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COGNITIVELY BASED COMPASSION TRAINING: BUDDHIST-INFLECTED MEDITATION IN A SECULAR MODE

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COGNITIVELY BASED COMPASSION TRAINING: BUDDHIST-INFLECTED MEDITATION IN A SECULAR MODE

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An abstract of
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Abstract

COGNITIVELY BASED COMPASSION TRAINING:
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By Marianne Parrish Florian

Cognitively-Based Compassion Training is a Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation (BISM) program based on teachings from the *lam rim* and *lojong* traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. This program is one constituent in a burgeoning field of meditation programs pursuing diverse objectives through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Some meditation programs, including CBCT, teach values such as compassion and kindness, which are often associated with religious rather than secular virtues. BISM programs' goals and teaching styles affect the ways that they constitute their own secular status. At the same time, public discourse about the proven health benefits of developing kindness and compassion and the possibility that compassion and kindness are universal human values—a position championed by the Dalai Lama—lends further support to the secular status of any BISMs that teach ethical values and virtues.

CBCT has clear textual antecedents from Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, a comparison between the CBCT protocol and one source text from the *Lam rim chen mo* by Tsongkhapa illuminates some of the secularizing choices made in developing this new meditation program. A parallel between the two descriptions is evident in a sequence of cognitive-affective states that CBCT heartily maintains from its antecedent. Some of CBCT's researchers have interpreted this cognitive-affective cascade—including impartiality, gratitude, affection, love/compassion, and resolve—as evidence that contemplative traditions uncover and employ the natural, psychological propensities of certain mental and emotional states to amplify subsequent ones. Other dynamics discernable between Tsongkhapa's text and the CBCT protocol include subtraction, addition, and rearranging, and these contribute in different ways to CBCT's secularization process. Analyzing the component decisions that add up to secularization cannot fail to reveal that the polar opposite categories of secularity and religion are inadequate to explain a cultural product such as a meditation training program. Yet, close attention to secular cultural status and to secularization processes will be useful to future studies of Buddhist-inflected secular meditation, because these question address how such programs represent themselves and how practitioners engage with them.

COGNITIVELY BASED COMPASSION TRAINING: BUDDHIST-INFLECTED MEDITATION IN A SECULAR MODE

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PROLOGUE

My acquaintance with the pithy genre of Tibetan Buddhist literature, known as *mental purification* or *mind training* (Tib. *lojong*) began on November 6, 2012. I attended a public talk by Geshe Kelsang Damdul, Assistant Director of the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics (IBD) in Dharamsala, India and member of the Tibetan government-in-exile, at Drepung Loseling Monastery, Inc., a Tibetan Buddhist dharma center in northeast Atlanta, GA.[1] The topic, "Transforming 'Workplace Woes' into Opportunities for Spiritual Growth," seemed quite accessible, even tame. However, the wonderful resilience Geshe Kelsang achieved was not what I had expected. His story made a strong case for practicing the spiritual discipline that had helped him. He experienced relief through internalizing the teachings of an eleventh-century *lojong* (mind training) text, the "Eight Verses of Mind Training," by Langri Tangpa (1054-1093 CE).

These verses demonstrate an altruistic attitude toward others that is loving, compassionate, and radically unselfish. In the context of the Mahāyāna Buddhist path, such an attitude allows a practitioner to convert hardships into important learning experiences. This ability, coupled with the resolve to attain perfect awakening, results in *Bodhicitta*, the mind or spirit that seeks Buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings. Of the "Eight Verses of Mind Training," the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses pertain specifically to personal pain that is caused by others:

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[1] Kelsang Damdul, "Transforming 'Workplace Woes' into Opportunities for Spiritual

IV
When I encounter beings of unpleasant character
And those oppressed by intense negative karma and suffering,
As though finding a treasure of precious jewels,
I will train myself to cherish them, for they are so rarely found.

V
When others out of jealousy
Treat me wrongly with abuse and slander,
I will train to take the defeat upon myself
And offer the victory to others.

VI
Even if one whom I have helped,
Or in whom I have placed great hope,
Gravely mistreats me in hurtful ways,
I will train myself to view him as my sublime teacher.[2]

Lojong is a wide genre, including many different texts and commentaries. *Lojong* teachings inspire and help shape other genres of Tibetan Buddhist literature as well, such as works on the graded stages of the path to enlightenment (Tib. *lam rim*), which incorporate mind training teachings within them.[3] *Lojong* texts are structured as "pith instructions," short distillations of immense volumes of Buddhist teachings. They are deceptively simple. Sometimes written in verse, pith instructions can function as mnemonic devices for recalling more expansive teachings. They require accompanying oral or written commentary to be properly understood. Traditionally, a teacher who has

[2] Langri Thangpa, "Eight Verses on Mind Training," in *Mind Training: The Great Collection*, ed. and trans. Thupten Jinpa, vol. I, 1st ed., The Library of Tibetan Classics (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, Inc., 2006), 275–76.

[3] Michael J. Sweet, "Mental Purification (Blo Sbyong): A Native Tibetan Genre of Religious Literature.," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. Lhundup Sopa, Jose Ignacio Cabezon, and Roger Reid Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 249 n. 12.

engaged in extensive study, mastering the complete teachings to which the brief lines refer, gives the commentaries.[4]

For example, the injunction in the lines above to radically reinterpret any mistreatment one receives as "precious" and "sublime" may seem impossible, incautious or even unjust at first glance. However, the point of this reorientation toward others, including those who do wrong, is to bring about an inner transformation; to leave off lamenting and wishing to change external circumstances that are impossible to control. As Geshe Thupten Jinpa puts it in the introduction to his 2006 translation of the fifteenth-century compilation, *Mind Training: The Great Collection*:

> When we as spiritual practitioners learn to relate to all events in this radically transformed manner, we will then be able to fulfill the injunction, "Cultivate the joyful mind alone." We will possess something akin to the philosopher's stone, for we will be able to transform every circumstance or event, whether positive or negative, into a condition favorable to our enhancement of altruism. No wonder the early mind training masters compare this teaching to an indestructible diamond, to the all-powerful sun, and to the mythological wish-granting tree.[5]

Lojong texts and teachings are regarded by many Tibetan Buddhist teachers as particularly appropriate for the religiously plural audiences they encounter in Europe and the Americas.[6] Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) is one Buddhist-inflected secular meditation program that has been developed in recent years. It is inspired by teachings from the *lojong* tradition.

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[4] Traleg Kyabgon, *The Practice of Lojong: Cultivating Compassion Through Training the Mind* (Boston: Shambhala: Distributed in the United States by Random House, 2007), 2–3.

[5] Thupten Jinpa, "Introduction," in *Mind Training: The Great Collection*, ed. Thupten Jinpa, vol. I, 1st ed., The Library of Tibetan Classics (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, Inc., 2006), 5.

[6] Thupten Jinpa, ed., "Introduction," in *Essential Mind Training: Tibetan Wisdom for Daily Life* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011), 1; Thupten Jinpa, "Introduction," 5–6.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis project is to investigate the secular status of Cognitively Based Compassion Training (CBCT), a Buddhist-inflected secular meditation program. CBCT teaches a particular style of analytical meditation based on the *lojong* (mind training) and *lam rim* (stages of the path to enlightenment) traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. This program is one of a growing number of contemplative practice pedagogies being taught in secular contexts to religiously plural audiences. Its biological effects are also being investigated in medical, psychological, and neuroscientific studies.

This thesis addresses secularization as a matter of context, as a response to a religious tradition, and as a cultural environment in which meditation is an option for a widening swath of people. A meditation program's secular status allows it to be implemented in both publicly funded institutions and private ones that would not welcome a religious emphasis. In order to operate in secular institutions and modalities, those who teach secular forms of Buddhist meditation must emphasize that their approach is not religious while remaining open and informed about the Buddhist roots of the practices. If secularity is more than a feature, if it is conceived as adaptive and complex, then to speak or write about secularity without attention to its shifting meaning will not produce helpful insights. However, the fact that secularization is multifaceted does not mean it is indeterminate. My hope is that this project will empower scholars and scientists involved in all kinds of meditation research to communicate their own conceptions of the boundary between the secular and the religious across disciplines. This

work may also provide insights for developers, teachers, and practitioners of contemplative practices, because it places the burgeoning field of secular meditation in historical context, offers CBCT as a case study of a secularization process, and investigates the ways that secular status is construed and supported in this emerging context.

