All the Best Holiday Greeting to all Members:

You may not be celebrating a holiday but nevertheless it is a wonderful time to take a break and be thankful for all the blessings we have. Buddhism holds that even life’s difficulties can be a blessing. They are the times that challenge us to grow and develop and so, without denying their problematic nature, we can use them to enhance our understanding and compassion for all beings including ourselves. I know that in my own life some of the things that I found terrible at the time turned out to be the things that prompted me to make important changes. Developing in yoga and Buddhism were major benefits and I can truly say that I would be very different today without having had these practices in my life.

The Contemplative Education Questionnaire: I’d like to take this opportunity to encourage both teachers and students of contemplative education to answer the questionnaire. As you know, contemplative practices are being used now not only for personal development and in education at all levels, but in other professions as well. Prominent here is their growing use in various forms of therapy, especially psychotherapy. Your experiences are of great value to those who are seeking to adapt contemplative practices to their specific line of work. During their education, after all, is where many people are introduced to the uses of contemplative practices and for some it is even where they begin to develop in their chosen personal practice. So I would encourage you to respond to the questionnaire so that we can disseminate your experiences. This then will not only help those teaching but will inform others of current practices and uses. We value your input so please take a few minutes to answer the topics and submit it. We have reformatted the questionnaire to make it easier and quicker for you to answer and you’ll also be able to add any comments you wish. You’ll find the questionnaire on page 14.

I’d also like to extend an invitation to all to post your work on the website. Not everyone has a lot of time to consult the website on a regular basis so the Newsletter can also be a useful way to inform folks of your work. If you have a contribution to make, let us know and we’ll post on the next issue of the Newsletter. For students especially, the more you get word out about your work, the more others will be able to utilize it in their work – oh, yes, and the more your profession reputation will grow. Folks working in your area will have a better sense of who you and what you do. To take advantage of this opportunity email either Deborah or Mustapha at the addresses below.

You can log onto the website in order to join, ask any question or post at http://www.contemplativeeducation.ca
Or contact Deborah at dorr@yorku.ca
Or Mustapha at msafadieh@hotmail.com
Newsletter Contents

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I’ve been greatly enjoying the beauty of the fall season – not to speak of the early snow! - and I hope all of you are as well. The colors, fragrances, fruits, berries, seeds, all things which come to fruition at this time of year and do so with great bursts of glory. It is also the season of death and dying which, at the same time, brings with it the promise of rebirth and renewal as the fruits go to ground to await the call of spring.

At the same time as we enjoy the season it is impossible to avoid witnessing and acknowledging the escalating violence, war, suffering children, unspeakably horrible deaths, all of the carnage in the world around us as well as the rapidly escalating ecological crisis and its effects on peoples’ lives. Is this, too, just a part of nature, that is, of human nature? Of nature’s nature? Are we born to ravage the world for what we think is our own good? Or for revenge on others? Or for compliance with the will of a God? Has nature turned against us? How do we answer these questions?

I follow the news and am fairly aware of what’s going on in the world but the torrent of horrors in the news on Sunday, November 3, 2019 was simply overwhelming. An hour or so on CNN gave me, amongst other things, wildfires in the west of this continent owing to climate change which destroyed the lives of many and also took lives; thousands of migrants fleeing the horrors of their homes in South America who are forced by the U.S. government to live in tents on the Mexico border where they have only half a dozen portapottys for all – and paper strewn everywhere that they were forced to use instead -, inadequate or no medical help, too little drinking water or food; the abominable situation in the Middle East where people are being forced from their homes, tortured, shot, bombed, massacred; and, of course, the ongoing lunacy of the Trump presidency.

And then there was the cover piece in the New York Times magazine, “The Hunted”, which reported that, “After the horror of ISIS captivity, tens of thousands of Iraqis – many of them children – are caught up in a mental-health crisis unlike any in the world”. The story revolves around the work of Jan Kizilhan, a Kurdish psychologist, who has undertaken to develop treatment facilities and train psychologist to address this crisis. It reports on children who had been abducted by ISIS or suffered violence perpetrated by them. It details the trauma these children suffered and its consequences for their lives. Their experiences are so extreme that they are far from fully comprehensible, or comprehensible at all, by me or, I suspect, anyone reading this. It opened with 17-year-old Enas who was contemplating suicide and whose 16-year-old cousin had burned herself to death. We meet an 8-year-old survivor of ISIS who tried to behead his younger brother; many girls, from 4 years old and up, who were kidnapped and sold as slaves and sex slaves, and many more children suffering because of the horrors perpetrated on them by adult men.

