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## Buddhism's Pedagogical Contribution to Mindfulness

Erec Smith

In *The Academy and the Possibility of Belief: Essays on Intellectual and Spiritual Life*, editors Buley-Meissner, Thompson, and Tan argue that spirituality's ubiquity in society should not be completely ignored in educational contexts, especially when it comes to language and literature courses (2). Regarding the place of religion in academia, they write that "if conditions of bias against religiously informed viewpoints exist within religion departments and society at large, it is not surprising that language and literature programs offer little room for serious or respectful dialogue about contemporary spirituality (7). Thus, a driving question for the editors and others who would "save" spirituality from academia's trash bin asks, "How can English teachers—and other educators in humanities—extend their discussions of students' diverse identifications to include more careful consideration of students' spirituality?" (2) As a rhetoric and composition scholar, I extend this question into the realm of writing pedagogy: How can we acknowledge student spirituality while maintaining our duties to teach skill in writing and communication?<sup>1</sup>

In "From Introspection to Action: Connecting Spirituality and Civic Engagement," Gesa Kirsch looks for the place of spirituality—specifically, opportunities for "mindfulness, introspection, and reflection" (W2)—in writing pedagogy. She writes, "Contemplative practices, I contend, can enhance creativity, listening, and expression of meaning—key goals of most writing courses. They do so by inviting students and teachers to practice mindfulness, to become introspective, to listen to the voices of others—and our own—and to the sounds of silence" (W1). I tend to agree with Kirsch on this point. However, I believe her commendable efforts to accomplish these pedagogical goals can be streamlined by looking into spiritual practices that already synthesize cognitive and spiritual faculties in a heuristically sound manner.

Kirsch's primary method for inducing mindfulness, introspection, and reflection involves the use of the spiritual autobiography, a genre she admits is fraught with emotional triggers and unpredictability. Of course, most spiritual practice comes face-to-face with such things at some point. In fact, I do not reference Kirsch to critique her work, specifically, but to show how valiant and commendable efforts to instill mindfulness in students is wrought with mental and emotional obstacles. I believe these blocks result from students' profound fear of exploration and the relinquishing of mindlessly acquired beliefs and ideologies. To question one's beliefs and ideologies is to question oneself, an act that is often abandoned prior to completion. So, how do we avoid the pitfalls that frustrated Kirsch's efforts?

I believe we, as would-be spiritual pedagogues, really seek to instill a kind of mindfulness or propensity for critical thinking deemed beneficial to our students as writers

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1. Writing may be more beneficial to instilling mindfulness in students. This conclusion derives from Janet Emig's canonical "Writing as a Mode of Learning," in which she posits that writing's nature as enactive, iconic, and representation or symbolic enhances engaged learning and, therefore, mindfulness

and thinkers. In fact, I believe when we speak of spirituality in the learning environment, we often mean a kind of *fulfilling* Mindfulness. We would do well to consider Ellen Langer's definition of mindfulness—arguably the most well-known definition in academic circles—for a concept that, upon fruition, will ensure critical thinking. According to Langer, “Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context (“Mindful Learning” 220). Perhaps the benefits of mindfulness are best described by some scholars’ lamentation of its opposite, mindlessness:

Mindless, unreflective, and unintelligent living is not only morally corrupt, it is aesthetically dull, boring, and repetitive. As an educator, I am sadly aware of how the tendency (of politicians, media, the mavens of industry, and such) to judge others greatly affects education. Most forms of education are little more than subtle indoctrination into the established political, economic, and social order. (Garrison et al, 241)

What’s more, Nell Noddings, in *Education and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, explains the benefits of mindfulness in a way that echoes Garrison, et al. while inadvertently commenting on Kirsch’s obstacles: “Students should be encouraged to think about their spiritual life and examine the encounters that produce spiritual highs. They should not be compelled to share these experiences, but voluntary disclosure should be allowed. . . . We should remind students that one can find spiritual satisfaction in everyday life” (130). Both scholars insist that mindfulness can remedy these disempowering aspects of society and education. Indeed, I believe that a practical and didactic spirituality promotes a self-reflection that both enhances self-understanding and communicative effectiveness. Langer, Garrison, Kirsch, and others would call this mode of spirituality “mindfulness.”