CBCT Program Overview

Development

In 2005, Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, a senior lecturer in Emory's Department of Religion, developed CBCT as a secular form of mental training. In addition to a doctorate from Emory University, Dr. Negi holds a Geshe Lharam degree from Drepung Loseling Monastery in India, and was a Buddhist monk for over twenty-five years. CBCT was originally designed for a pilot study of the potential positive psychological effects of compassion meditation in Emory undergraduates.[7] Mind-Body medical researcher and psychiatrist, Charles L. Raison, was the principal scientific investigator for this study, Dr. Negi was the principal contemplative investigator, and Terri Sivilli assisted in editing the original CBCT protocol. At the time, there was rising concern about rates of depression in college students at Emory.[8] Many experimental studies, outreach efforts, and other employments for CBCT have arisen since its inception. The program is now one of the major projects of the Emory-Tibet Partnership (ETP), which aims to foster interaction

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[7] Lobsang Tenzin Negi and Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 417, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[8] "Cognitively Based Compassion Training," *Emory-Tibet Partnership*, September 2, 2013, http://tibet.emory.edu/cbct/index.html.

and exchange between the Tibetan Buddhist contemplative and western scientific traditions of inquiry through a variety of initiatives.[9]

Infrastructure, Reach, and Research

Dr. Negi directs the continual development of the CBCT program, which is a major project of the Emory-Tibet Partnership, with the help of a dedicated team, some of whom are based at Emory University, while others have moved on to other institutions. The program's administrative partners include the Emory-Tibet Partnership's Kari Leibowitz, Carol Beck and Timothy Harrison. Charles L. Raison, now at the University of Arizona remains a principal scientific investigator for many CBCT studies. Brooke Dodson-Lavelle of Mind and Life Institute and Life University's Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, also serve as adjunct researchers.[10] The CBCT program's Teacher Training Practicum, co-developed by Dr. Negi and Dodson-Lavelle, is in its second year. Teacher trainees have a full teaching manual to draw from and engage in co-teaching with experienced instructors once they have finished their practicum.

CBCT is taught in diverse institutional contexts. Many of these contexts are part of Emory University, where CBCT classes and meditation sessions are offered in educational, psychotherapeutic, medical, religious, and experimental research settings.[11] Tim Harrison generously shared information on ongoing and future CBCT projects and courses. For instance, there are CBCT introductory courses offered to Emory students

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Some information regarding CBCT activities at Emory University were gathered by Corinne Grady, David Dearman, and me during a collaborative project, "Buddhism Zero: Buddhist Influence at the College Coca Cola Built," which was presented on December 10, 2013, as part of the fall 2013 course, "Becoming the Buddha in America," taught by Tara Doyle.

through Emory Counseling and Psychological Services. These courses have been held at the Counseling Center, as well as inside the university's Michael C. Carlos Museum. A weekly CBCT meditation led by Emory professor of religion and pedagogy, Barbara (Bobbi) Patterson, is also held in the Spiritual Formation Room of Emory's Cannon Chapel.

Emory's multi-use facility at 1599 Clifton Road houses several key CBCT courses. Dr. Negi teaches an eight- to ten-week CBCT Foundations course there each spring, and there are plans to add a fall-term foundations course as local interest in studying CBCT grows. This course (or an equivalent "two-weekend intensive") is a prerequisite for applying to the Teacher Training Practicum. The Compassion and Attention Longitudinal Meditation (CALM) study is an NIH-funded five-year study of the effects of CBCT and Mindful Attention Training (MAT) on stress and other psychological and neurobiological outcomes. The CBCT and MAT meditation classes for the CALM study as well as the CBCT Teacher Training Practicum are housed in the 1599 building. The scientific research for the CALM study is conducted within the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University School of Medicine. Under the auspices of Dean Christian P. Larsen, the School of Medicine is also hosting a free eight-week CBCT course for its faculty and staff. In addition, there are plans to incorporate CBCT training into the curriculum for Emory medical students.

The settings for CBCT classes and practice sessions in the state of Georgia are diverse. Drepung Loseling, Inc. hosts a weekly CBCT meditation on Thursday evenings, the "two-weekend intensive" version of the CBCT Foundations Course each spring, and the annual CBCT Teacher Training Practicum Retreat every August. In addition, there is

a CBCT course for residents in the Berkeley Lake Community, a suburban city northeast of Atlanta. Psychological research on CBCT as an intervention for African American suicide attempters is ongoing at Grady Memorial Hospital in downtown Atlanta. Also, CBCT has recently begun to be taught to women inmates of Aarendale State Prison in Alto, Georgia.

CBCT is beginning to transcend its local origins. This is in part due to the fact that Raison, one of CBCT's original investigators at Emory, now works at the University of Arizona-Tucson. In January and February of 2014, a scientific study of CBCT's effects on breast cancer survivors and their spouses was conducted there. Also, a CBCT study with parents of pre-school aged children is ongoing at the University of Wisconsin.

CBCT Content

The standard CBCT course includes eight sessions, though the course can be condensed to six or expanded to ten sessions. Each class meeting includes some teaching or didactic presentation, lengthy class discussion, and fifteen to thirty minutes of guided meditation.[12] Each week's topic adds a component to the cumulative guided meditation, so that by the end of the course, students have learned an integrative practice that they can continue to do on their own. The CBCT program asserts that this type of compassion training deepens and expands the natural capacity for altruism that all humans, and many mammals demonstrate. However, obstacles including poor attention, personal bias, and

[12] Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," 428.

the empathic distress often deter people when they encounter others' suffering.[13] These limitations are what CBCT seeks to address and overcome.

Practically, the topics within the CBCT protocol seek to remove or reduce a series of obstacles to compassion—including distraction, misapprehension, hatred, anger, and self-centeredness—by thinking through and refuting the basis of each obstructing thought.[14] In a similarly cognitive style, CBCT modules foster the necessary prerequisites of compassion— such as impartiality, gratitude, and especially endearment toward others—by using reflection and reasoning to deconstruct notions of personal independence and by introducing analogies and examples from the strongest and most universal human relationships.

The following description of the weekly content of a CBCT introductory course is based on as-yet-unpublished pedagogical materials, articles on CBCT written by CBCT team members, and the newly developed the "CBCT Teaching Manual." This description is intentionally condensed. Longer and more detailed explanations of CBCT are given in the teaching manual, and CBCT instructors adapt their own lesson plans and introduce materials tailored to their own ways of understanding the content in class. In order to succinctly highlight the analytical approach of the protocol's content, I have placed an emphasis on meditation instructions, steps of cognitive reasoning and visualizations.

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[13] Ibid., 425, 428–29.

[14] Brendan Ozawa-de Silva et al., "Compassion and Ethics: Scientific and Practical Approaches to the Cultivation of Compassion as a Foundation for Ethical Subjectivity and Well-Being," ed. Edward Gabriele F., *Journal of Healthcare, Science and the Humanities* II, no. 1 (2012): 152–4.

Week One: Developing Attention and Stability of Mind[15]

The first goal of CBCT is stabilizing attention. Stable attention is needed right from the beginning of CBCT in order to gain awareness of thoughts and feelings as they arise. In this way, impulses and habitual thoughts can be noticed and perhaps retrained. Therefore, sustaining attention on the breath is the first lesson in CBCT. To begin, the teacher instructs participants to establish a straight posture and take three deep breaths. The participants spend a ten- to fifteen-minute meditation period maintaining their attention and focus upon their own breathing by noticing physical sensations at either the nostrils or the abdomen as air flows in and out of the body. They practice remaining focused on the breath and returning their attention to the breath when it wanders with the help of periodic vocal guidance by the CBCT instructor who leads the meditation. In CBCT, this maintenance function is called "mindfulness."[16] When the attention wanders, participants can notice that the mind has become distracted, let go of the distracting thought, and refocus on the breath. With practice, they should notice distractions more quickly and

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[15] *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)* (unpublished, 2013), 13–16.

