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REFLECTIONS ON EXPERIENCE

Spirituality and the Management Teacher

Reflections of Three Buddhists on Compassion, Mindfulness, and Selflessness in the Classroom

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Despite the growing importance of spirituality in management, the management education literature says little concerning the teacher's self and even less concerning a teacher's spiritual self. This article addresses the issue of integrating spiritual values and teaching by reflecting on the experiences of three management teachers. To explore individual aspects of their Buddhist practices, one author examines how the spiritual value of compassion has changed the experience of teaching, a second discusses mindfulness, and a third the no-self. They then reflect collectively on those experiences, indicate opportunities for research, and call for further discussion with management professors from diverse spiritual traditions. Their experience suggests that integrating spiritual values into the teaching workplace is highly rewarding and also less problematic than might be expected.

Keywords: *Buddhism; management education; spirituality; mindfulness*

An emerging area in the management field concerns spirituality in the management workplace. Benefiel (2003) notes some 70 books published on the topic of spirituality and management since 1993, and the *Journal of Management Inquiry* has published many articles on spirituality in the workplace (e.g., Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Delbecq, 2000; Gull & Doh, 2004; Levy,

2000; Miller, 2000; Steingard, 2005; Vaill, 2000). This topic is important for managers, researchers, and teachers. Research indicates that leaders with a spiritual practice are more effective (Reave, 2005). For academic researchers, there is the challenge of integrating traditional management theory with spirituality and spiritual values (Benefiel, 2003; Franz & Wong, 2005; Steingard, 2005). Finally, for management teachers

there is the related challenge of introducing a spiritual component to management education. Both practitioners and management students appear to benefit when management education includes a spiritual component (Delbecq, 2000, 2005).

Thus far, management teachers with an interest in spirituality have largely focused on pedagogy, course structure, and content. Among others, Barnett, Krell, and Sendry (2000), Bento (2000), Freed (2005), and Lips-Wiersma (2004) have explored various pedagogical approaches, while Harlos (2000), Haroutiounian et al. (2000), and Marcic (2000) have looked at issues of course content and structure. The delicate relationship between religion and spirituality has been discussed by Barnett et al. (2000), E. M. Epstein (2002), Marcic (2000), and Mitroff (2003). Largely absent from this discussion on teaching spirituality is the question of how teachers can integrate their personal spiritual values into their own workplace. This omission is remarkable for several reasons. First, a logical extension of the topic of management, spirituality, and religion would seem to be the integration of teaching with the teacher's personal spirituality. Second, this discussion is a logical extension of two important themes in the broader education literature: (a) the discussion of teaching with the whole self (e.g., Palmer, 1998) and (b) the current shift in education paradigms from teacher centered to learner centered (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005).

Teaching with the whole self is increasingly important in the education literature (e.g., Intrator, 2005; Intrator & Scribner, 2003; Liston & Garrison, 2003), along with the related discussion concerning the teacher's self (e.g., Intrator, 2002; O'Reilly, 1998, 2005; Palmer, 1983). This thread in the research goes back to Moustakas (1972) and was an important theme in the work of Carl Rogers (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 65), who devoted a whole chapter of his book on education to the question, "As a teacher, can I be myself?" They proposed that growth for teachers comes "the more they own and accept their inner reactions" (p. 65). More recently, Palmer's (1998) *The Courage to Teach* has made the inner life of the teacher a prominent subject. Palmer characterizes the education literature as an inquiry into four questions: (a) "the 'what' question—what subjects shall we teach?" (b) "the 'how' question—what methods and techniques are required to teach well?" (c) "the 'why' question—for what purpose and to what ends do we teach?" and (d) "the 'who' question—who is the self that teaches?" (p. 4).

This article explores the who question. An underlying premise of Parker's question is the proposition that teaching with the whole self is better teaching. This proposition is gaining support partially because it relates to the emerging emphasis on student-centered teaching. This type of teaching (Mundhenk, 2004) moves away from the traditional emphasis on teaching as content delivery (what and how) toward the creation of learning environments that emphasize the teacher's "being with students" (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005, p. 333) and "honesty and truthfulness" (Buttner, 2004, p. 326). For teachers to be honest, they must teach with their whole self, and this self can have many aspects: the psychological self, the social self (including gendered and racial identity), the moral self, the spiritual self, and others.

Despite its importance in the field of education, the management education literature provides little guidance about teaching management with either the whole or spiritual self. A review of the *Journal of Management Education* for the past 11 years and all *Academy of Management Learning and Education* issues yielded only one article on the role of the self in teaching (i.e., Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005) and one on the management teacher's spirituality in the workplace (i.e., Delbecq, 2004). As regards spirituality, this situation is especially notable because there is an implicit requirement for teaching spirituality in management education: that such teachers demonstrate a concern for their own spirituality. Teachers such as Neal (1997), Bento (2000), Haroutiounian et al. (2000), and Delbecq (2000) outline student-centered course structures that generate intimate explorations of spirituality and its workplace implications but say little about the need for such teachers to be honest about their own spiritual values in this context or about the teacher's experience of his or her own spirituality in the classroom workplace.

