

The Uses of Mindfulness in Anti-oppressive Pedagogies: Philosophy and Praxis

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In this article, I argue that educators can utilize mindfulness practices to enhance the efficacy of anti-oppressive pedagogy. The philosophies of Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna provide a holistic human ontology and show that learning affects students at all levels: mind, body, emotion, and spirit. My analysis of the phenomenology of thinking reveals the modes of relationship to ideation. I have proposed mindfulness practice as a proven technique to address the non-cognitive forms of attachment to ideation that may remain in force despite the most thorough-going intellectual change.

Keywords: mindful pedagogy, anti-oppressive pedagogy, critical pedagogy, mindfulness meditation

Dans cet article, l'auteure fait valoir que les enseignants peuvent utiliser des pratiques attentionnées pour augmenter l'efficacité de la pédagogie libertaire. Les philosophies de Wittgenstein et de Nagarjuna permettent une ontologie humaine holistique et démontrent que l'apprentissage affecte les étudiants sur tous les plans : l'intelligence, le corps, les émotions et l'esprit. Les analyses de la phénoménologie de la pensée révèlent les types de relation à l'idéation. La pratique attentionnée est proposée comme une technique qui a fait ses preuves pour traiter les formes d'attachement hors du champ cognitif à l'idéation qui demeure active malgré le plus profond changement intellectuel.

Mots-clés : pédagogie attentionnée, pédagogie libertaire, pédagogie critique, méditation attentionnée

In response to the work of Paulo Freire (1981) many feminist and other anti-oppressive teachers at all levels of education have abandoned, or at least drastically modified, what he has called "the banking concept of pedagogy" (p. 58), the philosophy and pedagogical praxis that assert that the primary task of teachers is to fill their students' heads with established knowledge and instrumental procedures. The counter-discourses that were developed and implemented pedagogically in the latter decades of the last century have now further eroded faith in the banking concept.

Following Freire's work and energized by the social movements and

raised consciousness of the late twentieth century, educators have carried out numerous experiments with anti-oppressive and liberatory pedagogies, and from these trials came many of the new techniques and bodies of knowledge that now inform teaching praxes. Teachers who have made transitions from the old banking style to new alternatives as well as those younger colleagues who have been introduced to new methods are justified in feeling that much progress has been made: there has been a salutary loosening of entrenched forms of social oppression, and students are using critical skills and developing forms of knowledge that were undreamed of just a few decades ago. And yet, and yet . . .

In his critique of the “hidden curriculum” of traditional education, McLaren (1989) noted that the hidden curriculum “represents much more than a program of study, a classroom text, or a course syllabus”; rather, he continues, it represents the “introduction to a particular form of life; it serves in part to prepare students for dominant or subordinate positions in the existing society” (p.183, italics in original). To effect this social positioning it “favors certain forms of knowledge over others and affirms the dreams, desires, and values of select groups of students over other groups, often discriminatorily on the basis of race, class, and gender” (p. 183). The last several decades of the twentieth century were rich in pedagogical innovation that teachers developed not only in response to the critiques of Freire, McLaren, and others but also out of their growing awareness of inequities in their own classrooms. In their sensitivity to multiple forms of classroom oppression and silencing, in their openness to alternative points of view, in their willingness to deal with the life experiences of students outside the classroom, and in their encouragement of student-directed forms of intellectual enquiry and creativity, the new anti-oppressive pedagogies strove to take into account the lives of students. Along with new forms of knowledge, this approach has resulted in often passionate classroom debates, not only deep intellectual but often deep emotional struggles, by both students and faculty, to come to terms with what they are learning. In spite of the inevitable challenges, students and teachers have made conscious and concerted attempts to make education, in the words of bell hooks in her trenchant critique of Freire, “the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994a, p. 51), by finding ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice in their lives (hooks, 1994b).

At the same time, as I read the literature and engage with my own classrooms, I have become increasingly uneasy with a sense that we are, in some respects, still buying into a phallogentric and Eurocentric model of teaching and learning and so reproducing its hidden “logic of