[16] Buddhists have not always agreed as to what mindfulness entails. In his helpful article, "Toward an Understanding of Non-dual Mindfulness," Dunne proposes that non-dual Buddhist models of mindfulness (Skt. *smṛti*) are more comparable to the way mindfulness is understood, prescribed, and taught in the field of psychology.(John Dunne, "Toward an Understanding of Non-Dual Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 71–88). Some Mahāyāna traditions employ a "non-dual" style of meditation, in which a practitioner is never instructed to focus on any object nor even to conceive of him or herself as a separate subject. The meditative quality they elicit does not reify the *duality* or distinction of self and other. Dunne calls this type of meditative awareness "radically unstructured by subject and object," and posits that such traditions teach an understanding of mindfulness that is similar to that of MBSR.(Ibid., 73–6,). Noting that these traditions, including Mahāmudrā, Japanese Zen and Korean Seon ("Korean Zen"), can be considered later alternatives to the "classical mainstream," Dunne and Harrington point out that Zen and Seon Buddhist teachers and writers are known to have influenced the modern models of mindfulness employed in the fields of health and psychology in the United States. (Harrington and Dunne, "Mindfulness Meditation," 18–19). MBSR, like CBCT, actually includes meditation on an object, the breath, as its first instruction. This particular object may not negate the arguments above, since observing one's own breathing may not entail subject-object duality in the way that focus on an object outside one's body would.

return to the breath more frequently, eventually noticing even the potential or initiation of a distraction and renewing their focus, rather than having to completely reestablish it.

The instructional technique varies somewhat, though generally an instructor is seated facing the group of students in an upright posture. The instructor starts and ends the meditation period and periodically reminds or guides the group to maintain a focus on the breath. Teachers often make use of evocative metaphors for attentional stability and distraction. For different weekly topics, the meditation pedagogy and verbal guidance changes, though this method of cultivating stable attention is used as a preliminary step at the beginning of every meditation session.

Week Two: Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience[17]

After developing stable mental attention to breathing, the next step in CBCT is called "Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience" or "Resting the Mind in its Natural State."[18] This means letting go of focusing on the breath so that any mental activity that naturally arises can be observed. Students are instructed to take their own mind as an object of focus and to observe the mind's workings without judging, rejecting, reacting to, or participating in all the sensations, thoughts and feelings that arise. This practice is thought to foster "an abiding sense of tranquil joy, of spaciousness, and of an absence of conceptual activity."[19] Along with the first lesson, this step of CBCT is in-line with the mindfulness cultivation practices of other Buddhist-inflected secular meditation programs. When guiding students in this practice, CBCT teachers begin with a period of

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[17] *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)*, 17–20.

[18] Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," 432.

[19] *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)*, 17.

breath-focused meditation and then instruct students to shift their focus from the breath to the mind, with its sensations, thoughts, and emotions. During the meditation period, the teacher reminds students not to participate in whatever thoughts occur but to calmly observe the mind.

Week Three: Self-Compassion[20]

The step of developing self-compassion asks participants to critically investigate the deep aspirations and desires underpinning their thoughts and choices in light of the assertion that all beings (1) desire happiness and (2) seek to avoid dissatisfaction and suffering. This is the first truly analytical lesson of the CBCT protocol. The two distinct mindfulness meditation practices taught in the two previous lessons, which conform well to the phenomenal meditation categories that Lutz and colleagues have termed "focused attention" and "open monitoring," lack any normative ethical evaluation.[21] The first two steps are practiced at the beginning of all CBCT meditation practice, but as we will see, the amount of information, analysis, and evaluation in CBCT accumulates from weeks three through eight.

In developing Self-Compassion, participants review their own experiences, goals, and motivations to determine whether their actions are motivated by these two components of the desire for flourishing—seeking happiness and avoiding suffering. The universal experience of repeatedly chasing after the causes of happiness and avoiding the causes of suffering implies that a lasting solution to suffering has not been found. This account of human experience is derived from Buddhist teachings on the impermanence of

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[20] Ibid., 21–26.

[21] Antoine Lutz, "Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation.," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 12, no. 4 (2008).

all phenomena, on the role that the mind plays in interpreting things as good or bad, and on the advantages of abandoning the thoughts that lead to mental and emotional afflictions.

Building on the skills of stable attention and observing the mind's basic qualities and habits, students are encouraged to recognize their own deep-seated desire to be peaceful, happy, and free from suffering. From this personal recognition, they are then invited to examine whether this is also true for other people. Is it the case that, even when we are beset by mental afflictions and behave badly, at root, we are either trying to get something we perceive to be good or avoid what we perceive to be bad in order to achieve happiness?

The CBCT pedagogy then intertwines Buddhist ideas of perpetual change or impermanence (Skt. *anitya*) with this view of our universal aspiration. In light of this, participants examine whether the choices they believe will cause or prevent happiness are in fact only temporary. They also learn to investigate whether the 'good' they seek and the 'bad' they eschew are not contingent upon circumstances and subjective interpretation. This CBCT lesson teaches unequivocally that life, the environment, status, money, and other circumstances are all subject to perpetual change. Furthermore, the destructive emotions with which we react to changing circumstances are the true sources of unhappiness, rather than the circumstances themselves. If students see that their inner responses are the true causes of happiness and suffering, it is possible for them to personally commit to fostering positive emotions and to reducing or transforming their afflictive reactions. In the CBCT manual, this kind of resolve is inspired by the Tibetan Buddhist concept of renunciation, or *nge jung*. Since the *nge jung* concept in Tibetan

Buddhism is connected with pursuing nirvana, there is a significant contrast with CBCT, which deals solely with a resolve to transform personal problems. Observing one's own suffering and its causes catalyzes this resolve.

The instructions for the analyzing the impermanence of all external sources of happiness and suffering are given both during the explanatory period of the session and then again during meditation. First the students are guided through the previous CBCT steps. Then, using cues to recall the different desires and aversions discussed during the class, the teacher asks the participants to consider them one by one and then to use their growing certainty to develop a resolve to change their habitual patterns of constantly seeking and avoiding, which are the true, inner causes of suffering. Simultaneously, the recognition that all people are in precisely the same situation can reframe and intensify the desire to cultivate compassion for others.

Week Four: Cultivating Equanimity[22]

The fourth lesson is titled "Cultivating Equanimity;" however, this can be misleading due to the term's connotation of neutral emotion or apathy in English. This step in CBCT is actually all about *caring*. To undo some of the confusion caused by equanimity's other definitions in English, many CBCT teachers use "impartiality" as a synonym for equanimity as it is used in CBCT. Instructors teach students to cultivate a feeling of impartial concern for others equally, based on the conviction fostered in the previous lesson that all people share a common desire to be happy and to avoid pain and sorrow. In the same way that material benefits and status were seen in week three as neither intrinsically good nor bad, the three rigid categories of friend, enemy, and stranger that

[22] *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)*, 27–32.

we ascribe to all other people are observed to be temporary and arbitrary. No person is inherently an enemy or a friend.

The meditation pedagogy for this step involves visualization. After leading the participants through the previous three steps of CBCT meditation, the instructor tells them to visualize three specific people: a friend seated to their right, a person they have difficulty with seated to their left, and a person they have seen but do not know seated facing them. The class is advised not to choose a negative example that is too extreme for the first few attempts.