This article addresses the issue of the teacher's spiritual self in the management classroom by reflecting on the efforts of three teachers to integrate their spiritual values into their teaching. Although our mutual starting point was Buddhism and Buddhist values, the article is primarily concerned with the broader question of integrating the spiritual self with everyday management teaching. Thus, this article presents only a brief introduction to Buddhism before exploring our individual efforts to integrate a particular Buddhist value into our teaching practice. To encompass a variety of experiences, one of us has written about compassion, another about mindfulness, and another about

selflessness. We conclude with a collective reflection on integrating one's spiritual life with the work of teaching management and on opportunities for research. Because we believe that the values discussed have close analogs in other religions and spiritual belief systems, we invite readers to reflect on what we've written through the lens of their personal spiritual values.

We begin with a short introduction to Buddhism. Judith White then discusses her experience of compassion in the classroom.

BUDDHISM IN BRIEF

Buddhism began 2,500 years ago and today is practiced throughout the world. Like Christianity, Buddhism has many different traditions, stemming in part from the way it developed in different regions. The Buddha himself was born and lived in India. His teachings were spread to different parts of Asia by his followers. Over time, different ways of practicing Buddhism developed. These traditions include *Theravada* Buddhism, primarily practiced in southern Asia and the oldest of the three major traditions. *Vipassana* is one form of this. The second major tradition is the *Mahayana*. Practiced primarily in China and Japan, it includes *Zen* Buddhism. A third, *Vajrayana* Buddhism, is the newest of the three and the form practiced in Tibet. All three of these traditions have spread throughout the world and have many U.S. adherents.

Although Buddhism is a religion, it is also a philosophy that can be practiced without any reference to religion. Its central tenet is the belief that happiness comes from relieving suffering, in particular the suffering that derives from wanting something to be different than it is. Thus, the purpose of Buddhist practice and Buddhist virtues is eliminating suffering in oneself and others. For a Buddhist, "practicing" a virtue means striving to make one's life and actions conform to it. The discussion following this section explores three of the prime Buddhist virtues in some detail: compassion, mindfulness, and letting go of the self. Buddhists practice these virtues in order to achieve happiness by reducing their own and others' suffering.

COMPASSION

Judith: I have studied Buddhism since the early 1980s, in both the Zen and Vipassana traditions. I

attempt to live the Buddhist precepts, including honesty, nonharming, compassion, and generosity. I integrate these values into my teaching and see my work as a teacher to help students listen to, value, and develop their own minds and hearts.

In their article "Compassion in Organizational Life," Kanov et al. (2004) have an excellent description of the importance of compassion.

Compassion occupies a prominent role in the history of modern society, implicated in the creation and sustenance of human community (Clark, 1997; Nussbaum, 1998). Seen as virtuous and contributing to personal and social good (Blum, 1980; Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1998; Wuthnow, 1991), compassion lies at the core of what it means to be human (Himmelfarb, 2001; Wuthnow, 1991). Similarly, despite fundamental differences in philosophy and tradition, all major religions emphasize the importance of compassion. (pp. 208-209)

In Buddhist ethics, compassion is the aspiration that all beings be free from *dukkha*, commonly translated as suffering (Harvey, 2000). *Dukkha*, however, refers not only to suffering but also to subtle dissatisfaction—a sense of incompleteness that often accompanies our experience—and originates in both desire and aversion. When we want something we don't have, such as a material possession, a better boss, a delightful coworker, or a new car, the *wanting* itself becomes a form of suffering. Similarly, when we have something we don't want (a pain in our back, a student who cheats, a boring meeting), this dislike is a source of suffering. In both cases, we feel that our in-the-moment experience is unsatisfactory, and either gaining something or eliminating something will bring happiness. We usually find that after we have achieved this state of satisfaction, it is fleeting and we want something else—another publication, another piece of cake or a larger grant. In this way, suffering is ever present, as long as desire and aversion remain. The Western intellectual tradition often distinguishes between the mind and the emotions, even when explaining compassion. Eastern traditions generally don't make the distinction: The mind and heart are seen as one.

Our desires and aversions are consequences of our conditioning and cause suffering for others and ourselves. For example, I want to get someplace in a hurry. This desire causes me to drive quickly, pollute our environment, contribute to global warming, and depend on diminishing fossil fuels. These actions

cause suffering not only for future generations but also affect people today all over the world through changes in current climate conditions (including flooding, hurricanes, and droughts). These changes in turn increase poverty, famine, medical crises, the destruction of ecosystems, and so on. Instead of ignoring the effects of my actions on others, I can slow down, be patient, and practice compassion to express my concern for others (Shantideva, 1997). Practicing compassion involves putting aside self-righteousness and judgments that others are less than oneself. In Buddhist cosmology, all beings (living and nonliving, human and nonhuman) deserve compassion, including the pesky garden snails that eat the roses in my garden. Thus, we should be compassionate for the suffering of all involved. This compassion includes taking action to stop the causes of the suffering.

Challenges and Opportunities for Practicing Compassion

Teaching presents many opportunities for practicing compassion. As a teacher, I sometimes feel passionate, impatient, critical, and vulnerable all at once. When this happens, I try to slow down, step back, recognize these emotions, see my own fears and frustrations, open my heart to others, and summon up patience and compassion, however difficult that may be.