domination" (Warren, 1988, p. 32). As philosopher Karen Warren describes it, a logic of domination is a conceptual schema structured by oppositional and mutually exclusive binarisms and bolstered by value assumptions of relative worth and competency that serve to organize and ground social patterns of domination and oppression (pp. 31–32). From Plato's metaphysical distinction of Being from Becoming in the Classical Greek era, to the present-day variations on Descartes' separation of cogito from body, Western culture has been organized around the mind/body binarism and the assumption that mind is both radically distinct from and of greater worth than body. This assumption has been elaborated ideologically and institutionally to structure the discourses of sexism, racism, class, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. In each social category the privileged group has been identified with mind and the intellectual activities of cultural production and administration, while the subordinated group has been affiliated with the body, emotion, and physical and reproductive labour. Although scholars and researchers in many disciplines are now contesting the radical separation of the binarisms that structure the logic of domination, the hidden curriculum often continues to exert its insidious influence in schools because at a subtle level educators are still drawing on the logic of domination's foundational dichotomization of mind and body: it is still widely held as axiomatic that academic learning is essentially a mentative process. Educational institutions both reflect and entrench the ramifications of this ideological valorization of mind and suspicion of embodied experience in their endorsement of pedagogical practices grounded in the belief that, while the learning process and knowledge production may be stimulated by or call up emotional experience, this experience is extraneous to the processes of learning and knowledge production and should be viewed with suspicion (see Jaggar, 1989). Although feminist teachers and others have contested the mind/body binarism and worked to find ways to integrate both the body and emotion as an aspect of embodiment into intellectual work, the possibility occurs that there may even be other aspects of a student's being beyond mind, body, and emotion that are implicated in genuine learning. The spiritual, for instance, is rarely considered. My aim in this article is to explore ways to deepen the liberatory potential of anti-oppressive pedagogies by digging yet more deeply into the role of the logic of domination and especially its foundational mind/body binarism in the organization of teaching and learning, and then by suggesting a more holistic theory and praxis.

I have found the source for the issues I explore in this article and the

suggestions I offer to address them in the ongoing dialogue between my classroom experiences and a wide range of critiques of the logic of domination, most especially of its grounding mind/body binarism. I have drawn those critiques widely from the resources of world philosophy, in particular from key thinkers in the Hindu and Buddhist yoga traditions. I have gone to access forms of analysis that are unavailable in contemporary Western work, and to introduce practices that can be adapted for classroom use to expand students' awareness of the function of oppressive dualistic discourses in their thought and, more broadly, in their lives. The analyses engaged below demonstrate that no matter how radical the new critiques and the pedagogies that emerged from them have been, both the new forms of knowledge production and the knowledge that they have so successfully produced remain largely cognitive and so function primarily on the intellectual level in students' lives. Such pedagogical praxes, which remain situated on the dominant side of the mind/body binarism, are not, nor can they be, entirely successful in creating the necessary conditions to achieve the deep levels of transformation in the lives of students that, according to McLaren (1989), critical pedagogy seeks to effect because its impact on the body, emotions, spirit, and the lived sense of self and other can only be incompletely addressed through purely intellectual methods (Orr, 2004). If the arguments offered below to challenge the mind/body binarism and develop an integrated, holistic concept of human being are correct, then they show that we stand in need of pedagogic praxes that engage students in a more holistic fashion than is typically the case with critical pedagogy. As I argue below, in a holistic account, learning takes place not only in the mind but on all levels of a student's being. Consequently, I propose that the mindfulness practices that have been developed by the yoga traditions to address binaristic thinking can be usefully integrated into critical pedagogy. These techniques can be used to address oppressive ideologies and practices in the lives of students and thereby foster change not only on the intellectual level of a student's learning but also on the levels of body, emotion, and spirit, the levels where the most insidious and resistant formations of oppression are often lodged.

Because Western discourses have essentialized mind as the mark of the human and have claimed that its fullest development is to be found among the members of dominant elites (males, whites, upper classes), and because those discourses have severed the functions of the mind from other aspects of human experience, the critique and dissolution of the mind/body binarism are a root issue not only for theoretical holistic pedagogy but also for feminist and other anti-oppressive theory and

praxis. Implicit in the formation of the model of mindful pedagogy developed below is the de-essentializing and radical reformulation of our notions of both personhood and understanding. Thus, the development of the holistic paradigm for teaching and learning can further the theoretical aim of feminist and other anti-oppressive discourses of integrating non-cognitive aspects of experience into a more adequate and coherent concept of personhood. At the same time mindful pedagogical praxis can advance their practical goal of creating the conditions for non-discriminatory experience both inside and beyond the classroom.