But how do we implement this mindfulness while avoiding Kirsch’s aforementioned pitfalls? Based on Langer’s definition, one can see the connection between mindfulness and the rhetorical concept of *Kairos*—keen attention to one’s mutable rhetorical situation, or, as Eric Charles White writes in *Kaironomia*, a regarding of the present “as unprecedented, as a moment of decision, a moment of crisis, and . . . impossible, therefore, to intervene successfully in the course of events merely on the basis of past experience” (14). Such a concept of mindfulness—one appropriately synthesized with *Kairos*—can surely enhance critical thinking for, as Langer and Piper insist, based on their mindfulness experiments, mindfulness “is characterized by active distinction making and differentiation. One who demonstrates mindfulness engages in the process of creating new categories of making finer and finer distinctions” (Langer and Piper 280). To solidify the connection of mindfulness and *Kairos*, Langer’s mindfulness can be rendered as the following components that Robert Sternberg enumerates:

- a) Openness to novelty
- b) Alertness to distinction
- c) Sensitivity to different contexts
- d) Implicit, if not explicit, awareness of multiple perspectives
- e) Orientation in the present (Sternberg 12)

So, *kairotic* savvy—the “adaption to an always mutating situation” or the ability to resign oneself to “unending improvisation and experiment”—is tantamount to mindful-

ness (White 13, 35). But so what? Yes, the connection between mindfulness and *Kairos* may give clue to rhetoric's usefulness in acquiring mindfulness, but such knowledge does not necessarily make that acquisition easier.

As suggested by Garrison, et al., perhaps the most salient aspect of this definition of mindfulness is our understanding of *mindlessness* and how it comes about. Langer writes, "When we are mindless, our behavior is rule and routine governed; when we are mindful, rules and routines may guide our behavior rather than predetermine it" (220). The continued presence of rules and routines while seeking innovative, critical thought is nothing new. Such thoughts were labeled "pragmatism" by the likes of William James and John Dewey. However, we need to take a step back and help students gain mindfulness by avoiding mindlessness. Thus, my purpose, here, is to help students acquire the ability to embrace the present as fully as possible for, as Langer conclusively states, "there is power in uncertainty, yet most of us mistakenly see certainty" (220).

How do we get our students to acquire comfort in uncertainty and glean what Allan Watts called "the wisdom of insecurity": the ability to see the benefit and power of uncertainty and anti-essentialism? Critical thinking and mindfulness necessitate breaking out of a reliance on the "well-known" or the familiar. This is a necessary first step to critical thinking and innovative thought. How do we help students accomplish this initial but imperative step?

Apparently, Kirsch was onto something when she sought such answers in spirituality. Mindfulness or the propensity to think critically is often a primary subject of Buddhist philosophy, where the concept of *Kairos* is alive and well and where mindfulness carries both practical and spiritual connotations. *Kairos* is the bridge that connects Buddhism to key educational objectives such as critical thinking and rhetoric. This connection enhances mindfulness and, therefore, self-knowledge, critical thinking, and innovative thought.

By exploring the connection between Buddhist practice and *Kairos*, pedagogues can help students embrace mindfulness and introspection. The acquisition of mindfulness may also enhance a writer's ability to understand and construct appropriate subject positions, assess rhetorical situations, strengthen one's savvy with rhetorical appeals, participate in sound research, and write in a more lively and engaged manner. Such a pedagogy—one that may enhance a student's ability to embrace and utilize mindfulness while alleviating the insecurities that may arise in the process—derives from the Buddhist concept of the ten factors, or, as rendered in the *Lotus Sutra*, "The True Aspect of All Phenomena." I wish to present this concept as a strong synthesis of pedagogy, communication/interaction, and spirituality that can enhance our students' pursuits as both scholars and citizens of the world.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Various Buddhist scholars have written about mindfulness, but I see the Nichiren school and the *Lotus Sutra* as a more concentrated source. For example, if I compare the Nichiren take on mindfulness to that of Thich Nhat Hanh in *Interbeing*, we compare a short passage unpacked into a profound description of mindfulness and practical spirituality to a large treatise—Hanh's "The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings—that need to be memorized and particularized. If we seek a more palatable and embraceable method of mindfulness, that found in Nichiren school and the *Lotus Sutra* may be more ideal.

Again, what we are really after is a method for instilling mindfulness in our students. Mindfulness can enhance learning and rhetorical skill, and the ten factors of Buddhism can enhance mindfulness while providing the fulfillment of a spiritual practice.