Beginning with the neutral person, the teacher guides the class in imagining a very fortunate event happening to each of the people they've selected in-turn. It is important that the practitioners attend to the differences between their own emotional reactions to this thought. For example, when imagining a dear friend has just gotten a promotion at work, one usually feels joyful, but when someone we dislike succeeds in a similar way, it often causes negative feelings. The next step is to imagine a very unfortunate event happening to each of these people and observing different emotional responses to this. The class is then reminded about prior concepts, such as that the categories of friend, enemy, and stranger are impermanent and that the desire for happiness is common to all people. This is all in the context of seated meditation in which the voice of the CBCT teacher is guiding the direction and the topics of meditation. The teacher guides the participants to remember their own desires for happiness and freedom from suffering, to then recognize that everyone shares this desire, beginning with friends and family, expanding the insight to include acquaintances and strangers, then trouble-makers and enemies, and finally all people equally. The process of

slowly recalling that each individual values her or his happiness and does not want to suffer teaches the participants to view all other people as having an equal right to happiness and compassion. This common aspiration for happiness and relief from suffering is also seen as a basis for recognizing the oneness of humanity.

Week Five: Developing Appreciation and Gratitude for Others[23]

In CBCT, the process of generating appreciation and gratitude for the contributions that other beings make to our lives is seen as a precursor to developing affection toward all others equally. Our default modes of thinking mistakenly assume a level of personal independence that is not born out by the kind of cognitive analysis taught in week five of CBCT. Through examining everyday objects, participants learn a way of seeing every resource, idea, and exchange as completely dependent on contributions from other beings, without which one could not even live. Recognizing obvious contributions such as the kindness of parents and friends leads to a more general consciousness of the intended and unintended benefits we derive from others. By training to see interdependence, CBCT practitioners gradually begin to incorporate awareness of it into every moment and to develop unbiased appreciation. While expanding the awareness of interdependence and the sensation of gratitude, we can also expand the scope of those for whom we feel gratitude.

For guided meditation instruction, the teacher leads the class step-by-step through previous CBCT skills. In order to meditate on gratitude and interdependence, students choose one item of clothing or some other useful object and then consider all the beings who contributed to producing and delivering that item. Next, the teacher guides the class

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[23] Ibid., 33–38.

to meditate on the ever-widening groups of beings that contribute to the well-being of the first group, enabling them to contribute to the useful object. Practitioners begin to see that directly and indirectly, consciously or inadvertently, these other beings contributed something of benefit to each CBCT participant.

Week Six: Developing Affection and Empathy[24]

The CBCT Manual states that, "Affection is the catalyst that activates empathy to spark the development of compassion."[25] This CBCT lesson on affection and empathy is partially a continuation of developing gratitude in the previous lesson. According to the CBCT manual, the word "affection" is used to translate the Tibetan word *yid-'ong,* which describes the feeling that others are "cherished and pleasing to the mind."[26] Relating to others from this sense of their value and dearness is the foundation for cultivating compassion in CBCT. However, week six has another important element. Practitioners develop affection and empathy both by contemplating the kindness of others and by reflecting on the benefits of altruism and the problems caused by having a self-centered attitude.[27] In this way, participants become logically convinced that others are valuable and simultaneously spurred by the positive consequences of this view. The feeling of affection for others will naturally foster a desire for their happiness once one sees that personal happiness is interconnected with the happiness of all other beings. The prior step

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[24] Ibid., 39–43.

[25] Ibid., 2.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 39.

of developing concern for all beings equally expands the category of those for whom we feel affection to encompass more and more people.

The CBCT teacher guides participants in developing affection by asking them to imagine an example of a very positive, affectionate interaction, such as that between a new mother and her baby. Then, the class is instructed to continue to reflect on the benefits they derive from others as well as the detriment that self-centered attitudes pose to their own well-being. Developing affection and empathy for more and more beings may seem risky or unhealthy to some participants who do not want to become distraught by the unhappiness of others. If so they are encouraged to spend more time on developing insight into the temporary nature of thoughts and emotions from Week Two: Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience and developing Self-Compassion and the resolve to change negative habits from Week Three: Self-Compassion.

Week Seven: Realizing Wishing and Aspiring Love and Compassion[28]

CBCT defines "compassion" as the desire for others to be free from suffering. "Love," the positive side of this coin, is simply the desire for others to be happy. In this step of developing a loving and compassionate wish and aspiration, the empathy and affection developed in the previous week intensify and become feelings of compassion and love. The initial growth of love and compassion are described as "wishing love" and "wishing compassion." Reinforcing this initial wish through repeated meditation makes it more urgent and palpable. This next, more urgent stage is called "aspiring love" and "aspiring compassion."

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[28] Ibid., 44–49.

For the guided meditation on this step, after leading the class through the succession of previous steps, the teacher guides the participants to reflect on how wonderful it would be if others did not experience suffering, how wonderful it would be if others experienced happiness, and the ways that one's own happiness would increase with the knowledge that others were happy. Then, participants imagine different individuals including friends, troublemakers, and strangers experiencing happiness and freedom from suffering.

Week Eight: Realizing Engaged Love and Compassion[29]

Once a strong aspiration for others to be happy and free from suffering is repeatedly generated, it will develop into a desire to actively seek to benefit others. A greater sense of the importance and urgency of engaging in compassionate, loving action prompts the CBCT practitioner to make a personal commitment to become involved. The desire to ease others' suffering and work towards their happiness arises and grows. Even this final step is still only preparatory. During the CBCT session, no actual compassionate or loving action is yet taking place. Rather, participants are mentally preparing to help others by training themselves in compassion. By doing so, they will be more ready to help others from a healthy mindset without feeling burned-out or becoming self-centered in the very act of seeking to benefit others.

The guided meditation for Week Eight proceeds through all of the previous seven steps. The work that participants have done on their own to produce a strong aspiration for the benefit of other beings is reinforced and the class is encouraged to fortify their aspiration into a determined commitment to seek the welfare of others. The teacher also

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[29] Ibid., 50–54.

reminds them and verbally guides them in contemplation of the downside of self-centeredness and the benefits of compassion and love for others. Once the participants sustain an urgent compulsion to help others to be happy and to free them from suffering, the instructor guides them in a simplified form of *tonglen* meditation. In Tibetan Buddhism, one practices *tonglen* by visualizing taking all the sufferings and problems of another person into one's own body by breathing them in through the nostrils, and then also breathing out purifying multi-colored healing lights and vapors that the other person inhales. In the simplified visualization here, students picture the love and compassion they have cultivated as a small, bright pearl at their heart that shines, illuminating their entire body and then also fills the person they have visualized before them, eliminating all of their suffering and filling them with happiness.

Research Methods and Sources

The research for this project is the fruit of multiple semesters of reading and pondering what the status of meditation could be in the field of secular, western experimental science. My initial question and my initial confusion stemmed from a difficulty in locating an object of study. Can the modern health-oriented mobilization of meditation be approached through articles in science journals, new theories of consciousness, or perhaps writings on mystical experience? Happily, I have found that studying a single contemplative pedagogy has provided a much-needed toehold and enabled me to formulate and work through clearer research questions. This progress would not have been possible had I not become personally involved with the Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) program.

In the spring of 2013 I took a CBCT Foundations Course taught by Dr. Negi who is a Senior Lecturer in Emory's Department of Religion, Director of Emory-Tibet Partnership, and Spiritual Director of Drepung Loseling Monastery, Inc., (site of the talk described in the prologue). After this course, I applied to and enrolled in the CBCT Teacher Training: Level One Retreat and Practicum. These trainings, especially the eight-day retreat, have had a transformative influence on me, and I continue to apply ideas and practices taught in CBCT to situations in my own life. As I was becoming part of CBCT's small community of practitioners, teachers, and enthusiasts, I continued the research for this thesis on the status of secularized meditation.

As a young program with new and concise pedagogical materials, CBCT exists much more vibrantly as a practice and as a community than it does in written form. This is entirely appropriate, since it is ultimately a series of attentive and analytical steps for people to perform in their own minds, rather than a course of reading. However, this thesis is a reading project, and though I am convinced that ethnography would be a potent way to approach many of the questions I address here, my current skill set and timeframe have limited me to the study of discourse. My sources have included the writings of modern theorists in the study of religion, pedagogical materials from the CBCT program, English translations of Tibetan literature, public presentations of all sorts, books and articles on the measurable effects of meditation, articles on contemplative pedagogy, conversations with Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, and many informative webpages.