Like other management teachers, I have difficult students from time to time. (See, for example, Parker Palmer's [1998] comments on "the student from hell" [p. 40].) I've had students who say "I just want to get my ticket punched," or "The only reason I'm in this program is to get a promotion at work," or "I'm only taking this class because it is required and I just want to pass and move on." These students may sit in the back of the room, carry on side conversations, sleep, or otherwise disrupt class. When they look bored, unmotivated, and unprepared, I feel hurt, defensive, and frustrated because our goals are so divergent and my impact on them will be minimal. And when, out of fear, I judge these students, my judgments create barriers to compassionate action.

Buddhist practice gives me an alternative to acting on these feelings. If I stop to notice my feelings, I see options. I can summon up compassion by imagining this student loved by family and friends or imagine the student as a beautiful infant or an adorable 2-year-old child who has not yet been conditioned. The Dalai Lama said,

A classic procedure in Buddhism for cultivating compassion is to develop a way of viewing others as if each sentient being is your mother . . . viewing an individual as your mother brings forth a sense of fondness, cherishing, gentleness, affection, and gratitude. (quoted in Goleman, 2003, p. 283)

There have been times in a class when I felt annoyed and defensive but when I stopped to see more deeply, found understanding and compassion. Several years back, two Israeli master of business administration (MBA) students, friends and former officers in the Israeli army, were in my organizational behavior (OB) course. Their MBA focus was finance, and they treated the in-class OB exercises and written assignments as a waste of their time and "childish." In class they were arrogant, disruptive, and hostile. I felt defensive because I cherish OB. At the same time, I wanted to understand how these students experienced the various dynamics of OB in the Israeli army and how their military experiences had affected their lives and their worldview. Each had seen death and destruction and had come to the United States to leave the conflict behind to get an MBA and a high-paying job. For them, their education, and particularly the OB class, was merely a means to an end, whereas I saw my classroom as an exciting laboratory with many opportunities for students to learn to be more effective in organizations. By looking into my heart and mind, I could understand that their social conditioning resulted in a very different worldview than mine, but one that could coexist with mine. I felt compassion for these students knowing that like me, they suffer from desire and aversion and deserve compassion.

Like others, I have had students who earnestly want to learn the material and complete the course and put in a great deal of effort but still perform poorly. Some faculty members call these students "high maintenance" because they need so much time in and outside of class. Prompted by colleagues, my arrogant mind says, "Hey, this is graduate school, not a freshman study skills course. Find a tutor, get a 'study buddy' or take some remedial classes in writing and study habits." I forget that there must have been times when I was high maintenance during the many years that I was a student. I try to remember that I have choices of how to respond—with criticism, or compassion and care.

The opportunity to practice compassion also arises when I grade papers, when the judging and impatient mind surfaces because of unrealistic expectations.

Unconsciously, I expect students to write good papers from the start. When they don't, I become frustrated, which then makes the work of grading unpleasant. Reflecting on my job of promoting learning, I realized that many students turn in flawed papers, and my job is to help them improve. If they turned in perfect papers from the beginning, they probably wouldn't need to take my course! By remembering to be compassionate, I move from thoughts such as "Why didn't Pat follow the assignment?" to "What comment can I write that will help Pat do a better job of following the assignment when she revises this paper?" or "I wonder if I need to add something to the syllabus or say something in class so students do a better job of following the assignment in the future?"

Much of what I teach is value laden. Discussions about corporate environmental pollution, child labor, sweatshops, social responsibility, or servant leadership involve ethical values. The students and I may not agree about which is more important—self-interest or the greater good, me or we, short-term gain or concern for future generations—but the topics all involve value judgments. Some issues resonate more than others with the core values of liberal education (Nussbaum, 1998) and experiential learning. Learning itself implies change (Kolb, 1984)—whether cognitive, affective, behavioral, or perceptual—and students may experience the discussion of deeply felt, value-laden topics as threatening. Here, too, is an opportunity for compassion.

In our individualistic and youth-oriented culture, it is easy to get lost in our own personal dramas, losing perspective on anything bigger than our immediate realities. Wisdom traditions, severe trauma or crisis, and age remind us we are all vulnerable—living with joy and sorrow, happiness, frustration, and confusion. As I teach, I want to touch students' minds and hearts—leading to new awareness, perceptions, conceptualizations, and behaviors (Kolb, 1984). Through reflection, I am aware that within the judging mind is vulnerability and fear; underneath every "tough" is a "puff," reminding me to practice understanding, compassion, and loving kindness (Salzberg, 2002) toward myself and others. Patience is necessary for understanding, and patience is required to learn to be patient—one of many paradoxes common in Buddhism. The ideal is to step back and see each minute in class (and outside of class) as an opportunity for learning, insight, a change in perception and attitude—a questioning of one's own frame and looking through

new frames. In Zen, that perspective is called "beginner's mind" (Suzuki, 1977, p. 21)—a heart and mind that is open, refreshed, compassionate, inquiring, curious, and empathic. In Vipassana Buddhism, it is called right mindfulness (Strong, 2002).

In the next section, Don McCormick discusses his experience with mindfulness—how it makes his work more meaningful, increases empathy, helps him with some of the unpleasantness inherent in teaching, and helps him transcend his expectations of students.