In what follows I show that the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein's mature period provides a philosophical grounding for the holistic, de-essentialized concept of the person that anti-oppressive work requires (Orr, 2002a); however, he does not provide an adequate technique for unlearning the discourses of oppression. For this we must look elsewhere. The affinities between the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein and that of the second-century Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna are great and have been well documented (Gudmunsen, 1977; Streng, 1967). Like Wittgenstein's, Nagarjuna's philosophy provides a vigorous critique of essentialism, binaristic conceptual schemata, and reified concepts of the self. And, like Wittgenstein, Nagarjuna acknowledges the importance of embodied experience for learning and understanding. Although their work is in many ways similar, Nagarjuna is particularly useful for the development of anti-oppressive pedagogy because it is an integral part of a set of yogic meditation practices, including mindfulness techniques, which have proved efficacious in providing access to non-cognitive levels of learning. Thus, I engage his work to develop the argument for the role of mindfulness in the anti-oppressive classroom. This discussion is supplemented by the work of Dogen, the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master and philosopher, to provide a phenomenological description of thinking and thus a clarification of the ways in which a student relates to ideas. In the sections that follow, I argue that Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna provide a philosophical "therapy" (Wittgenstein, 1968, sec. 133) for the intellect, Dogen provides a phenomenology of thinking, and mindful yoga and meditation, a set of therapies for individual lived experience that can effect a loosening of the ideological formations that structure the lived experience of oppression.

On a cautionary note, only fairly recently have Western comparative philosophers begun to explore the complex similarities and differences between Western and Eastern intellectual paradigms (see Ames, 1994; Hall & Ames, 1995; Katz, 1981; Solomon & Higgins, 1993), and in light of

this research we must acknowledge that drawing together the work of philosophers of such cultural and historical diversity is fraught with dangers. This connection is of particular concern given the orientalizing proclivities of Western intellectuals, and so we must be especially alert to the danger of assuming that Western scholars can transpose Western meanings to other cultures. Of particular concern for this article is the fact that neither the word philosophy, with its connotation of abstract, disinterested thought, nor any close analog to that word, is to be found in the contemporaneous languages of Nagarjuna or Dogen (see Potter, 1991), and yet I have called them philosophers and spoken of their work as philosophy. One might justify this decision by noticing that, especially in the work of Nagarjuna, the treatment of issues and the development of patterns of argumentation resonate with Western concerns and argumentative styles; however, this observation runs the risk of obscuring substantive differences in their strictly philosophical production (Katz, 1981) as well as the very different uses to which the work of Eastern and Western thinkers has been put in their various milieus (Pye, 1978; Schroeder, 2001). Although a full exploration of the many issues raised by bringing Wittgenstein, Nagarjuna, and Dogen together is well beyond the scope of this article, in what follows I have developed some of the similarities in the work of each of them to draw out the ways in which they can contribute to the development of holistic pedagogy while at the same time noticing some of the significant ways in which they differ.

WITTGENSTEIN'S HOLISTIC LEARNER

Different concepts of human ontology each imply an epistemological theory that in turn support a particular model of teaching and learning. If, for instance, mind and body are radically separate entities, then the banking model of teaching that Freire critiqued gains considerable plausibility. Alternatively, if we opt for a materialistic human ontology, then a behaviourist approach makes best sense. Post-structuralism and radical constructionism, which often tend to downplay, if not erase entirely, the body and non-constructed experience (see Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1977), have yet other implications. In this section I explore some aspects of Wittgenstein's work that provide the conceptual tools for developing a holistic, integrated, and de-essentialized concept of human being that foregrounds the importance of embodiment for learning, and then I begin to work out the implications of his work for a holistic critical pedagogy.

The detailed critiques in *Philosophical Investigations* (1968) of referential theories of meaning, learning by ostentation and/or definition, and mechanistic models of rule-following — the accounts of learning and understanding that proponents of rationalistic theories of education most frequently draw on — all serve to undermine the radical distinction between mind and body that has grounded the traditional pedagogical praxis of the dominant culture. Because these negative arguments are balanced by a series of demonstrations of the ways in which understanding is interwoven into lived, and frequently pre- and/or non-linguistic, behaviour, they seriously challenge any radical post-structuralist account that seeks to focus on pure textuality, as well as the more common rationalistic and materialistic theories.

In the major work of his mature period Wittgenstein (1968) demonstrated that, although emerging out of and in many ways continuous with the natural world, the person is *sui generis* and cannot be reduced to the categories of matter, mind, or language. This perspective emerges from his sustained exploration of the topics of language acquisition and use along with the interlocking issues of meaning, understanding, and knowing, key areas of concern for any educator. With the development of his notion of language-games, Wittgenstein argued that language acquisition is best understood as a form of training in which language is woven into the unique matrix of human experience, much of which is non-linguistic. For Wittgenstein a language-game consists of “the language and the actions into which it is woven” (Sec. 7). His attention to the role of language in language-games weakens the plausibility of purely cognitive models of learning and gives credibility to a more holistic and experiential model. Wittgenstein used the concept of language-games along with a multi-faceted attack on both dualistic mentalist and monistic materialist theories of human being to show that the criteria of the concepts of mentation — knowing, believing, doubting, understanding, and others — lie in human experience and behaviours, not in the occurrence of inaccessible events in a hypothetical mind, nor in mere overt behaviour. To know, believe, doubt, or understand something is logically internally related to human behaviour in the broadest sense of the word. The examples Wittgenstein analyzed range from language-games involving subjective experience, to natural responses to others, to attitudes, bodily actions, and complex social practices. What is being foregrounded throughout Wittgenstein's work is that, because the person as a whole learns, not a disembodied mind or mechanistic body, learning affects the whole person. Thus, for example, learning the discourses of sexism is more than acquiring a set of ideas or

even a set of behaviours. It will colour, as McLaren (1989) has pointed out, the entirety of an individual's being — behaviours, feelings, values, aspirations, orientation of spirit — and often in very subtle and subconscious ways.