The Structure of the Project

The first chapter looks at CBCT in the context of the burgeoning field of Buddhist-inflected secular meditation programs currently being developed and studied by

experimental scientists in the fields of biomedical and mental health research. Constituents in the current array of Buddhist-inflected secular meditation programs can be categorized by their different ideological content, different meditation instructions, and different goals. An analytical style is a key feature of CBCT, which includes value-laden information and ideas. In contrast with mindfulness-based meditation programs that eschew judgment and discriminating attitudes, CBCT's approach encourages practitioners to evaluate the benefits and detriments of certain thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This normative and evaluative stance makes the task of establishing CBCT's secular status more intricate.

Chapter two proposes that understanding key contrasts between some of CBCT's textual sources and its own eight-week protocol may elucidate ways that secularization has taken place as a series of responses to the requirements of western secularism. This final chapter takes differences between CBCT and one of its textual sources, a section of Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo*, or *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* as an opportunity to engage with some modern theories of the secular. While this is far from a comprehensive survey of all that has been said to frame secularity and secularism, this assortment of perspectives on the secular sheds much-needed light on how practices rooted in religious textual traditions can function in and respond to secular modes.

An Aside about Religious Experience and Meditation

In the history of the western academic study of religion lies an obstacle to the scientific investigation of the effects and features of meditation. This obstacle is the problematic category of meditative experience, which figures prominently in some of the

most influential western discourse on Buddhist meditation and healing in the twentieth century. Before any discussion of the history and particularities of contemplative science proceed, it is necessary to examine and contradict two underlying assumptions about meditative experience. An ontological unity called "religious experience" has relied on the following assumptions: (1) that this experience is a universal, ineffable, and unmediated perception of reality and (2) that the experiencing subject is impermeable to all outside influence.[30] A brief look at the history and implications of these ideas in the study of Buddhist meditation and healing will affirm the need to set this category aside in order to move forward in surveying the burgeoning field of meditation research and the various secular meditation pedagogies that have emerged both as independent variables in experimental research, and as healing interventions in psychology, mind-body medicine, education, and social work.

Romanticism is a cultural movement that arose in the late eighteenth century—largely in reaction to the themes of the European Enlightenment—that profoundly shaped European art, literature, and intellectual discourse. In *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (2008) David L. McMahan has noted that in the twentieth century, ideas that arose in the Romantic period in Europe were mapped onto Buddhism, giving rise to a particular conception of Buddhist meditation as an access to a universal, essential, and unmediated religious experience.[31] Identifying Buddhist contemplative practices with the search for direct experience is, according to many scholars of Buddhism, both a historic and a

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[30] I first addressed this topic in a paper entitled "Meditative Experience and the Permeable Subject," for the course, "Tracing Buddhism from India to Tibet" taught by Sara McClintock in the spring of 2013.

[31] David L McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

problematic move, for while the idea has been definitive in shaping modern Buddhist movements, it is much less helpful in understanding how meditation practices are or were understood by Buddhists unacquainted with Romantic thought.[32]

McMahan traces this cross-cultural fusion of ideas to the influence of the writings of German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), upon a select group of Buddhist apologists. Schleiermacher's contrast between "experience" as the essence of religion versus mere "external forms" in his 1799 work, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* is an important building block in the construction of meditation as a way to attain pure experience.[33] However, McMahan carefully shifts the story connecting Romanticism, experience, and Buddhist meditative experience to the ideas of art and artists and the writings of influential Buddhist apologists such as D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts. Purity and authenticity are tightly associated with original human interiority in European Romantic art. McMahan draws a correlation between the idea of the artistic epiphany, an experience that arises spontaneously from "the deep interior of a human being," and the valorization of meditative introspection in religion.[34]

In her book, *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine* (2008), historian of science, Anne Harrington, classifies meditative approaches to health as "Eastward Journeys," one of six shared narratives of healing she identifies in mind-body medicine.[35]

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[32] Perhaps the most strident case for understanding the ascription of the category of "experience" to Buddhism as a product both of western influence upon Asian Buddhists and bias in the western academy is found in Robert H. Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (1995): 228–83.

[33] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 78.

[34] Ibid., 82.

[35] Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within : A History of Mind-Body Medicine*, 1st ed. (New York: WWNorton, 2008), 205–8.

"Eastward Journeys" narratives are characterized by anti-modernism, concerns about the detriments of stress in the modern world, dichotomous constructions of East and West, and the hope that, "…we can have the best of the East without abandoning all that we value from our own traditions."[36] Many of these elements resonate strongly with the themes of Romanticism. Buddhist meditation first began to play a role in western modes of healing in the field of psychoanalytic psychology in the early- and mid-twentieth century. In their co-written article, "Mindfulness Meditation: Frames and Choices," Harrington and John Dunne, a scholar of Buddhist philosophy, credit D.T. Suzuki and mid-twentieth-century humanistic psychotherapists with first unifying the aims of Zen Buddhism with those of psychoanalytic healing under the single goal of "pure experience."[37]

While Suzuki's characterization of Zen meditation as a journey to unmediated experience has repeatedly been traced to his affinity for Western philosophy, including Romanticism and Pragmatism,[38] it is nevertheless a depiction of Zen—and Buddhism more generally—that has had widespread influence and undeniable staying power. Yet, this quasi-spiritual emphasis on unmediated experience has lost strength in the current generation of psychological and medical employments of meditation. The focus is shifting to alleviating disease, stress, and pain on the one hand, and constructing more accurate and useful models of cognition and consciousness on the other.

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[36] Ibid., 206–7.

[37] Harrington and Dunne, "Mindfulness Meditation," 5–7.

[38] For more information on Suzuki's western philosophical influences, see: Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," 247–250; McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 121–134.

This shift would not be possible if scholars and scientists did not recognize that the experience of meditation and any effects it may have are, in fact, mediated by first-person description, by gestures and symbols, by descriptions of a contemplative "path," by meditation instructions, and also by changes in bodily sensations or behavior that a practitioner may observe. In other words, though scholars are wary of the category of experience as understood in Romantic theology, philosophy, literature and art, there is a wealth of other ways that experience in religion and specifically in Buddhist meditation can serve as fruitful objects of study.

Though this account of experience differs from that of D. T. Suzuki and some nineteenth- and twentieth-century Buddhist apologists, we should not assume that it is absent from traditions of Buddhism. Janet Gyatso, a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, has written about the ways that various traditions of Tibetan Buddhism seek experiences that are mediated.[39] She interprets one of the traditions, Mahāmudrā, as valorizing an immediate, direct experience of reality, but she calls this immediacy "'postconceptual'" because it is only attained after long and arduous training: "This is an immediacy or naturalness that is won, like the acquisition of bodily skills, through a process of habituation. It is the fruit of a course of training."[40] As such, this category of religious experience is facilitated by a context of external religious forms and influences rather than being immune to or obscured by them.

The role of context in Buddhist and secularized contemplative practices is a focus of increasing attention in academia. In the past two years the Mind and Life Institute has

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[39] Janet Gyatso, "Healing Burns with Fire: The Facilitations of Experience in Tibetan Buddhism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 1 (March 1999): 113–47.

[40] Ibid., 138–39.

awarded three Contemplative Studies Fellowships to scholars investigating the role of context in meditation.[41] This support that a model of introspective subjectivity that is totally walled-off from its environment no longer presents a taboo-like hindrance to the scholarly conversation about meditative experience. Instead, scholars are increasingly investigating the role of context—including discourse—in shaping what contemplative practitioners experience. Experience can now be approached as a broad category of first- and third-personal information produced within a particular context, be it religious, secular, private, clinical, or empirical. In her book, *Religious Experience Reconsidered* (2009), Ann Taves classifies the diverse information that may serve as objects of the study of experience as (1) traditional texts, (2) real-time neurological data, and (3) real-time and recounted first-personal data.[42] Understanding the history and the drawbacks of the former, limited category of meditative experience is a helpful step in beginning a survey of meditation programs and pedagogies in the field of contemplative science. This is not to say that the effects and experiences identified in the context of secular meditation are not also limited, however, they are rapidly diversifying.