The Times report and CNN news give us only a small sampling of what is going on in the world today. As I’ve followed the news of these horrors and seen it only escalate over time, Matthew Arnold’s poignant 19th century poem “Dover Beach” keeps coming to mind. This poem laments
the meaninglessness and violence of his time and traces this ongoing state of affairs back as far as the time of the tragic playwright, Sophocles. Even the apparent beauty of the earth is a mere façade covering the suffering inherent in the human condition. While he indicates that it is the retreat of “The Sea of Faith” that contributed to the then current misery of humanity, his wording indicates faith as well as a mere cover which once “Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled” over the desolate earth. Thus, he looks to fragile personal love as the only respite from inexorable suffering:

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

In this short essay I want to challenge the profound pessimism of Arnold’s view. While I agree that we are surrounded by atrocities, I will argue that they are not a necessary and inevitable expression of human nature or of nature itself. To an extent Arnold agrees with this position and he looked to human perfectibility through the pursuit of beauty and the use of reason to overcome suffering. I submit that human history, both prior to and most certainly subsequent to Arnold’s time, presents overwhelming evidence that the use of reason and love of beauty will hardly suffice to eradicate suffering, neither individually, nor as a culture nor as a species. Instead I’ll offer a Buddhist response.

In the September Think Piece I argued that humans are haunted by a shadow of their sense-of-self, a sense-of-lack which engenders the multitudinous forms of individual dukkha/suffering which we experience. The root problem with the sense-of-self is avida/ignorance or delusion about both who we are and our relationship to the world. That is, our beliefs about who we “really are”, our ego, is largely a social construction and largely false. Since we accept the-sense-of-self without question the purported ‘reality’ of our nature becomes a klesha/affliction which causes suffering. The sense-of-lack is, in Freudian terms, repressed but manifests as dukkha/suffering, dissatisfaction, a sense that all is not well. Avidya gives rise to two other major kleshas, raga which is attachment or clinging to things that we desire, especially if we believe they will somehow cure our suffering, and dvesa or avoidance of that which we dislike or fear. What the sense-of-self fears and so represses is the fact that it is not a reified and autonomous entity which can avoid death. Thus, we tend to cling to a delusional understanding of our actual nature and seek out and obtain those things which we believe will, somehow, ensure our eternal life, and avoid or reject those things which challenge this.

Those guarantors sought by the sense-of-self tend to fall into the components of the contemporary Western concept of success, i.e. wealth, status and power, as well as the acquisition of the commodities so relentlessly advertised to us. Seeking any or all of the components of success will, of course, involve competition in a zero-sum games which will not
only leave most as losers but also fail to assuage the suffering symptomatic of the repressed sense-of lack since it does nothing to actually address it. Commodities, while they might provide a brief buzz, are no more successful than ‘success’ in overcoming our dukkha.

The commodities on offer are produced by corporations. Corporations are problematic for a number of reasons of which we are now well aware. They have been instrumental in the depletion of the earth’s resources, in the course of which emitting pollutants for the production of commodities which also emit, thus contributing greatly to the current ecological crisis. In their pursuit of profit they exploit workers and have produced growing wealth inequality and an extreme lack of social justice in developed countries while also exploiting both workers and non-workers and damaging the ecology in ‘underdeveloped’ countries. In this we can clearly begin to see some indicators of the source of both the suffering that multitudes of human and other-than-humans beings endure as well as the causes of the escalating ecological crisis which science has conclusively shown may destroy much of the earth as well as human and other beings in the very near future. (see Klein, 2014)

Corporations also have a powerful impact on political processes and consequently on social issues due to their ability to contribute financially to parties and candidates and support those who will support them when in office with a wide range of advertising and promotions. One of the most egregious examples of this is Citizens United in the U.S. This is a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court which held that preventing corporations from funding political campaigns and providing other forms of support such as super pacs violates the constitutional guarantee of free speech. In this corporations are held to be “persons” but, unlike actual persons who have limits on the contributions they can make, corporations effectively have none. (see Mayer, 2016)

In his important critique of Western social thought and practice, The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory, (2003) David Loy points to one of, if not the, major dangers of corporations. That is that while the word ‘corporation’ is derived from the Latin corpus/body, unlike humans they do not have a body, they are legal fictions. However, like humans, corporations are plagued by the klesha which leads to much suffering, raga/craving, in their case for profits. Loy argues that the reason corporations are so dangerous is that they do not have an actual body.

Without a body, they are essentially ungrounded to the earth and its creatures, to the pleasures and responsibilities that derive from being manifestations of the earth’s biosphere. . .corporations are unable to be spiritual. . . A corporation cannot laugh or cry; it cannot enjoy the world or suffer with it.