The concept of language-games, a complex one in Wittgenstein's work, resists a simple definition. In an early discussion he stated that the term is "meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life" (1968, sec. 23, italics in original). Language, he held, is part of human "natural history" (sec. 25) that serves to shape pre- and non-linguistic human experience in a range of culturally established ways. For example, in one well-known passage that throws light on the development of sexism, he maintained that in teaching a child the language of sensations, such as the word pain, adults teach the child "new pain-behaviour" (Sec. 244).

The significance of this example becomes apparent on considering the differences in the uses boys and girls are taught to make of this word. In the modern West many boys are socialized to the mandated masculine identity by being taught that "big boys don't cry." Thus they learn that it is not appropriate for them to engage in a language-game that is strongly endorsed for girls. And along with the acquisition of their differential uses of language, boys and girls "swallow down" (1969, sec. 143) associated sexist attitudes and behaviours, as this simple example clearly demonstrates. In their differential learning of the language-game of pain their culture subtly shapes boys and girls in ways of which they may be largely unaware. Nevertheless, this learning will configure attitudes, experiences, and behaviours about both themselves and others. Wittgenstein's demonstrations of the historical-cultural grounding of language-games and of the ways in which they serve to shape human experience are developed for a wide range of language-games. These include the games of mathematics and science (1969, 1975), religious belief (1972), self-understanding and understanding and responding to others (1968), and many others. In a very real sense, then, with this work Wittgenstein has shown that people are the language-games they learn to play.

The following classroom example, in which teaching addresses the ideas students hold but fails to challenge the non-cognitive aspects of their learning, illustrates the importance of Wittgenstein's theory of language-games. As is widely acknowledged, boys and young men internalize still-pervasive male social privilege and the ideology that grounds it. The sexist language-games through which boys assimilate and experience ideology may then manifest in a variety of conscious and

unconscious forms in the feminist classroom. On an ideological level a pedagogy that deconstructs masculinity to expose its contradictions and to reveal to the male student his own conflicted position as both oppressor and oppressed might successfully challenge sexism (Orr, 1993). Although this deconstruction might successfully change ideology, and even have a quite strong impact on behaviour, Wittgenstein's holistic human ontology suggests that important levels of a student's being remain unaffected by his new knowledge.

As noted, Wittgenstein showed that the process of language acquisition is usefully seen as a sort of "training" (1968, sec. 5, 6, 9, *passim*) that involves weaving language into natural, extra-linguistic behaviours and abilities in a process that moulds and shapes them in conformity with society's needs and ideology. This process results in the formation of a repertoire of socially shared language-games developed from, and at the same time shaping, human potential.

This brief sketch of Wittgenstein's views on language acquisition suggests that ideation — and the ideology of masculinity — is much more than an intellectual content to which one may be emotionally cathected; it constitutes the subject in the sense that the acquisition of language-games contributes to establishing personhood. In consequence, to change language-games in any profound way is necessarily much more than to change a set of beliefs: it is to change the very being of a student. Change, then, may involve a broad range of things including any or all of a student's beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, values, dreams, and aspirations.

Two major points of interest for anti-oppressive pedagogy emerge from this very brief survey of Wittgenstein's work and its application to sexist language-games. The first is that, because of the radical holism of a person, a student in an anti-oppressive classroom must be taught as a holistic being if educators hope to eradicate, or at least ameliorate, the multiple forms of social discrimination in any but a superficial way (Orr, forthcoming). The theoretical confrontation of ideology is of the utmost importance, of course, but it is limited in its potential to effect liberation because its impact is largely limited to one level of a student's being: the cognitive. The second point, which follows from the first, is that the full scope of a student's relationship with ideology — what Nagarjuna's tradition identified as the person's forms of attachment to ideation — must be addressed as such and in ways that can enable a student to effect broad-based change in her or his life. What is involved here, as will become clearer below in the section on the philosophy and practice of mindfulness, is not a Freudian or psychotherapeutic treatment of emotion

but rather the dismantling of oppressive language-games, of ways of being that involve, but are not restricted to, ways of thinking (Kasulis, 1977). Thus anti-oppressive teachers who aim to enable profound change must address linguistic practice holistically, not simply by replacing problematic ideas with ideas they deem to be better.