MINDFULNESS

Don: I began studying Vipassana Buddhism with Stephen Levine in the mid 1970s. During graduate school, I studied Zen at the local Zen center, and in 1985 I returned to the study of Vipassana, this time with Shinzen Young. I've studied with him and his senior students ever since. The main focus of my practice is mindfulness.

The Buddhist path to enlightenment has eight aspects, one of which is right mindfulness (Strong, 2002). When meditators concentrate attention on their experience, they become aware of the present moment. Mindfully focusing on the task at hand means living in the here and now—not losing ourselves in thoughts about the future or past (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004). Nonjudgmental observation of one's perceptions, thoughts, and emotions leads to an acceptance of these and results in greater calm, equanimity, and relaxation. Research shows that mindfulness meditation alleviates "pain, stress, anxiety, depressive relapse, and disordered eating" (Baer, 2003, p. 126).

People in many professions find mindfulness helps their practice, including law (Keeva, 2004), medicine (R. M. Epstein, 1999; Hannibal, 1994), and teaching (Johnson, 2001; Vacarr, 2001). I try to focus on mindfulness while teaching as part of a more mindful approach to my whole life. As I become more mindful, I become more calm, relaxed, open to and appreciative of students and their experiences, and more satisfied with my work as a teacher. Practicing mindfulness has (a) made teaching more meaningful, (b) increased my empathy (which in turn increases the potential for student learning), (c) helped to make unpleasant teaching tasks more pleasant, and (d) helped me get beyond my expectations of students. These benefits are discussed below.

Making Teaching More Meaningful

Teaching mindfully can make teaching more meaningful for anyone who values living in the present moment. Many spiritual traditions value present centeredness—living in the now (Naranjo, 1970), including Hinduism and Sufism (Tart, 1994). In the Jewish publication *Tikkun*, Weinberg (2001) writes, “Judaism and mindfulness practice seek to awaken us to the natural connection between all forms of life. In classic Jewish language this is called accepting the yoke of Divine sovereignty” (p. 33). Christian theologian Dreyer (1994) writes, “For many Christians work takes on spiritual significance when they choose to live in the present moment, to notice and value God working there, and to offer a loving response in a full and integral way” (p. 161). Teaching mindfully gives spiritual significance, meaning, and purpose to each moment of teaching.

Increasing Empathy

When I pay mindful attention to a student, I try to relate as if she or he is the most important person on earth. I become more empathic and compassionate. Mindfulness removes the cobwebs of concepts and expectations that interfere with seeing my students as they really are. Vacarr (2001) writes that mindfulness “cultivates a sense of open curiosity toward each emerging moment, and it strengthens our ability to sustain a nonjudgmental stance both toward ourselves and in relation to the full range of our students’ experiences” (p. 293). It has become a truism in education to recognize that “all learning begins with the learner’s frame of reference. We teachers need interpersonal skills to enter the learner’s frame of reference” (Carkhuff, Berenson, & Pierce, 1977, p. 17)—skills such as perspective taking and empathy (McCormick, 1999). Mindfulness helps with those skills. Decades of research going back to Rogerians such as Aspy (1972) and even earlier have shown that students of empathic teachers have higher levels of achievement. Because our job is facilitating learning, this means that mindfulness can increase our effectiveness as teachers.

Making Unpleasant Teaching Tasks More Pleasant

By definition, developing mindfulness involves developing equanimity, which reduces stress and

anxiety (Baer, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003), including anxiety about teaching. Mindfulness helps with unpleasant tasks because the experience of unpleasantness is almost always a combination of the actual negative experience and negative judgments, concepts, and expectations that we overlay onto that experience. It is the judgments and expectations about the experience that make something unpleasant, not the experience itself. When I am mindful, I become more aware of my immediate, primary, sensory experience and, simultaneously, of my judgments and expectations about it. Becoming mindful of the judgments and expectations loosens their hold on me and makes them less unpleasant.

Mindfulness also helps me reduce the unpleasantness of interacting with hostile students. I once had a bright, politically active student who liked to make hostile comments to me in class. Once, she said something that she felt was particularly provocative (to paraphrase): “You know what? I won’t pay my tuition this semester at this university that is so-called dedicated to social justice. Why shouldn’t I give the money to the homeless?” Then she continued, “You know, Don, my goal in this class is to get not just one of the veins on your forehead to pop out, but to get both of them.” When I heard this, I observed my feelings of anger, but at the same time I was fairly unattached to these same feelings: I didn’t identify with them and let them pass. This student had two agendas: one involved my emotional state and the other was to question the relative importance of higher education when compared with helping the homeless. When I didn’t react from a primitive, defensive posture, I could see that most of the time her antagonistic comments were actually helpful. She introduced interesting, strongly held opinions into class discussion and raised important issues. Over time, I learned to appreciate how her comments stimulated a lively discussion.

Shinzen Young (2000), my Buddhist teacher, points out that people tend to react defensively to a question with an antagonistic agenda. On an audiotape for training meditation teachers, he explains that they should “respond to a hostile question in a way that is satisfying to [both] yourself” and the person asking the question. “When challenged publicly, you will need to allow huge subjective responses of hurt, anger and fear to come up—irrational feelings, hostile images, negative tapes” (Young, 2000). He suggests keeping track of, that is, remaining mindful of these responses as you hear them and as you respond. This

mindful equanimous approach to hostile questions is supported by Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002), who discuss research on how meeting hostility with calm reduces the antagonism. Part of mindful response is becoming exquisitely aware of feelings and images as they arise but not acting on them, identifying with them, or expressing them. At the same time, you don't suppress feelings of defensiveness. Rather, you mindfully watch your emotions arise, including any "hurt, anger and fear" (Young, 2000) with equanimity. This way, emotions have less of a hold on you. Learning to be mindful of such strong reactions takes a lot of practice, but can be learned.