Most important of all, a corporation cannot love. Love implies realizing our interconnectedness with others and living in a way that embodies our concern for their well-being. Love is not an emotion but a genuine engagement with others that includes responsibility for them that transcends our own self-interest. If that sense of responsibility is not there, one’s love is not real. Corporations cannot experience such love or live according to it, not only because they are immaterial, but because their primary responsibility is to create wealth for the shareholders who own them. (98 – 99)
Loy goes on to argue that consequently corporations are not ruled by compassion/karuna and wisdom/prajna but by greed.

In contrast Buddhist meditation is designed to enable one to access and overcome those acquired components of our sense-of-self which suppress spiritual love and lead to dukkha. These components have the form of habits, habitual ways of thinking, remembering, deciding, acting and, like many habits, smoking cigarettes for instance, they can be overcome. This may be an extremely challenging task but not an impossible one. As we succeed at it, we begin to overcome the clinging to our sense-of-self and its repressed shadow, the sense-of-lack, and with that our raga/cravings which are symptomatic of it. Thus, with the practice of Buddhist meditation we can begin to overcome the delusions we cling to and so more clearly access and live the awareness that is our true nature. In the words of Dogen the 13th century Zen master and teacher,

To study the Buddha way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of realization remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly. (Tanahashi, 1999, 36)

This passage has been the subject of much exegesis. For our purposes here it is useful to employ the Sanskrit term pratitya samutpada which is translated as dependent co-origination. The point here is that rather than being reified and autonomous entities, all ‘things’, including humans, are interconnected with all other ‘things’. It is this interconnectedness that “actualizes” them. The metaphor of Indra’s Net is often used to make this point in that the net shows that all ‘things’ are interconnected with all other ‘things’ and that at each crossing of the cords of the net there is a jewel which reflects all the rest of the cords and their jewels. Thus, as Dogen says, the no-trace of realization continues endlessly; we do not stand alone and separate from all else, rather we are, as David Loy argues, the earth itself. From this experience of interconnectedness/pratitya samutpada flows the compassion/karuna and wisdom/prajna which can guide our behavior.

As I have argued elsewhere (Orr, 2018) Buddhist meditation does not provide us with an ethical foundation in the sense of universal laws, but it does provide the grounding for moral action. That grounding lies in our experience which is opened by the practice, not in external knowledge. Over time this practice gives us access to our innate compassion and wisdom. With this we come to realize, as Dogen has taught, that we are a part of a larger whole, the earth and all that it is. And as Loy has argued, our awareness of our interconnectedness with the earth engages the spiritual love that is expressed through our responsibility and care. This then is the foundation of the moral action which relies not on reasoning from principles or rules but fundamentally on one’s spiritual experience. But, of course, this by itself will not give a solution to all of the world’s problems. For this we, individually, as a society and as a species, need not only experiential understand but also the knowledge of the natures of the problems we face and the will to construct and implement appropriate solutions to them. The development of non-deluded understanding will support that will.

The conclusion I draw from the above considerations is that the wonder and beauty of the earth is not a mere dream. This is our world, or better, the world that is us. The nightmare is what we
The causes of the horrors I have mentioned in my opening paragraphs are not inherent in the nature of reality nor in our fundamental human nature. The root cause of our actions, which in turn cause the nightmare, is not an inexorable aspect of our human nature but rather the outcome of our individual and social delusions.

**Question:** We all have issues we are concerned with be they environmental degradation, social justice, poverty or a wide range of others. How might contemplative practices help you in dealing with these? What knowledge or other resource is needed?

Arnold, Mattthew. “Dover Beach” 
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43588/dover-beach,


New Members

We are welcoming Kristy Kula to the website and into the Contemplative Education community. Kristy is a practitioner of mindfulness. Her previous career was in finance, but she is now a student teacher in the teacher training program at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. She is looking forward to discussing ways of integrating mindfulness into teaching. You can connect with her to share your interests at kulakristy@gmail.com or on the MSCE website.

We also are welcoming Twyla Kowalenko. Twyla is a student at York University, in Toronto, Ontario. Twyla’s work focuses on Dance Studies where uses Mindfulness practices in teaching and in the rest of her work. She can be contacted at twyla@yorku.ca.
New Postings

We are pleased to post announcements of your new book or article publications, calls for papers or conference participation or other matters. These can also be posted on the website and you may give a fuller discussion of them there. I’m posting a paper of mine which you might find relevant to the Think Piece as an example of a paper announcement. Then we have a fuller announcement from Chris Glass of the latest issue of *Journal of International Students* and related matters.