### Buddhism and the Ten Factors

Before diving into the concept of the ten factors, some brief context may be in order. The ten factors are derived from the second chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. This text, a fixture in Mahayana Buddhism—a branch of Buddhism that gives more power and agency to practitioners by focusing on their own inherent Buddha nature and potential as enlightened beings—is one of the most popular sutras in the Buddhist canon. Initially expounded by the Chinese Buddhist philosopher Chih-i, founder of the T'ien-T'ai school of Buddhism, it survives most prominently as the primary text of the Nichiren school of Buddhism, a medieval Japanese offshoot of the T'ien-T'ai school. Both schools recognize the importance of rhetoric in life and human interaction. In fact, The *Lotus Sutra* introduces the ten factors as “The True Aspect of all Phenomena” in a chapter titled “Expedient Means,” which, in the context of the sutra, is a term synonymous with “rhetoric.”<sup>3</sup> This chapter is followed by a chapter titled “Simile and Parable,” which, itself, is followed by chapters that present parables and analogies as the Buddha's necessary media for guiding his followers to enlightenment.

One would not exaggerate to call the *Lotus Sutra* a kind of treatise on rhetoric, specifically *Kairos* and its concomitant mindfulness. Within this text, the Buddha actually states that his previous texts were merely provisional (expedient means, rhetoric) and used to lead people to the wisdom of the *Lotus Sutra*, which involves the ten factors. The ten factors, then, are a powerful tool for enhancing mindfulness, i.e., understanding the world in which we must communicate as well as the nature of that communication itself. Thus, the concept may be an effective first step for anyone who would write, listen, and live mindfully.

The *Lotus Sutra* introduces the ten factors thusly: “The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end” (57). Exegetes tend to split the factors into three or four groups when explaining them. I will first discuss the first three factors—appearance, nature, and reality—as one foundational unit on which the other factors rest. Next, I will discuss power and influence as a dyad of agency and interpellation. Next, I will discuss internal cause to manifest effect as the factors of cause and effect and symbiotic interdependence, and, last, I will discuss the general simultaneity of all the factors. After going over the significance of the factors, I will discuss ways to apply them as rhetorical heuristics for enhancing communication and mindfulness.

#### *Appearance, Nature, Entity*

The first three factors exemplify what Chih-i called the three-fold way of life. This three-fold way is considered the foundation of life that actualizes the other factors.

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3. Editors' note: the author makes this argument in “Writing under the Bodhi Tree,” *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 9.2.

Appearance is just that: the presence of a potentially active body. Daisaku Ikeda, in *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death. . . And Everything in Between: A Buddhist View of Life*, defines “appearance” as “attributes discernible from the outside, such as color, form, shape, and behavior” (127). Regarding human beings, appearance denotes “the manifested, superficial side of our existence, such as the way we look, the body and its various functions” (127).

Nature is described as the “disposition or potential of a thing or being that is invisible from the outside” (127). According to Chih-i, nature is, in essence, empty. That is, there is no substance or abiding essence to it (Chih-i 180). Emptiness is a common term in Buddhism and is often mistaken as a kind of nihilism. In reality, emptiness is potential. Akin to Nietzsche’s description of Dionysus as the formless fodder to be shaped into a more Apollonian form (*The Birth of Tragedy*), nature is considered a kind of force that can be molded into various modes of “mind and consciousness” (127).

Entity is the combination of appearance and nature. Regarding humans, we are entities in that we are beings that appear in the world with vast conscious potential. No one *is* anything (we will discuss the relevance of “to-be” verbs to the ten factors, shortly). One is always, “essentially,” a becoming. Chih-i calls entity “The Middle Way,” in that it presents humanity, for example, as both abiding and non-abiding—a duality of “somethingness” and “nothingness” rendered as “nondual” (175-176). Chih-i says that we abide as a certain kind of person for a particular situation or context but always have the potential to move into another kind of person—another ego state or *ethos*, if you will—in another context (180). This movement is akin to a single person shifting from one subject position to another when traversing discourse communities or rhetorical situations. And again, these three factors—appearance, nature, and entity—provide the foundation of “The True Aspect of All Phenomena.”

### *Power and Influence*

The next two factors, power and influence, are a subcategory of appearance, nature, and entity. Power is considered the latent agency we each have. Ikeda writes that power is “life’s inherent capacity to act, its potential strength or energy to achieve something” (Ikeda 127). This power is activated by Influence, the contextual forces that bring forth certain capacities over others. The pairing of the two is akin to an agent being interpellated by powerful hegemonic devices. For example, in certain contexts, I have the power to effect change based on my *ethos* as a professional, but other aspects of potential power—knowledge of sports, for instance—are not activated. Thus, power and influence may describe the dynamics of the rhetorical appeal of *ethos*—one’s credibility at any given moment. *Ethos* can change based on the aspects of ourselves being interpellated by the contingent powers-that-be.