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[41] These three projects are 1) "Meditation in Context," David L. McMahan 2) "Subjective transformation and actual individual practice among at-risk populations engaged in cognitively-based compassion training," Chikako Ozawa-de Silva 3) "Contemplation in context," David Germano and Shauna Shapiro "Contemplative Studies Fellowship Recipients," *Mind & Life Institute*, 2013, http://www.mindandlife.org/grants/contemplative-studies-fellowship/fellowship-recipients/.

[42] Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 81.

CHAPTER 1

CBCT AND ITS CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCE CONTEXT: FEATURES THAT IMPACT SECULAR STATUS

While unique in many ways, Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) is one of a complex of contemplative programs based on Buddhist practices that share a set of overlapping family resemblances.[43] I propose "Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation" (BISM) as a potential umbrella term for CBCT and similar practices used in the secular modalities of social work, education, experimental science, and health.[44] BISM is a distinct and useful category, because the practices falling within its scope are secular versions of *Buddhist* meditation. Being rooted in Buddhist traditions, they share traits that scholars, students, and practitioners of Buddhism will recognize. BISMs either seek to cultivate virtues and skills—such as mindfulness, loving-kindness, and compassion—that are consistent with some of the goals of the Buddhist path, or they follow a practice regimen drawn from Buddhist sutras and teachings, or both. These commonalities notwithstanding, the collection of Buddhist-inflected practices taught in secular fields is diverse. There may prove to be as much to contrast as to compare among them.

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[43] It is useful to appeal to twentieth-century analytic philosophy giant, Ludwig Wittgenstein's, "family resemblances" approach to linguistic definition at this point, because while the operative traits of this group of phenomena are often not shared by all its members, no single example lacks enough salient features to merit exclusion. See Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, "Ludwig Wittgenstein," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2011, accessed December 11, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/wittgenstein/.

[44] I began to narrow down potential terms and study differences among contemplative intervention and experimental protocols that included secularized content from Buddhism in a paper entitled "Buddhist-Inflected Secular Contemplation: Variations, Lineages, and Contexts" for the fall 2013 course, "Becoming the Buddha in America," taught by Tara Doyle.

Those who develop and teach BISMs, many of whom are Buddhist practitioners, constitute the secular status of their programs in various ways. This indicates that they are interested in or at least open to meditation's potential physical, psychological, and societal benefits; in other words, what David L. McMahan calls "extra-Buddhist goals."[45] Furthermore, though these practices may appear in religious contexts at times, they are neither confined to nor necessarily meant for religious communities. BISMs transcend the institutional and social boundaries of Buddhism and are practiced by people of many religions as well as those who have no religious affiliation.

Obviously, the BISM label is too narrow to adequately describe the totality of contemplative practices studied in scientific experiments and employed other secular contexts. This category excludes contemplative practices that do not claim to be secular as well as secularized ones from religious traditions other than Buddhism. So it does not include examples such as the Hindu-inspired Transcendental Meditation (TM) as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, upon which Herbert Benson based his 1974 book, *The Relaxation Response*, and the Sikh-inspired Kirtan Kriya Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan, whose effects on memory and Alzheimer's symptoms Andrew Newberg has investigated.[46] The important work of neuroscientists studying changes in neural and circulatory brain activity and structural characteristics of the brains of adept Buddhist meditators is also not included in this discussion of BISMs, because the meditation practices involved are

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[45] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 57.

[46] For more information on these, see Herbert Benson and Miriam Z Klipper, *The Relaxation Response* (New York: Avon, 1975), Harrington, *The Cure within*, 209–213., and Andrew B Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009). The important work of neuroscientists studying changes in neural and circulatory brain activity and structural characteristics of the brains of Buddhist adept meditators is also not included in this discussion of BISMs, because the meditation practices involved are not considered "secularized."

not considered "secularized." Nevertheless, these are significant examples in the history of integrative medicine and the secular science of contemplative practices.

As noted above, much of the similarity between BISM programs stems from their common or comparable religious roots. This chapter, however, is intended to survey the field of BISMs by examining their differences and to demonstrate that these differences affect the ways that they are understood to be secular. I argue that much of the variance among BISMs relates to meditation pedagogy, how the meditation practices are explained and guided by the instructor and what practitioners are expected to do in meditation. Meditation pedagogy is a major determining factor for the ways BISMs constitute their secular status. Different instructions and content challenge the religious-secular barrier in different ways and necessitate different types of support.

Some BISMs, such as the "mindfulness-based" interventions, focus on refining attention and on cultivating non-judgmental, receptivity to unprescribed, endogenous mental activity that arises during meditation practice. The meditation pedagogy of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) typifies this strategy. MBSR participants are repeatedly advised not to engage in evaluation during meditation and to cultivate a non-judgmental yet observant mindset.[47] Since the format of MBSR meditation conveys so few normative ideas and avoids seeding any particular value judgments, its secular status is derived from the context in which it is taught, the goals of teachers and practitioners, and the words used to convey practice instructions.

Other BISMs are more prescriptive and may teach participants to work with specific content furnished in the program's meditation pedagogy. In the CBCT program

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[47] Donald McCown, Diane Reibel, and Marc S. Micozzi, *Teaching Mindfulness : A Practical Guide for Clinicians and Educators* (New York: Springer, 2011), 64, 186, 216.

in particular, most of the meditations have *analytical* instructions.[48] This means that the information and the guided meditations that CBCT instructors teach are evaluative. The participants receive instruction including normative personal, ethical and social values. This occurs both within the mode of seated meditation practice and in class discussions and activities. Participants are also encouraged to engage in evaluative, discerning introspection themselves, both during meditation practice and throughout the rest of their daily activities.

Unlike MBSR, which includes less value-laden pedagogy and de-emphasizes judgment or discernment, the secular status of a BISM with an analytical approach must be actively established. For CBCT, simply avoiding certain traditional terms and names would be an insufficient explanation of the process of secularization. The Buddhist roots of CBCT's ideas are apparent, and its prescriptive rhetoric includes much more than refining introspective skills. For CBCT, with its value-laden pedagogy, secular status requires recognizing a number of universal, secular human values that are not tradition-specific.[49] A continuing conversation about the possibility of universal ethical values, or what the Dalai Lama calls "secular ethics" provides support for CBCT's secular status.

The anticipated outcomes or benefits of meditation are another site of differentiation among BISMs. For the purposes of this discussion we can distinguish two kinds of anticipated effects: *direct objectives* and *secondary effects*. The direct objectives of a BISM practice are skills or states that are directly sought and explicitly cultivated

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[48] Brendan Ozawa-de Silva and Brooke Dodson-Lavelle, "An Education of Heart and Mind: Practical and Theoretical Issues in Teaching Cognitive-Based Compassion Training to Children," *Practical Matters* Spring 2011, no. 4 (2011): 1.

[49] Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skillful Means, and the Trouble with Maps.," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 282.

throughout a BISM pedagogy. These are often in-synch with one or more goals—such as mindfulness, loving-kindness, and compassion—of meditation in a Buddhist context. The secondary effects of a BISM could be thought of as incidental to the practice, though they often draw public attention and are the dependent variables most frequently measured in scientific studies. Psychological studies that test whether BISMs are effective for obtaining their stated direct objectives generally employ questionnaires to measure change according to various scales. Secondary effects may be measured objectively, for example blood pressure and stress hormone levels in the bloodstream, or measured subjectively through first-personal data.