The work of the second-century Indian philosopher Nagarjuna is a necessary supplement to the work of Wittgenstein to address this issue. Although they both understood the holistic nature of learning, only Nagarjuna's culture provides efficacious ways to challenge oppressive ideas on other than a purely cognitive level. Thus Nagarjuna's culture provides access to the yogic meditation practices developed by Buddhism and its mother tradition, Hinduism, practices that yoga teachers have designed and refined over the course of millennia to loosen attachment to dualistic and essentialized thinking and consequently to the destructive ways of living that all cultures produce in their members.

NAGARJUNA AND A TECHNOLOGY OF THE SELF

The affinities between Wittgenstein's work and that of Nagarjuna have been explored in considerable depth (Gudmunson 1977; Streng 1967). These two historically and culturally remote thinkers have used a methodologically similar approach of *reductio* argumentation against philosophical positions that, although also historically and culturally distant, are logically quite similar. They have arrived independently at surprisingly similar positions with respect to human ontology, epistemology, and conceptual logic. Their philosophical investigations of conceptual grammar, in the view of both of them, effected a "therapy of the understanding" (Wittgenstein, 1968, *passim*; see also Pye, 1978; Schroeder, 2001) through clearing away confused and distorted ways of thinking and thus allowing the emergence of more clear-headed ways of understanding. Both believed that their therapy would enable the development of ways of living to allow for greater human flourishing.

Through an examination of conceptual grammar, that is, the relationships between and among linguistic and non-linguistic elements of language-games, both Wittgenstein (1968) and Nagarjuna (1967) provide powerful anti-essentialist and anti-nominalist arguments, and both reject dualistic thinking on logical grounds. These outcomes are of fundamental importance to anti-oppressive discourses and pedagogies because the master dichotomization of mind and body and the subsequent formations that have been attached to it and that reproduce its valorization of the first term — being/becoming, male/female, reason/

emotion, culture/nature, polis/domus, transcendent/immanent, good/evil — have been a central concern of feminist discourse since its early, first-wave inception. Arguably the logical elaboration of other manifestations of alterity that are the foci of other anti-oppressive discourses — white/minoritized, occidental/oriental, bourgeois/proletarian, heterosexual/homosexual — are products of this founding move. Both philosophers have addressed the logical crux of oppression in dualistic thinking and essentialism and both have explored the ways in which conceptual paradigms structure human life and experience: Wittgenstein with his concept of language-games, Nagarjuna with his arguments to show that the terms to which people form such deep and abiding attachments are merely the conventions of human life with no self-subsistent ontological status. In Nagarjuna's terminology these terms are empty. Both held out the promise that by addressing and overcoming the destructive ways of thinking rooted in conceptual dualisms, a way of living that was free of the ills this form of thinking created would be allowed to emerge.

Paradoxically, while affirming the inextricable connection between ideas and praxis and the pernicious effect of misunderstood or confused ideas on human life, Wittgenstein (1968) did not provide a "therapy of life" to go along with his philosophical "therapy of the understanding" that he designed to "battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (sec. 109). He seemed to think that if people sorted out their ideas, the rest of their life would follow along in due course. Nagarjuna, on the other hand, was situated in a culture with a much more highly developed and astute psychology that not only recognized the intricate and complex relationships between ideas and all other aspects of lived experience, but also provided techniques to address these relationships. Although Western readers have often mistakenly understood Nagarjuna as an academic-style philosopher, his philosophical work is more accurately seen as one phase of a broader program of transformation of the self in the context of his home culture. He designed his anti-essentialist and anti-dualist arguments to be used in conjunction with other meditation practices and techniques to help overcome obstacles to the experiential understanding of emptiness (Komito, 1987, p. 62; see also Pye, 1978; Schroeder, 2001).

In his *Mulamadhyamakakarikas* Nagarjuna (1967) subjected concepts and positions that were central to the thought of his day, as well as to our own, to a process of rigorous logical testing to determine if they could be asserted with sense. He showed, for instance, that one could not assert of a "self-existent thing," that is, of an independent and unchanging essence, either that it existed or that it did not exist by showing that either position

resulted in either contradiction or incoherence (p. 15). Both Nagarjuna's philosophical demonstrations of emptiness, that is, that linguistic categories do not function to denote essences or natural kinds (see Kasulis, 1981, pp. 16–28; Streng, 1967, pp. 69–81) and Wittgenstein's location of sense and meaning in language-games add significantly to the anti-essentialist arguments of anti-oppressive discourses. The application of Nagarjuna's arguments to oppressive discourses shows, for example, that no abiding reality to the categories of race or sex exists (p. 199). Although race and sex have no essence, these constructs have a social reality that can be powerful and tenacious; consequently they colour the lives of the members of any society who have acquired the language-games in which they function. Likewise, and following the logic of emptiness, the self can not be accorded a fixed ontological status, although its phenomenal reality is not denied (p. 18). But if language is empty, that is, if it does not function to pick out essentialized entities, and if at the same time people are constituted by language-games and deeply attached to their linguistic categories, then what attitude ought one assume to language, to others, and to oneself? This is a key issue, or complex of issues, that yogic meditation techniques were designed to address.