Transcending Expectations of Students

Mindfulness has helped me to transcend my expectations of my students. As the American Zen master John Daido Looi (2004) writes, "Expectation is deadly because it disconnects us from reality. When we get ahead of ourselves, we leave the moment" (p. 133). I experienced this getting ahead of myself years ago when I worked at a college with a strong public commitment to social justice. One day, a new advisee, in her late 50s, walked into my office wearing expensive clothes. I asked her about her academic and career goals, and she said she wanted to finish her bachelor's degree as soon as possible so she could get her master's degree and become a psychotherapist in private practice in Beverly Hills. I immediately disliked her and what I considered to be her status-seeking, materialistic aspirations that told me all I needed to know about her. My prejudices, judgments, and expectations about her blocked me from seeing who she really was.

I became mindful of these feelings of dislike and realized they were the results of my prejudices and expectations. This realization helped me become less identified with them and let them go. When a prejudicial thought arose, I noticed it and let it pass without mistaking it as a thought that I firmly believed. In meditation, one treats images, thoughts, feelings, or sensations as a cloud moving across the sky or a train moving across the horizon. Being mindful allowed me to relate to her as a unique individual, and I began to appreciate different aspects of her personality and goals. I felt a joyful, loving openness as I let go of my mental constructs of who she was while also realizing how destructive my expectations had been.

With mindfulness, I can see beyond my preconceptions and experience students as whole persons. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) research (see also Jamieson, Lydon, Stewart, & Zanna, 1987) spawned a stream of research that showed how teachers' expectations of student performance become self-fulfilling prophecies. This happens regardless of whether they are expectations of good or poor performance. Practicing mindfulness helps me become aware of my positive and negative expectations and reduces them.

Becoming Mindful

There are at least three ways to become more mindful while teaching: developing a daily meditation practice, meditating before class, and meditating during class.

- (a) *Developing a daily sitting meditation practice* is the most common Buddhist practice for developing mindfulness. Shinzen Young (2000) compares a meditator doing sitting meditation to a musician practicing scales. The purpose of practicing scales is not to improve one's ability to perform scales; it's to develop skills that will be used in a performance. Similarly, sitting meditation is done so that one can be more mindful in life.
- (b) *Meditating right before class* also deepens mindfulness. Napoli's (2004) pilot study of mindfulness training for teachers reports that some teachers used mindfulness meditation before class to become more calm, centered, and aware.
- (c) *Meditating during class* is the final way. Focusing on the breath can remind us to be mindful in the present moment. This technique can be particularly useful when we become upset. Breathing produces many body sensations and is relatively easy to observe. Becoming mindful of something easy such as the breath can remind a teacher to be more generally mindful of the sights, sounds, physical sensations, and thoughts associated with teaching. Mary Rose O'Reilley (1998), a Zen Buddhist, Quaker, and English professor, calls this the discipline of presence, which she compares to *zazen*—Zen sitting meditation:

The discipline of presence requires me to be there, with my senses focused on the group at hand, listening rather than thinking about what I'm going to say—observing the students, the texts, and the sensory world of the classroom. This is harder than sitting *zazen*. In *zazen*, nobody talks back to you. (p. 9)

This presence leads to one of the major effects of mindfulness on student learning. Parker Palmer (2004) articulates this:

Students know when a teacher is being real. And they get involved with that teacher. Students know when a teacher is phoning it in and students turn off . . . when there is that gap between the selfhood of the teacher and whatever it is they're doing. . . . Because the teacher is disconnected, the students are disconnected, and no learning can happen. Learning is about making connections, . . . about jumping sparks between the poles. And it doesn't happen when a teacher is unplugged.

When the kind of mindless teaching described above occurs, no learning happens. Mindfulness prevents this kind of bad teaching.

Mindful teaching brings a new dimension to student-centered teaching. Students reveal their learning needs in their facial expressions and the tone of their voices. When I'm mindful and present, I'm much more likely to pick up these subtle communications from students. I also become less self-conscious. In the next section, Richard Kernochan addresses this diminution of the self and how it can lead to spontaneous teaching.

NO-SELF

Richard: I have been practicing seriously with my teacher, Yoshin Sensei, since 1994, although my curiosity about Zen Buddhism dates back to the 1960s. My practice involves sitting meditation and integrating Zen concepts with my everyday life.

The Buddhist ideal of no-self is difficult for Westerners to understand, yet one of the most important for students of Buddhism. According to the Buddhist teacher Bhikkhu (1999), the individual "self" involves self-identification and some degree of attachment to that self, whereas an interconnected self involves identification with all nature. As Westerners, we perceive ourselves as self-conscious individuals, focusing primarily on our own selves and "needs." Much of economics, for example, views human behavior as centered on maximizing individual self-interest and thus less sensitive to others and their environment. If, however, our egoism diminishes, then we as individuals become more sensitive to our surroundings—and more able to interact appropriately with them. In the Buddhist concept of no-self, the distinctions or

boundaries between the individual self and the external environment are dissolved and thus have no meaning. In that state, the individual is free to explore the territory beyond the self.