The impetus to develop a BISM usually comes about when a scientific researcher or clinician in a health-related field sets out to employ a Buddhist contemplative practice in a secular institutional context. This is done either to investigate the practice's effects on the body or to employ it for specific healing purposes, in other words, to access secondary effects. BISMs are tailored in various ways for the new institutional context and especially for potential target audiences of student-practitioners. One way that BISMs become more conspicuous and interesting to potential investigators, clinicians, and students is through scientific verification of their effects. Assays and statistics measuring what happens to the body (including the brain) help constitute contemplative practices as "real" using scientific methods for which there is nearly universal consensus. Importantly, these measurements appeal exclusively to naturalistic explanations of the mechanisms behind the effects observed.

Sites of Differentiation

Direct Objectives and Secondary Effects

Many BISMs are designed to meet the research and clinical needs of scientific researchers and healthcare professionals in secular institutional fields. When a contemplative pedagogy is developed for this type of environment, it is often designed to be suitable for a specific target audience, which is usually religiously plural, comprised of people from different faith traditions as well as people who are not religious. The investigators' interest in secondary effects may also influence the design.

On rare occasions, a derivative BISM may be designed in order to seek one particular secondary effect. This was the case when Segal, Williams, and Teasdale developed Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) to reduce the likelihood of a relapse of symptoms in patients recovering from depression.[50] Differentiation may also occur when a new target audience requires a reworked pedagogy, as was the case with the adaptations to the CBCT program pedagogy, described by Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson Lavelle, for use with children and adolescents.[51] Constraints on the population of the target audience limit the number of variables in experimental research and are closely tied to the pursuit of positive secondary effects of meditation, especially if these effects are health-related.

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[50] For more information on MBCT, see Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse* (Guilford Press, 2002).

[51] Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle, "An Education of Heart and Mind: Practical and Theoretical Issues in Teaching Cognitive-Based Compassion Training to Children."

Meditation Pedagogy

As mentioned above, the meditation pedagogy of a BISM can distinguish it from similar programs. Meditation instructions can vary significantly in the content they recommend. In contemplative pedagogy, "pedagogy" includes not only ideas and values, but also attitudes. Often it is assumed that meditation always entails the mental attitudes described in mindfulness-based meditations, such as keeping one's attention focused on a single object or observing one's thoughts and feelings without reacting. However, it can be misleading to assume that meditative stances are restricted to just these.

The Sanskrit word *bhāvanā*, which is often translated as "meditation," refers to exercises for developing positive states, skills, or virtues. In his autobiographical book, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (2003), Georges Dreyfus argues for a broadened definition of *bhāvanā* that encompasses practices of "development," "cultivation," and "habituation," as well as the single-pointed focus—and, I would add, the monitoring of spontaneous mental activity—most commonly associated with the translated word "meditation" in English.[52]

If we understand meditation to be just this limited range of practices, it is likely due to the problematic history of identifying meditation with the quest for religious experience, which was discussed in the introduction. According to the "religious experience" model of meditative subjectivity, practitioners meditate to achieve a direct, pure experience of reality, and that experience is seen as the universal core around which the composite forms of religion, including rituals, doctrines, etc. have arisen. Construing meditation as an access to a universal experience flattens the landscape of secular

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[52] Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2003), 170.

meditation in an unhelpful way. The effects and experiences of meditation are actually primed by pedagogy and objectives. So, recognizing the heterogeneity of activities called meditation and the diverse experiences that may result will produce more accurate and helpful insights into the spectrum of BISMs.

A different, more contemporary reason for construing meditation as a single phenomenon is the need to compare the results of scientific studies of different contemplative practices. An article surveying studies of meditation and health by Kok and colleagues, discusses this necessity and the difficulty of comparing experimental results from on meditation research.[53] As scientists attempting to synthesize data, these authors recognize the evident diversity of the practices classified as "meditation" across a range of scientific literature.[54] However, because they are trying to compare results from different experiments using different meditation protocols, they must maintain a definition of meditation that is "loose and decontextualized."[55] This standpoint is influenced by earlier work by Lutz and colleagues who define meditation quite broadly as "a family of complex emotional and attentional regulatory strategies developed for various ends, including the cultivation of well-being and emotional balance."[56] They point out an analogy between the terms "meditation" and "sport," noting that these terms lack enough precision to be meaningful descriptions of experimental variables.[57] A

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[53] Bethany E. Kok, Christian E. Waugh, and Barbara L. Fredrickson, "Meditation and Health: The Search for Mechanisms of Action," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 7, no. 1 (2013): 27–39, doi:10.1111/spc3.12006.

[54] Ibid., 28.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Lutz, "Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation.," 1.

[57] Ibid.

similar analogy could be proposed for the investigation of the health effects of "speech." It is easy to see that engaging in the act of speech could affect experimental subjects in different ways depending on defining features such as content, intensity, language, intelligibility, skill level, volume, length, and a host of others.

Lutz et al. begin to distinguish meditative activity by phenomenal or experiential features. They delineate two categories, "Focused Attention" (FA) and "Open Monitoring" (OM), which are frequently taught within "secular clinical derivatives" of Buddhist contemplative techniques.[58] Meditation characterized by focused attention involves directing and sustaining attention on an object, monitoring potential for distraction, letting go of the distracting object of focus, and returning the attention to the desired object.[59] Meditation characterized by open-monitoring often begins with focused attention to develop attentional vigilance. This is followed by a shift to non-reactively observing automatic thoughts and emotional responses to sensations, perceptions, and stimuli that arise from within the mind.[60] It is easy to recognize elements of "attention" and "attitude" from MBSR's mindfulness approach in these two categories. Following this classificatory scheme, Kok et al. add the category of "Kindness and Compassion" to accommodate meditation practices in which practitioners focus on others and their cognitive and emotional responses to others.[61]

These classification schemes pivot on the phenomenal features that practitioners experience. This is a very useful perspective if one's goal is to correlate neurological and

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 2.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Kok, Waugh, and Fredrickson, "Meditation and Health," 29.

psychological changes with specific cognitive activities. This is no doubt the objective of the experimental neuroscientists and psychologists who subdivide meditation in this way. It is less helpful for identifying factors that affect secular status. To answer this type of question, it is better to focus on BISM programs rather than the cognitive steps practitioners perform in meditation.

If we attempt to distinguish BISMs by their direct objectives, two broad groups emerge: those that cultivate mindfulness and those that cultivate the positive states of either loving-kindness or compassion, two of the four "divine abidings" (Skt. *brahma-vihāra*) also called the four "immeasurables" (Skt. *apramāna*) in Buddhism. Loving-kindness and compassion are also two of the most prevalent candidates for universal values discussed in conjunction with secular ethics, because they are central to Buddhist practice but are also appreciated by people within other religious traditions and those who are non-religious.

Another way to categorize BISMs is by their meditation pedagogy. Unlike the phenomenal contemplative content—focused attention, open-monitoring, etc.—that psychologists and neuroscientists identify, BISM programs can be distinguished by whether the they prescribe analytical or non-analytical practices. Some BISMs focused on loving-kindness and compassion have an analytical approach, others cultivate these virtues affectively using evocative visualizations or repeated phrases. BISMs with an analytical approach guide ethical reasoning and analysis within modes of contemplative practice. In CBCT, for example, this mode of ethical reasoning addresses the reasoning that forms background attitudes and intuitions that inform ethical decision-making. Generally, ethical dilemmas are not the focus of CBCT pedagogy, but the positive state

of compassion is sought as an ideal inner context from which to tackle any ethical decision. The analytical steps that cultivate compassion in the CBCT protocol are detailed in the introduction.

Seeking to cultivate values, especially by means of normative modes of ethical reasoning or analysis distinguishes CBCT and similar practices and shapes they ways that their secular status is construed. The potential for these values to be considered universal, and therefore amenable to a secular audience, is of critical importance. Correlations between positive mental states and positive health outcomes imply a degree of universal value for loving-kindness and compassion insofar as such traits can be measured. In addition, the public discussion of secular ethics as explained by the Dalai Lama is a major source of support and inspiration for establishing them as universal values.

Histories and Descriptions

MBSR and its Derivatives

McMahan describes western psychology's early acquaintance with Buddhist practices as a "courtship" and "an attempt to theorize a relationship," however; in recent decades more and more therapists, physicians, and scientists are testing and using Buddhist-inflected meditation for well-being in secular settings.[62] In the fields of medicine and psychology, *mindfulness*[63] has become a focus of extensive research. Mindfulness-based practices are thought to be particularly helpful for pain management,

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[62] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 56.