Because of the holism of a human being and the consequent involvement of all aspects of one's being in learning, the intellectual acceptance of the logical insights of Wittgenstein or Nagarjuna by itself achieves very little. Understanding must encompass the totality of one's experiences and so one must achieve an experiential awareness of these insights to fully understand them (Orr, forthcoming). The extensive body of meditation techniques, which includes the practices of classical Hindu yoga and the many Buddhist meditation techniques that were developed out of them, were refined to facilitate this experiential awareness. Much of the discourse surrounding meditation techniques acknowledges that this process is gradual and staged. Thus, in this article I propose that educators can adapt the more preliminary stages of the process to the anti-oppressive classroom.

A common strand running through the meditation techniques developed over many millennia and across many cultures is succinctly captured by the contemporary researcher and teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, who characterizes them as "a particular way of paying attention, one that gives rise to a moment-to-moment, non-judging awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 2000, p. 230). They are a set of non-denominational techniques that aim to increase and clarify awareness of experience undistorted by such things as the preconceptions, biases, and conditioning that are internalized as one learns to participate in language-games. The insight

of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was that this keen, non-judgmental awareness is impeded by a deep and pervasive attachment to conceptualizations, most especially to distorted ideas about the nature and permanence of the self (Schroeder, 2001, pp. 22–28). Nagarjuna's philosophy develops the logic of Gautama's rejection of the tendency either to reify and essentialize concepts, or to endorse nihilism. The refusal to endorse any metaphysical position while at the same time acknowledging the possibility of a valid role for language in everyday talk is echoed in Wittgenstein's work, especially in his valorization of the "everyday use" (1968, sec. 116) of language and his demonstrations that language-games function in the construction of subjectivity. Building on Gautama's work, meditation teachers have developed an extensive set of meditation techniques designed to bring to experiential awareness the ways in which a distorted or false idea manifests in an individual's life and, in the process of achieving this awareness, create the possibility of change. What, then, is the proper use of concepts? The proper attitude to them? And how could using concepts in this way help the hypothetical male student I described above deal with his internalized ideology of masculinity, the effects of that ideology on his own experiences, and its effects on his reactions to others?

DOGEN: IDEOLOGY AND THINKING

Both Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna spoke to the above issues, but their practical advice is not very direct. Wittgenstein developed his philosophical methodology to clear up conceptual confusions and to show one the way out of the difficulties these confusions engendered by returning language from its false and distorted metaphysical uses to its everyday uses, its "original home" (1968, sec. 116). "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. — The one that gives philosophy peace so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question" (sec. 133). How is it that philosophy can achieve this peace? What is the "original home" of language? Nagarjuna also endorsed everyday uses of natural language as it is employed in the course of human lives: "The highest sense [of truth] is not taught apart from practical behavior" (1967, 24:10); and "When emptiness 'works', then everything in existence 'works'" (24:14). For him, as for Wittgenstein, language has sense only in the context of practical, everyday behaviour, in the stream of life. But how can one use language in a way consistent with the philosophy of emptiness, that is, without either reifying and essentializing it or, alternately, falling into

nihilism, when everyday people in their everyday lives suffer the confusions that result from these philosophical moves? The thirteenth-century Japanese Buddhist philosopher and Zen master Dogen most directly addressed the question of correct and incorrect uses of thought on the phenomenological level, and so of language, and he amplified the role of meditation practice in achieving correct uses.

In his work translated as "A Universal Recommendation for Zazen," Dogen (1976) explains in detail how to sit in meditation: how to place the mat, the body, and the mind.

Finally, having regulated your body and mind in this way, take a deep breath, sway your body to left and right, then sit firmly as a rock. Think of non-thinking. How is this done? By thinking beyond thinking and nonthinking (p. 46).

Kasulis (1981) translates Dogen's terminology for these three categories of thought in a somewhat clearer, easier to follow, way, as "thinking," "not-thinking," and "without-thinking" or "non-thinking" (chap. 6; see also Kasulis, 1977). In the discussion to follow I will use his translation and opt for "without-thinking" for "thinking beyond thinking and non thinking." What, then, is it to "think beyond thinking and non thinking," to engage in "without-thinking"? And how is it that this is the realization of wisdom?