**Papers Published:**


**Journal Publication:**
Explore the latest issue of the *Journal of International Students*!

The 9.4 issue features research and authors in *Canada, China, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Portugal, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates*. The editorial highlights different perspectives that may frame the international student experience through an Indian parable known as The Blind Men and an Elephant.

**Editorial**

*Touching the Elephant: A Holistic Approach to Understanding International Student Experiences*
*K. Bista*

**Research Articles**

*International Muslim Students: Challenges and Practical Suggestions to Accommodate Their Needs on Campus*
*B. Chen, H. Tabassum, & M. A. Saeed*

*International Students’ Perceived Language Competence, Domestic Student Support, and Psychological Well-Being at a U.S. University*
*Z. Luo, S. Wu, X. Fang, & N. Brunsting*

*Academic Reading and Writing Challenges Among International EFL Master’s Students in a Malaysian University: The Voice of Lecturers*
*M. K. M. Singh*

*An Inventory of International Student Services at 200 U.S. Universities and Colleges: Descriptive Data of Pre-Departure and Post-Arrival Supports*
*T. Madden-Dent, D. Wood, & K. Roskina*

*International, Inaccessible, and Incomplete: A Texas Case Study of International Student Websites*
*Z.W. Taylor & I. Bicak*

JIS will celebrate its 10th Anniversary in 2020! Over the last ten years, we have gone from a handful of articles posted on a simple website to the #2 journal in Higher Education – International Education, publishing 350+ authors from 45+ countries in the world.
Look for special essay collections from leading voices in the field and a reception at the 2020 Comparative & International Education Society (CIES) annual meeting.

A Quantitative Assessment of Japanese Students’ Intercultural Competence Developed Through Study Abroad Programs
S. Hanada

Bahamians as International Adult Learners Determined for Academic Success: Challenges and Required Support System
Y. Hunter-Johnson & Y. Niu

Social Support and Stress-Related Acculturative Experiences of an English-speaking Afro-Caribbean Female Student in U.S. Higher Education
S. Rahming

Demographic Correlates of Acculturation and Sociocultural Adaptation: Comparing International and Domestic Students
H. Güzel & S. Glazer

Portuguese Institutions’ Strategies and Challenges to Attract International Students: External Makeover or Internal Transformation?
C. Sin, O. Tavares, & S. Cardoso

Teaching for Transfer to First-Year L2 Writers
W. Cui

Academic Stressors as Predictors of Achievement Goal Orientations of American and ESL International Students
X. Lin, S. Su, & A. McElwain

Analysis of Social Adjustment Factors of International Students in Turkey
M. Gündüz & N. Alakbarov

International Student Spouses and the English Language: Co-Creating a Low Stakes Language Learning Community
A. T. Grimm, D. Kanhai, & J. Landgraf

Book Reviews

Educational Equality and International Students
M. Hou

Research In Brief
Is it a Trump Bump, Spike, or Plateau? India’sChanging Interest in Canadian versus U.S. Universities
D. Yerger & M. Choudhary

Study Abroad Reflections

Life Outside your Comfort Zone: The Power of Reflection for Cultural Adjustment
J. Sy & N. Cruz

Dr. Chris R. Glass
Senior Editor, Journal of International Students
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
Old Dominion University, Virginia (USA)

JIS Editorial Team Applications Due December 1st!

We are excited to welcome more people to our team in 2020 to kick off our second decade of publishing high-quality research.

Come join us and be a part of one of the most geographically and culturally diverse journals in the field. To apply, review position descriptions and application requirements and submit requested materials by December 1st, 2019. We are currently seeking qualified candidates for Associate Editors, Assistant Editors, and Editorial Production Team members, including a social media manager.

Open Positions

Editorial Team >

Krishna Bista, Founding Editor-In-Chief
Chris R. Glass, Senior Editor
Joy Bancroft, Senior Copy Editor
Laura Soulsby, Managing Editor
Natalie Cruz, Production Editor

Related Journals >

• Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
• Higher Education Politics & Economics

Journal of Underrepresented & Minority Progress

We are thankful for the support of the Higher Education – International Education graduate program at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA USA). Learn more >>
Questionnaire

Below is the Questionnaire on your experience as a student studying contemplative practices. We look forward to your experience and thoughts on this important pedagogy. We plan to publish the results in a variety of venues and will keep you posted as this is developed.

We're conducting a survey (www.surveymonkey.com/r/WSMM7KQ) and your input would be appreciated. Click the button below to start the survey. Thank you for your participation!

Thank you for your participation in the survey!

We wish you all the best for the holiday season and a very Happy New Year
Deborah and Mustapha