The relevance of Power and Influence to mindfulness, then, becomes apparent when considering the required cognizance of one’s surroundings. Awareness of one’s subject position as temporary and contingent on the present moment does, indeed, focus on *Kairos* and rest less on established self-conceptions (*ethos*) that become the fodder for mindlessness. Understanding the contextual forces (Influence) that activate one’s extemporaneous agency (Power) is a powerful exercise in mindfulness.

*Internal Cause, Relation, Latent Effect, Manifest Effect*

A more detailed rendering of the power/influence dynamic is found in the next four factors. To be fair, these factors are separated for a reason; they denote the cause and effect inherent in interpellation, and, along with power and influence, promote a keen self-awareness. Unlike power and influence, these factors may promote a more intricate and personal self-awareness.

Internal cause is considered a latent aspect in one's consciousness, waiting to be activated by a relation—an outer action that brings forth an internal cause. Initially, this internal cause presents itself as a latent effect. That is, its influence has not been felt in the world yet. When it has, it becomes a manifested effect. Theoretically, each of us has spent our lives collecting internal causes—impressions, memories, habits—that come forth when called forth or activated by certain environmental happenings. In Ego-state psychology, the term for this activation is *cathexis*, a mental and emotional calling forth of one or more internal causes when situations that initiated and perpetuated those internal causes come forth (Watkins and Watkins 13-16). I, for example, would like to think that I am a grown, autonomous man at this moment. However, upon visiting my family on holidays, internal causes indicative of being a son, a little brother, a big brother, and such are activated, causing a latent effect that eventually manifests itself as an action or actions indicative of one or more of those roles. (Of course, resistance is possible, but the desire for resistance is, itself, brought up by the internal causes and relations. Certain aspects of a situation may not pique a desire to resist.)

The interaction of these factors—internal cause to manifest effect—can be so closely married to mindfulness as to seem synonymous. But such mindfulness is contingent upon feeling a latent effect where we attempt a cognizance keen enough to trace backwards to its impetus and forward to its potential manifestation. Then we essentially engage with the past to influence the present in ways more in line with our desires and, theoretically, our overall wellbeing. We can see this mindfulness as a rhetor's intent.

By remembering the foundational three factors—appearance, nature, and entity—one can see, based on the ten factors, that we are not at all autonomous beings, but the results of various interactions with our environment. We are always becoming. This constant becoming is the impetus for the concept of emptiness. No abiding being (or self) exists, only a being in constant flux based on contingent stimuli.<sup>4</sup>

*Consistency from Beginning to End*

The final factor, consistency from beginning to end, is less a factor and more an observation about how the other factors consistently interact with each other. The factors are split into ten for didactic reasons. That is, presenting this one phenomenon as ten factors is, itself, an expedient means—a rhetorical move—to enhance instruction. In reality, all these factors interact simultaneously at any given moment and are not parsed out into separate factors or groupings. "The True Aspect of all Phenomena" is really what the Buddha calls "one vehicle," one mode of understanding the self. Thus,

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4. In Buddhist parlance, particularly Mahayana Buddhism, this is called "dependent origination": the inherent and necessarily symbiotic relationship between entity and environment.

to be mindful, one must conceptualize one's reality into separate components—aspects of a phenomenon—to better understand oneself and one's place in a particular moment.

In order to more clearly understand the ten factors' relevance to rhetoric, especially when it comes to understanding subject position and discourse, one must understand the partnership of the ten factors with what, in Buddhist parlance, are known as “worlds.” Such worlds are akin to Burke's “terministic screens”: each is a worldview shaped and dominated by a particular ideology or mindset. Theoretically, at any given moment, the ten factors can deliver us into particular mind states or “worlds,” which are defined as follows:

- Hell (self-absorbed misery)
- Hunger (intense desire, hedonism)
- Animality (hunger for power)
- Anger (associated with competitiveness and jealousy)
- Humanity (rational calm)
- Heaven (fulfillment)
- Learning (joy of expanding knowledge)
- Realization (initial enlightenment, absorbed creativity)
- Bodhisattva (selflessness)
- Buddhahood (creative and wholly positive potential)

These possible mind states/worlds are not so finite, however. According to Buddhist philosophy, at any given moment, each mind state contains the other nine (Ikeda 123–126). These ten worlds squared into one hundred are then multiplied by three realms: the Realm of the Five Components (form, conception, volition, and consciousness), the Realm of Living Beings, and the Realm of Environment. The ten factors times ten mind states/worlds times three realms are rendered as “Three Thousand Realms in a Single Moment of Life,” or, in its more concise Japanese rendering, *ichinen sanzen* (Ikeda 106). For our purposes, however, we can settle on the ten factors and the ten mind states/worlds, for they yield the most salient lesson about situational context, interpretive communities, subject position, writing style, and rhetoric.