In Dogen's tripartite categorization, thinking is a common practice, familiar to all. It is conceptualization, the attribution of qualities and characteristics to things and persons. However, in his commentary on Dogen's concept of thinking, Kasulis (1977) makes the point that what Dogen denotes is more than a mere mechanical attribution of predicates, rather there is a "category-affirming attitude within consciousness" (p. 69; Kasulis, 1981, p. 74). Thinking, then, is the tendency to reify concepts and thus to react to them as permanently existing entities. Not-thinking is simply the opposite of thinking, the rejection of thinking, its refusal, perhaps an attempt to achieve a sort of blanking out or a state of sleep (p. 69).

Without-thinking, which characterizes meditation practices, goes beyond either of these, but in what sense? Both Dogen and Wittgenstein suggest two senses: those of being both logically and phenomenologically prior to either of them. Without-thinking occurs on the level of pre-reflective experience that, Wittgenstein argues, provides the "prototype" for language-games (Wittgenstein, 1970, sec. 541). A language-game is developed out of this matrix of lived experience; it is what the words are woven into to form a language-game. At the earliest stage of language

acquisition, when children begin to weave words into pre-linguistic experience, they can not reflect on language because they lack the language to do so (cf. Wittgenstein, 1968, sec. 5–6, p. 244, and *passim*) and thus they are unable to enter into the thinking stage that Dogen describes. Logically and phenomenologically they are without-thinking. Kasulis (1977; see also Kasulis, 1981, pp. 74–77) puts Dogen's point in surprisingly Wittgensteinian terms when he says without-thinking

takes neither an affirming nor a negating attitude for its intentionality. Since it does not objectify ideas, there is no object for it to either affirm or deny. For Dogen, this pre-reflective or pre-conceptual state of mind is more fundamental than the other two and it is the proper attitude to assume in seated meditation. (p. 70)

Without-thinking, then, takes no intentional attitude; it neither reifies nor rejects concepts, nor does it involve an identification of the self with them. To achieve this non-essentializing, detached attitude is to achieve an experiential understanding of emptiness, to achieve (at least a taste of) wisdom. Important for Dogen, without-thinking is a stance one can take toward cognition as well as toward other forms of experience; one can just as well play chess or solve a math problem “without-thinking” as one can sit in zazen or tend the garden. Dogen maintained throughout his work, perhaps most accessibly in his *Instructions for the Cook* (2001), that this attitude should extend into all of one's daily life. With it, one is able to act and respond freely and spontaneously, unimpeded by preconceptions or biases.

TECHNIQUES AND APPLICATIONS

Yoga is a comprehensive term that includes somatic disciplines, breath work, ethics, philosophy, a multitude of meditation techniques, and more. A wide range of yogic techniques, including the various forms of practice that Westerners tend to separate out as meditation, such as the currently popular Vipassana/insight/mindfulness style of meditation, have been developed and perfected over millennia to help practitioners confront the confusions, illusions, and delusions that result from the misuse or misunderstanding of language. Of particular importance for anti-oppressive teachers is the insight, which we have briefly explored above, that people reify binaristically constructed concepts of self, gender, race, and a host of other categories with which they then identify and to which they become deeply attached at the same time that they assign the oppositional terms to others. This reification and the subsequent

experience of identification and attachment limit the degree of change that merely developing new intellectual positions, such as theoretical anti-essentialism or feminism, can have in the life of a student. If, as Wittgenstein (1968) has shown, understanding necessarily implicates what people "do," in the broadest sense of that word, then students who, for example, intellectually affirm anti-essentialism and yet continue to live as if essentialism were true, clinging on non-intellectual levels to reified ideas of self and others, do not fully understand anti-essentialism. As meditation traditions have shown, one can most effectively remove the attachment to the ideas that structure and may contaminate our lives by a direct and deliberate confrontation with their manifestations on all levels of experience. This confrontation is effected through mindfulness meditation, the "particular way of paying attention . . . that gives rise to a moment-to-moment, non-judging awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 2000, p. 230). Through mindfulness meditation students are able to develop an awareness of the corporeal and emotional responses that accompany ideas, opening up the possibility to more completely address their effects their lives. This is the deeper level of the dissolution of confusion that Wittgenstein gestured toward (1968, Sec. 133) but did not fully theorize. It is the beginning of wisdom in the meditation traditions.