The no-self concept and the reduction of boundaries exist in other religious traditions. John Hick, an influential thinker in philosophy of religion, writes that such reduction is a

central concern to each of the great world faiths. Each in its different way calls us to transcend the ego point of view, which is the source of all selfishness, greed, exploitation, cruelty and injustice, and to become re-centered in that ultimate mystery for which we, in our Christian language, use the term God. (quoted in Forward, 2001, p. 42)

Like Christianity and other spiritual traditions, the Buddhist tradition seeks this same transcendence of ego, albeit for different ends. The quotation suggests that Buddhism also shares two other, related ideas with those traditions: (a) unity with a greater whole and (b) the reduction of (ego-created) barriers or boundaries as a means to that (comm)unity. When applied to teaching, these two ideas create interesting opportunities.

Diminishing Self in the Classroom

Although the concept of no-self is necessarily abstract, its applications are not. Some years ago, I had scheduled an important test in my capstone strategy course. As students filed into the classroom, some were crying in despair and shock. Like them, I was also in shock. Earlier that September morning, I had seen the New York World Trade Center towers implode on my television set. Seeing the impact of those tragic moments on the students, I cancelled the exam and initiated a discussion of the events and how they might affect our lives. As we all talked, we tried to understand the events and realized that we were all fearful and confused. And in the process of sharing our emotional experiences, the usual distinctions of teacher and student diminished. Exploring and sharing our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and ideas, my students and I experienced a deep community, letting go of our individual selves, egos, and needs for that one class session. In that very moving discussion, we began to apply previously learned strategy concepts, focusing on the nature of uncertainty and the challenges of developing strategy when there is a lack of data. The experience was

positive for *all* participants. When the class ended, the students lingered much longer than usual, continuing to talk openly with me and each other about the events and their implications. It was a transcendent experience, in the sense that we transcended our usual roles, experiencing and then learning through our emotional and intellectual interconnectedness. Adapting strategy concepts to the events of that morning, we developed a deeper and broader understanding of both strategy and ourselves as whole persons. In my 9/11 classroom, teacher, learner, and teaching content transformed dynamically.

This classroom experience suggests that being flexible and dissolving identification with our individual self can enable a meaningful learning experience. As we let go of our roles of teachers and students, as we become capable of seeing ourselves as a (comm)unity of learners, we become able to expand our personal concepts of boundaries and preconceived ideas about the course material. In such moments of synthesis, the boundaries between the teacher's self, the learner's self, and the material become blurred. Such boundaries are not necessarily bad. The distinctions among the three elements are useful because they provide a frame that allows us to understand and also parse the teaching process into smaller and more manageable parts. Moreover, when the teacher is distinguished from the learner and content, then each can be viewed as having separate functions and responsibilities. Thus, when those functions are being fulfilled, we can be certain that a defined teaching transaction exists.

From a Buddhist perspective, however, these distinctions are boundaries that hinder the exchange process. For example, my students insist that I as teacher have the answer. (Otherwise, why am I the teacher?) Thus, their work becomes a one-way exchange: to get my answer from me. In a more open exchange process, their work would be to create a shared answer. Or, as another example, most teachers have their own concept of what a teacher does. That concept is essentially a personal perspective of teaching that views some behaviors as teaching and others as not teaching. The trap is that the process of distinguishing teaching actions from nonteaching also creates the boundaries to our actions. As Zen Master Glassman (2003) has suggested, it is our ideas about teaching that delimit our actions, not the realities of the teaching transaction:

We completely attach to our notions of how things are instead of seeing them as they really are; thus,

we're unable to act freely in any situation. We create our own fetters. Those fetters are our ideas; we refuse to let go of them. (pp. 42-43)

In effect, the more we are self-conscious, the more that we insist on our ideas about the differences between teacher and learner, the higher the boundaries we create and the farther we move from the possibility of a transcendent classroom.

Self-consciousness isn't bad. It simply involves tradeoffs. It enables some actions and limits others. If I had insisted on teacher-student differences in the 9/11 classroom, then I would have canceled the class on the grounds that no proper teaching was possible in that situation. Instead, relaxing those boundaries enabled a new situation. In becoming less "self" conscious, simply a room of human beings, we were able to exchange our ideas about the world. In relaxing, a teacher becomes more able to be spontaneous and thus more open to the emergence of synthetic moments, those moments when teachers, students, and material achieve a kind of dynamic synthesis.

Teaching Spontaneously in the Present Moment

Recently, the three authors made a conference presentation on Buddhism and teaching (McCormick, White, & Kernochan, 2004). Our agenda included a point regarding our perspective that teachers enter the classroom "self-consciously," full of extraneous personal concerns. As the workshop progressed, the participants' questions indicated they were having difficulty with this idea. Attentive to the audience, the point we were trying to make, and our own presence, a new exercise spontaneously took shape in my mind. With my fellow presenters' permission, the audience members and we listed all the things we could remember thinking about when we entered our classrooms. The resulting list on the whiteboard included items such as computers, textbooks, pens, teaching notes, overhead slides, and so on. As we thought about items that might be missing, one of the participants said, "Oh! Where are the students?" In that moment, we all shared an understanding that our focus on teaching well had been separating us from our students.