For example, each world can be considered a kind of subject position shaped by the workings of the ten factors. These factors can work together to land us in a mind state of Hunger or Animality. Moving from one mind state to the next is likely—or even inevitable—but the ten factors can give us a way to remain mindful of these transitions, to consider the causes that created their respective effects. We can ask ourselves, “Who am I, right now? What relations landed me here? What powers are being brought forth by certain influences? What is my subject position? How might it change if I explore the internal causes that helped bring me here? Should it change at all?”

We can understand Gorgias' treatise on Non-Being as analogous to the conclusions gleaned from the ten factors and the ten worlds into which they lead. However, the ten factors give us an epistemological hold or a heuristic for mindfulness that can assist writing and writing pedagogy. The middle way, denoted by the factor of entity, embodies Gorgias' ideas of not-being, which does not posit not-being and being as an either/or construction, but a both/and construction. We are both the “I” writing or communicating in a given situation and the emptiness that represents a contingent or provisional



agency. So to continue with this line of reason, *Kairos* is not a concept we embrace to our advantage as extemporaneous communicators. That is, *Kairos* is not something outside of ourselves, nor are we something inside of *Kairos*. According to the ten factors, we *are Kairos*. That is, we *are* each embodiments of contingency and always-becoming opportunity. This ontological understanding of *Kairos* can ensure a mindful state over a mindless one, and the ten factors can serve as an effective tool for maintaining such mindfulness as often as possible.

### Mindfulness, Rhetoric, and Composition

If we conceptualize *Kairos* as something we embody and not something we use or embrace, we must develop a different approach, a more mindful approach, to communication and communicative pedagogy, particularly writing pedagogy, especially when it comes to the understanding of subject position and research. To a degree, the middle way has already emerged in the concept of post-process pedagogy, especially that expounded by Lee Anne M. Kastman Breuch. Her dismissal of writing skill as a mode of mastery, for mastery implies a set body of knowledge, and her embrace of writing as situational, public, and interpretive, supports the concepts of emptiness and the constant becoming denoted by the ten factors. However, the ten factors give us a methodological heuristic Breuch did not seem to believe could exist in a traditional classroom setting (118-120). I believe contemplation on the ten factors can give students and writers, in general, a process of mindfulness that should accompany composition and communication.

The first step, of course, is for a rhetor to let herself be open to change. One would do well to embrace the potential to change or to consider oneself a kind of personified contingency. Mindfulness work is needed here.

#### *Subject Position*

Subject position is induced by the relationship of one's power and influence in a given context. When writing from a particular standpoint, one may discern personal ethos by evaluating how he or she has been interpellated by a particular environment. If one does not like the potential interpellations presented to her, one can then seek a more informed way to reach an audience by asking questions such as:

- How did I get here?
- What influences have created this situation?
- What power (ethos) do I possess to deal with it?
- Who else in my audience may have similar power in this situation?
- What internal causes and relations have brought about my power to deal with this situation?
- How might my power come to fruition (i.e., manifest effect) here?<sup>5</sup>

Power, which can be construed as both ethos and agency, must always be evaluated in relation to the context in which it potentially manifests. Students can use these factors to gauge a rhetorical context and think *kairotically* when communicating (White 20).

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5. Editors' note: compare these questions for students to ask with Khost's on 'felt sense,' this volume.

Of course, one cannot remain cognitive of the nuances of positionality at every moment. Upon writing, one must employ what Roland Barthes describes in *Mythologies*, when he speaks of a character dubbed “the mythologist”: one who embodies a role as an expedient means, a rhetorical strategy, for temporal purposes (156-159). Thus, students can learn to represent themselves as embodiments of *Kairos*—no small feat.

### *Interdependence of writer and research*

The ten factors and their relationship to the ten “worlds” may also benefit a student’s approach to research. Students who are in the initial stages of research—exploring a general topic—or students who may have trouble processing information that does not fit their preconceived notions, as Kirsch found, may benefit from applying the factors of internal cause, relation, latent effect, and manifest effect to the research process. If texts discovered through research are considered kinds of relations, what internal causes do they spark? Why those causes as opposed to others? Such mindfulness can both illicit interest on the part of the student writer and act as a mode of invention to create an approach or delivery of a student’s thesis.