Interest in North America in a wide range of forms of yoga and meditation has grown rapidly over the past few decades and there has been a concomitant proliferation of teachers and traditions on offer. Scholars (Hall & Ames, 1995) have argued at length against the appropriateness of transposing Western concepts of religion to the home cultures of these practices and so it is appropriate that they are usually presented as non-denominational techniques. A common aim of many yogic techniques, frequently lost in the process of their Western commodification, is to develop an increasingly refined mindfulness or self-awareness. Mindfulness techniques involve being well-seated, perhaps but not necessarily in the manner Dogen describes; turning one's focus of attention inward; and observing without engaging with them one's ideas, emotions, and sensations as they arise. Doing so results not only in an expanded awareness of the full range of experience attendant upon a particular ideational content, but also in a growing appreciation of the transitoriness of all levels of experience. An experiment that usually surprises beginning students and dramatically makes this point is to have them sit quietly, watch for the next urge to itch, but not act on it. Within seconds what they would have taken as an irresistible urge (to itch) and a physical sensation (the tickle) that would persist until it was attended to have vanished! So too with many of the experiences which,

usually non-consciously, attend their ideas. The awareness they achieve empowers students to make choices about the attitudes and the experiences they wish to preserve. This empowerment radically deepens and widens their education. With it they can decide not only to reject oppressive and discriminatory positions, but begin to live these decisions in all areas of their lives. Thus, through the use of mindfulness techniques, a male student grappling with masculine ideology may become aware of the subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, manifestations of sexist ideas in his life and relationships and so be able to change them.

A growing body of yoga and especially mindfulness techniques are being used in disciplines as diverse as medicine, psychology, and sports and fitness, among others. As well, feminist scholars have theorized that yoga techniques can help women access unoccupied subjective sites from which to mount resistance to oppressive discourses by enabling them to develop forms of self-acceptance uncontaminated by such patriarchal institutions as the beauty industry (Kaplan, 1997). Others are exploring their theoretical resources for various feminist projects (Klein, 1987, 1994; Orr, 2002a, 2002b, 2004). Recent research has turned to their pedagogical uses.

In a pioneering study that provides evidence of some of the positive effects these techniques can produce, Miller (1994) taught mindfulness techniques to participants in a variety of university-level classes at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. His students' self-reports in journals kept during their course documented increases in areas ranging from the development of focus, attention, and concentration, to a growing awareness of their connectedness with others and the world around them. Empirical research (Emavardhana & Tori, 1997) shows that for young adults mindfulness practice significantly enhanced self-concept, self-esteem, benevolence, impulse control, and the ability to handle stress while reducing many forms of defense mechanisms. Significantly for mindful pedagogy, they also reported a "powerful effect" on beliefs and practices (p. 200). The sense of a common humanity found in Miller's work combined with increased benevolence found by Emavardhana and Tori are important factors for reducing the alienation in which discriminatory attitudes are rooted. Enhanced self-concept and self-esteem combined with impulse control and the ability to handle stress will further strengthen tendencies to non-discriminatory responses. Other research undertaken through the School Counseling Program at the School of Education at Brooklyn College/State University of New York specifically addresses internalized gender oppression. Forbes (2003, 2004) has shown that mindfulness can help inner-city boys both to

develop awareness of and to ameliorate problematic internalized masculine behaviours. Thus, as these examples show, both theoretical and empirical research support the premise that mindfulness techniques will enhance the goals of critical anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Two additional factors serve to recommend the exploration of uses of mindfulness in the classroom. The first resides in the fact that, because of its very nature, it is resistant to abuse. Mindfulness is a technique that functions to increase awareness but is not itself a doctrine or ideology. This enlarged awareness enables students to make more informed choices without guiding those choices and thus nurtures radical empowerment. It is also inherently low-tech and low-cost, a major consideration in these times of underfunding. As with all yogic disciplines, teachers must train to become teachers themselves but, while this training demands dedication, it is not itself expensive to obtain. It can then be passed on to students with virtually no outlay for materials.

In summary, the work of Wittgenstein, Nagarjuna, and Dogen in conjunction with mindful yogic meditation practices offers a rich and untapped resource for feminist and other anti-oppressive pedagogies. These philosophers provide ways to begin to theorize human beings as holistic, relational, and a part of the natural order, while recognizing the distinctly human attainments of intellection and complex cultural development. Taken together they provide a therapeutic of understanding, complete with aetiology, diagnostics, and treatments. With yogic meditation techniques such as mindfulness, they can bridge the socially constructed gulf between mind and body, feeling and spirit, ideas and life, and self and other that current pedagogy is often unable to span. With the research that teachers today such as Miller (1994) and Forbes (2003, 2004) are conducting, a new model of anti-oppressive pedagogy is beginning to emerge that is certain to have much broader applications at all levels of teaching and learning.

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