That exercise was never part of our planned presentation. Rather, it emerged from the immediate situation, just as the content and interactions of the 9/11 class emerged in response to that day's events. It would not have emerged if we had been primarily

concerned with the presentation mechanics or covering each part of the agenda. Instead, our Buddhist perspectives pushed us to be flexible, to let go of our self-conscious concerns and focus on learning from our immediate audience. By focusing on what they were teaching us in that moment, we all became less self-conscious—less stuck in our roles. Boundaries began to dissolve, and we all became mutual inquirers. In teaching spontaneously, new learning emerged for all.

Teaching spontaneously in the present moment is a realizable ideal. The examples above suggest that the experience is similar to an athlete's "zone . . . when you're performing automatically . . . when you're absolutely free of worries, free of inhibitions and so confident and relaxed that your best performance just kind of comes out automatically" (Smith, 2004, p. 1). According to Cooper (1995), Csikszentmihalyi "calls the experience 'flow'" and describes it as "a self-surpassing dimension of human experience . . . [whose] characteristics include deep concentration, highly efficient performance, . . . a lack of self-consciousness, and self-transcendence" (p. 1). Cooper goes on to note that an athlete is mentally ready for the zone when "anchored in technique, rooted in the body, focused on the task at hand, the conscious mind shuts off, deliberate intent is transcended, and the self seems to fall away" (p. 1).

Like athletes, teachers cannot create spontaneous teaching moments through force of will, that is, the self. Moreover, although a teacher's desire and determination are certainly important preconditions, they are not sufficient to create such moments. My experiences above suggest, however, that teachers can control at least three conditions that will facilitate their emergence. First, teachers can prepare class material to the point that they are completely comfortable with their knowledge, with what they know and don't know about the material. Otherwise, they are too anxious to be spontaneous. Second, teachers need to remain aware (mindful) of the dynamic relatedness among the three teaching elements by reminding themselves to focus on the content and the student (compassion) with the goal of "forgetting" themselves and the mechanics of their teaching. Finally, teachers can practice changing "I" to "we." Teaching spontaneously is inhibited by self-consciousness: concerns for the self, one's role as a teacher, and the mechanics of teaching. As we become less self-conscious and let go of our personal, self-conscious *teaching* goals, we become open to the students and the content, more

able to generate mutual learning. We can foster attitudes of openness that reinforce the relatedness in a classroom rather than the distinctions.

In sum, if you wish to teach spontaneously, remember to check your "self" at the classroom door.

COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS

The individual reflections above explore three personal efforts to integrate our spirituality with our teaching. In the process of reading each other's reflections and discussing our experiences, additional insights emerged. We realized that in simply changing who we were when we taught, we changed many things: our interactions with our students, our approach to the material we taught, our view of ourselves, and our teaching purpose. A few of these collective reflections are below.

Spiritual values overlap. As we reviewed our collective experience, we realized that compassion, mindfulness, and selflessness intertwined, continually influencing each other. Mindfulness led to compassion because it involves a calm focusing of one's attention on the moment, including others and their pain. In such a state of equanimity, the suffering of others evoked compassion naturally. Being in a state of compassion drew our attention away from our own needs to the needs of others and so diminished the demands of our egos. Thus, the differences in our original value choices were relatively unimportant because seemingly different values ultimately led toward similar behaviors. The practice of one spiritual value led to the practice of many.

Spirituality and religion. Teachers, including management professors, often feel constrained in expressing their spirituality in the classroom (Nord & Haynes, 1998), not to mention integrating it into their teaching. Reflecting on our collective experience, we realized that we expressed our spirituality through our actions and who we were, not through a declaration of our religious orientation. As a result, practicing our religion and spirituality in our workplace never became a problem. No student ever remarked on our behavior or asked for an explanation. Our spiritual practice in the classroom was invisible because our actions didn't come with explicit religious labels. A compassionate act is a compassionate act, whether it springs from Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism. It is not labeled

Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist just because it's compassionate. When we practice compassion, we do not announce "I am working on being compassionate" or "I am a Buddhist acting religiously." Our experiences suggest that management professors don't need to separate their spiritual practice from their teaching.

A balanced perspective. Although we have personally benefited from our efforts to become more compassionate, mindful, and selfless, these values are not cure-alls. They won't get you tenure, stop students from plagiarizing, or guarantee that you will create inspiring classes. Moreover, immoderation may cause difficulties. Take, for example, too much compassion. Blake and Mouton (1982) and McClelland and Burnham (1975) raise some potential difficulties when they describe managers whose concern for others overwhelms their efforts at getting tasks accomplished. So, although we feel that our spiritual values are tremendously important, we also know that the spiritual self is only one aspect of the whole self. Balance is still important.

Emotional labor. Emotion is an important theme in our individual reflections. In reviewing our stories, we have written about handling emotions—ours, our students', and the interaction of the two. Our efforts to deal wisely with those emotions suggest that integrating spirituality and teaching exposes the emotional aspects of our work. Such emotions are not necessarily surprising. They are connected to the vulnerability experienced by both teachers and students. So, for teachers, the need to have "the courage to teach" (Palmer, 1998) stems from the fears that arise from performance anxiety, that is, the desire to teach well, and from uncomfortable interactions with the emotions of vulnerable students.