Embracing the cause and effect factors (internal cause to manifest effect) may ease a student’s transition from old to new ideas and break that student out of a comfortable but mentally inert mindlessness. William James, when discussing paradigm shifts or transitions in consciousness, stresses that the new must intertwine, to some extent, with a bit of the old in order to be accepted; the novel without a bit of transition is too foreign for most to embrace (382-383). Likewise, if the new (relation) can be connected to the old (internal cause) a student may transition to new ideas more smoothly. Thus, the ability to move out of one’s comfort zone toward innovative thought can be enhanced.

So the concept of the ten factors presents itself as a mode of invention (discovering what to say and/or how to say it). Like Krista Ratcliffe’s definition of rhetorical listening—“a trope for interpretive invention” (19)—the ten factors help us listen to both ourselves and the surrounding environment. According to Ratcliffe, rhetorical listening “is a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” that enhances “conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication, especially but not solely cross-culturally” (25). Surely, one can see a correlation with the ten factors. However, the ten factors are not utterly contingent upon rhetorical listening. Our faculties for such mindfulness must always be on and can constantly be reset in other ways.

The ability to constantly reset (or to reset as often as humanly possible) can be enhanced through writing, or, at least, through a construction of language that evades essentialism as much as possible. Langer and Piper provide an interesting example. In their attempts to identify a “method of teaching conditionally” that “may be interpreted as a way of fostering creativity and teaching flexible thought” (285), Langer and Piper facilitated an experiment in which separate groups of college students were given familiar objects that were described unconditionally (“This is an X”) or conditionally (“This could be an X”). They say, “A need was then generated for which the object in question was not explicitly suited but could fulfill. In an independent assessment, the familiar and unfamiliar objects were determined equally able to fulfill the needs” (281). Langer and Piper discovered that the group for whom the object was described conditionally were

able to think more mindfully. In other words, they were able to make new distinctions based on present need (280). To put it another way, the students were able to think kairotically. The unconditional mode of rendering something in language ("This *is* an X") locked the other group of students into an essentialist mode that discouraged innovative thought. The conditional rendering promoted a world in which objects were not essentialized and, therefore, open to a constant change in meaning and use.

In a similar mode, Lawrence Weinstein, in *Grammar for the Soul*, sums up the risks involved when a student assumes the notion of a fixed, unchanging self. Such a notion is both inaccurate and overly constraining:

It is too simple, and it lacks respect for its subject's capacity for change over time . . . [T]he verb . . . form of "to be," seems to sum that person up. I, in my time, have been told I was a disappointment, a hero, a lightweight, a genius, a progressive, a frightened middle-of-the roader, and scores of other things. Every time a "to be" variant was wielded to define me, it gave me the distinct, paralyzing sense that my whole self had been encompassed. (92)

Mahayana Buddhism denies the existence of essential, autonomous selves and promotes the belief in an ontology of constant change. A Buddhist's attempt at discourse—at a rhetoric that reflects this ideology—promotes mindfulness. The lack of essentials and the disappearance of *the* self in exchange for *a* self, conditional and kairotic, becomes apparent.

### Conclusion

Buddhist thought, specifically Mahayana Buddhism and the *Lotus Sutra*, seems to work well with contemporary theories of rhetoric and composition. Indeed, exegetes of this sutra may say that Buddhist thought, like epistemic rhetoric, permeates all that is (Ikeda et al, 176). Thus, I see the ten factors as pedagogical and heuristic supplements, both to the teaching of mindfulness *and* rhetoric. What's more, contemplating the ten factors and those who have written thoroughly about them point students toward the connection of rhetoric and spirituality that pedagogues like Kirsch are trying to attain.

I want to make clear that this essay is not meant to either proselytize or downplay the efficacy of other religions in the classroom. However, if one wants to combine the spiritual and the rhetorical, he or she would do well to look into the Nichiren school, the *Lotus Sutra*, and its exegetes, such as Chih-i, and Ikeda.

What's more, I am also suggesting that we move away from the concept of mastery and fixed knowledge and embrace the ten factors as a way of understanding *Kairos*, subject position, and research. Buddhist thought has been neglected for too long as a way to provide us with an alternative understanding of rhetoric and pedagogy. Perhaps the *Lotus Sutra* can help us remedy that.



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