster helpful development by enabling closer integration of these programs into existing human resource protocols, such as competency and capability matrices.

Outcomes

When an organization has developed the skills of collective wisdom, which are identified in Figure 3 below, it would be expected to have achieved a level of significant resources for corporate social responsibility (CSR), and to have principles as well as procedures that support CSR in a sustainable

fashion. This will be most observable when the organization responds rapidly and appropriately to inevitable crises. Figure .3 also outlines the knowledge, capabilities, behavioural outcomes and performance accomplishments that exemplify an organization that exemplifies collective wisdom. By doing so, it provides a framework to design individual and organizational development to deliver the outcomes it targets.

	KNOWLEDGE	CAPABILITIES	BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
COLLECTIVE WISDOM	**Incongruity** Contradictions between economic & social/ecological objectives	**Awareness** Of organised irresponsibility & contradictions between economic & social/ sustainability concerns	Demonstrated institutional reflection on organised irresponsibility & socioeconomic contradictions	e.g. Level of resourcing & scope of corporate social responsibility
	Impermanence Instability, uncertainty & lack of sustainability in global systems	**Attention** Collective attention regulation & disciplined meta-cognition of narrow & contradictory group purposes	Established routines, practices & structures attending to such concerns	e.g. Operational outcomes achieved by following principles & procedures
	Identification Organised irresponsibility	**Acceptance** Openness, curiosity & compassion towards transcending tensions in complex purposive systems.	Institutionalised cultural values & power structures that acknowledge & experiment with such tensions	e.g. Application of values when reacting to critical tests

Figure 3: King and Badham (2018): CollectiveWisdom Table

The importance of collective wisdom and the establishment of a community of practice aimed at corporate social responsibility is central to future efforts to improve our relationship to business, society and the environment and interconnectedness between them.

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Conclusion

Jade Hutchinson & Alex Trauth-Goik

It is hoped that the articles presented as part of this compendium have provided the reader with an alternate view concerning the nature of contemporary problems, and the corresponding need for solutions that are grounded in an appreciation for our shared humanity. Upon the firm foundation of Humanistic Buddhism, the aim of the Community of Practice (CoP) and this collaborative work has been to advance a more humanistic approach, one concentrated on the attainment of a greater understanding of ourselves, our place in the community, and our community's place in wider society. The CoP has proven that local communities can rise to meet societal challenges of the modern era by recognising that compassion, mindfulness and empathy are powerful qualities inherent within all of us. Through the development of these qualities at the level of the individual person we become empowered to pursue more mindful and meaningful interactions with other people. In pursuing more mindful and meaningful interactions with our environment and others, our personal actions translate over to having a positive net impact within our community. And this is what the CoP achieves. Individual community members are not only made more aware of the issues that face the community, but are placed in positions to address them. Practices that bridge the potential between individuals within the community and the world-over, will be essential to meet the challenges depicted in this compendium.

In the writing of this compendium it is hoped that others around the world may take the humanity-focused enterprise advocated within these pages upon themselves. The CoP does not constitute a single event or voice, but rather, a blueprint for others to improve themselves and their respective communities. Accordingly, this compendium comprises both academic and community voices and draws from Humanistic Buddhist principles, to craft an artefact for all communities, now and in the future. In our memories and imaginings, we can depict libraries and museums since lost to us

through time or catastrophe. However, the CoP presents a means for all communities to create their own compendium. With the continuation and sharing of these compendiums from community centres, we may once again explore and learn in halls adorned with new artefacts. Inevitably changing the world for the better through the advancement and practice of Humanistic Buddhist principles, grounded in the concern for our collective future and ambition for our collective improvement.