Our reflections remind us that teaching and learning involve emotional labor. As defined by Hochschild (1983), emotional labor is the work done to display or feel emotions that are called for by a job. So, for example, we worked to feel compassion when dealing with difficult students. It is interesting that some emotional labor techniques in Hochschild's (1982) original study of flight attendants bear a remarkable resemblance to spiritual techniques found in Buddhism. Hochschild writes that a flight attendant trainer said, "It can help to think of rude passengers . . . as having had some terrible tragedy in their past" (p. 14). This technique is strikingly similar to Judith's description of the Tibetan Buddhist technique for developing compassion toward aggravating persons by viewing them as your mother.

In sum, our efforts to integrate our spirituality with our teaching developed into a means of dealing with their emotions—and ours. One means was replacing one emotion with another, such as compassion. In addition, however, our spiritual values helped us transmute potentially negative emotions and emotional situations into positive ones for both our students and us. So we described using mindfulness to consciously turn indignation into compassion and appreciation, and how selflessness turned the 9/11 shock into a powerful learning experience.

Ultimately, integrating our spiritual values provided a powerful means of dealing with the emotional labor of teaching. Without spiritual values, our actions were guided by a professional desire to be the best possible management education teachers. Our metrics for success were job related and focused on content transfer and student response. The work of integrating our spiritual values changed our perspective from a strictly professional lens to one that included a spiritual lens. As that lens began to frame and guide our actions, our teaching became connected to our deepest values, the ones we cared most about. We felt less vulnerable to fear and student emotions because our actions were motivated by our fundamental values. The emphasis on acting in accordance with deep, other-directed values lessened fears of failure. Our teaching became less a job or career and more of a calling—more rewarding because our teaching was connected to heartfelt spiritual values.

CONCLUSION

This article has been a reflection on how our experience of teaching has changed. We would like to believe that our teaching is more effective as a result of our spiritual practice but lack the research data to support this proposition. Each of us has been attempting for a long time to integrate our Buddhist values with our work as teachers. Because of the personal and sensitive nature of that process, we overlooked the opportunity to systematically research the changes in our students, our teaching, and us. In retrospect, it seems evident that our practice shifted us toward student-centered teaching, that we became more sensitive to our students as we evolved. For example, practicing compassion moved Judith to change her teaching in ways that emphasized the experience of her students and away from self-centered teaching concerns. Other positive student outcomes are probable, especially

given the significant overlap between Buddhist behaviors and attitudes and those that characterize effective teaching. Ambady and Rosenthal (1993), for example, found that students were likely to rate instructors as effective when they viewed their teacher as supportive, optimistic, enthusiastic, warm, likeable, attentive, and accepting. Our experience suggests that being mindful involves being accepting, attentive, and warm. Similarly, being compassionate includes being supportive and warm. Absent specific research, however, the proposition that compassionate, mindful, and selfless teaching increases a teacher's effectiveness remains speculative. Lacking systematic research, we lack the data to enumerate a list of changes in student behavior or learning outcomes, or to differentiate them from changes associated with a shift to student-centered teaching.

Future research. Our reflection suggests many opportunities for future research. Much remains to be explored concerning the key characteristics and variables affecting the process of integrating a teacher's spiritual values, as well as how different values interact with that process. Also to be investigated are the many questions concerning the effects of this implementation process on students, learning outcomes, course content, pedagogical approaches, and so on. Furthermore, the interactions among many of these variables need to be specified. For example, we decided to have our spiritual values explicitly influence the way we taught. To what extent do *tacit* spiritual or religious values influence the way other management professors teach? As management education becomes increasingly pluralistic and global, we need to investigate the religious assumptions that underlie our existing management education and explore more culturally inclusive alternatives.

Our article discussed the inner aspects of our spiritual and religious identity. These appear to have been invisible to students. One direction for future research could be how the external aspects—the visible expressions of management teachers' spirituality—affect students. Such expressions include dress ("Should I wear my yarmulke while lecturing?") and self-disclosure ("Do I tell the students I'm Muslim?"). A related question might be whether student sensitivity to a teacher's spiritual values varies according to such variables as age, gender, religious orientation, emotional intelligence, and so on. Students from threatened groups may be more sensitive. As these and other questions indicate, there is considerable scope for research in this

area, research that has potentially important implications for the classroom and the teaching of management education.

The integration of spiritual values and management education is not an isolated phenomenon. We have been inspired in our efforts by management colleagues who struggle to integrate their spiritual values with their teaching (and sometimes succeed). The practice of compassion, mindfulness, and selflessness is not limited to Buddhists. Many professors are compassionate teachers, whether motivated by spiritual values or not. It would be stimulating to read articles by our colleagues of various traditions such as Muslim, Mormon, Taoist, Christian, Sufi, agnostic, Hindu, Wiccan, and others. What are the ways they integrate their spiritual lives with their work as management teachers? What obstacles do they face, and how do they overcome them? Has their perspective on teaching changed? If these articles appear, they will break the mysterious silence in the management education literature about our spiritual lives in our workplace.

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