[63] See note 16.

immune function, brain activity associated with positive emotions, and resistance to depression relapse.[64]

In 1979, John Kabat-Zinn, an MIT-educated molecular biologist and student of the Korean Seon Buddhist teacher, Master Seung Sahn, founded the University of Massachusetts Medical School's renowned Stress Reduction Program. His method for reducing stress evolved into the widely-used BISM pedagogy, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).[65] This training program in mindfulness meditation is the most prevalent and longest-standing Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation used in complementary or integrative medical settings. Shapiro and colleagues have proposed that mindfulness practice in MBSR requires the three elements of "intention," "attention," and "attitude" (IAA).[66] These three elements bring about positive change by triggering several direct mechanisms of action including "values clarification."[67] Values clarification in the MBSR context is conceived as a reformulation of personal values whose result is more authentic. This is achieved through mindfulness practice, but the parameters of this reformulation are never set in MBSR pedagogy. In fact, the idea is to undo "conditioned" values imposed by external influences and allow access to the practitioner's true values:

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[64] Sue Kraus and Sharon Sears, "Measuring the Immeasurables: Development and Initial Validation of the Self-Other Four Immeasurables (SOFI) Scale Based on Buddhist Teachings on Loving Kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity," *Social Indicators Research,* 92, no. 1 (2009): 169.

[65] "Jon Kabat-Zinn: Biographical Information," *UMass Med Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare, and Society*, accessed December 11, 2013, http://www.umassmed.edu/content.aspx?id=43102; Harrington, *The Cure within*, 220; Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Forward," in *Wanting Enlightenment Is a Big Mistake: Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn* (Shambhala Publications, 2006), ix; Kabat-Zinn, "Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skillful Means, and the Trouble with Maps.," 286–87.

[66] Shauna L Shapiro et al., "Mechanisms of Mindfulness," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62, no. 3 (March 2006): 373–86.

[67] Ibid., 378.

> Often values have been conditioned by family, culture, and society, so that we may not realize whose values actually drive our choices in life…. Frequently we are pushed and pulled by what we believe (based on cultural or familial conditioning) is most important, but fail to reflect upon whether it is truly important in the context of our own lives. However, when we are able to separate from (observe) our values and reflect upon them with greater objectivity, we have the opportunity to rediscover and choose values that may be truer for us.[68]

In their pedagogical manual, *Teaching Mindfulness* (2011), McCown, Reibel, and Micozzi boil down the definition of mindfulness used in MBSR to three key elements: (1) "intentionality"[69] is the quality of attending that is purposeful and consciously willful,[70] (2) "present-centeredness" entails remaining aware of sensations and mental activity that occur in the present even when they may relate to prior causes or future eventualities,[71] and 3) "absence of judgment," is a more neutral and kind attitude rather than a critical or harsh one.[72] Their formulation only differs from the IAA model of Shapiro and colleagues in that it is written from an instructional rather than a cognitive-psychological perspective.

Full participation in an MBSR program involves attending nine weekly sessions lasting 2½ hours each and one full-day class between the sixth and seventh sessions.[73] The program's formal meditation practices include body scan; seated meditation on the breath; mindful Hatha yoga; meditative focus on sensations, thoughts, emotions, and

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[68] Ibid., 381.

[69] Intentionality here refers to a purposeful attitude or a conscious intention to do something. This word should not be confused with Husserl's definition of intentionality in phenomenology, indicating a mental phenomenon directed upon an object.

[70] McCown, Reibel, and Micozzi, *Teaching Mindfulness*, 64.

[71] Ibid., 9, 64, 140.

[72] Ibid., 64, 186, 216.

[73] Ibid., 8.

open awareness; walking meditation; and eating meditation.[74] According to Harrington and Dunne, Zen and Theravada Buddhist practices and Hatha yoga are major influences of this training, which includes some elements from Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhism as well.[75]

MBSR programs similar to the one at the University of Massachusetts were established in many hospitals and clinics in the decades to follow. According to a recent *TIME* article, there are more than 1,000 certified MBSR instructors worldwide and hundreds are currently teaching MBSR courses in the United States.[76] In addition to the proliferation of MBSR programs, other initiatives that employ mindfulness techniques for different and more specific benefits have emerged. Some of these use MBSR to frame their own goals and strategies. These include: Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT), Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement (MBRE), and Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT).[77]

Among the more influential, evidence-based programs descended from MBSR is Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which integrates Kabat-Zinn's program with cognitive therapy in order to prevent depression relapse.[78] The target audience is limited to individuals who have some psychopathology that would make them a candidate for cognitive therapy, such as those who have experienced depression, mood

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Harrington and Dunne, "Mindfulness Meditation," 9.

[76] Kate Pickert, "The Art of Being Mindful," *TIME*, 2014, 43, 45.

[77] McCown, Reibel, and Micozzi, *Teaching Mindfulness*, 7.

[78] Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*.

disorders, or addiction.[79] Several other interventions and therapies have incorporated ideas and strategies of mindfulness in their development, though they have varying direct objectives and do not explicitly incorporate MBSR. These include Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and other styles of therapy from the humanistic and psychodynamic traditions of psychotherapy.[80] It is doubtful that these more distant relatives of MBSR use contemplative therapeutic modes or demonstrate an obvious enough "Buddhist inflection" to be considered BISMs. However, their connection to mindfulness rhetoric is evident. Derivative mindfulness-based interventions that incorporate MBSR elements are more obviously rooted in Buddhism and maintain certain recognizable ideas and practices from Buddhist traditions—including seated meditation practice, walking meditation, and cultivating emotional stability—within a secularized protocol. Though establishing MBSR's secular status was a major concern in its early development, Kabat-Zinn now avows the great extent to which his program is informed by Buddhist teachings and that he views mindfulness as "a universal dharma that is co-extensive, if not identical, with the teachings of the Buddha."[81] The numerous other programs based upon or inspired by MBSR are a clear demonstration of the role that secondary effects play in the proliferation of BISMs and in differentiating them from one another. As secondary effects for MBSR have been singled out and investigated, new meditation pedagogies and therapies have emerged in order to seek these benefits more directly.

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[79] McCown, Reibel, and Micozzi, *Teaching Mindfulness*, 9.

[80] Ibid., 7–11.

[81] Kabat-Zinn, "Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skillful Means, and the Trouble with Maps.," 290.

The Positive State of Loving-Kindness

Cultivating mindfulness is almost always a preliminary step of BISMs, including those that seek direct objectives other than mindfulness. Programs that focus on developing positive mental states usually begin by instructing practitioners to attend to their breathing and observe their thoughts. This indicates that while the word "meditation" signifies more than just one practice, the development of stable attention and open-monitoring are foundational in many different meditation instructions. Many Buddhist traditions incorporate practices whose aim is to develop one or more of the four "divine abidings" (Skt. *brahma-vihāra*) also called the "Four Immeasurables" (Skt. *apramāna*). These four attributes are (1) *loving-kindness* (Skt. *maitrī*), the wish for others to be happy, (2) *compassion* (Skt. *karunā*), the wish that others would not experience suffering, (3) *sympathetic joy* (Skt. *muditā*), feeling delight when good comes to others, and (4) *equanimity* (Skt. *upeksā*), a calm and unbiased sense of good-will toward others.[82] A more recent subset of BISMs also focuses on developing one or more traits from among the Four Immeasurables.

Experiments and therapies in the health sciences that use loving-kindness or compassion meditations present a strong contrast between Buddhist and secular goals and contexts. The Four Immeasurables in Buddhism are descriptions of fully awakened states. Practitioners seek to develop completely unbounded, unbiased, and "immeasurable" feelings of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity toward all beings. However, scientific studies using loving-kindness and compassion practices may be more concerned with secondary effects, investigating their potency as treatments for

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[82] Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 186–7.

psychological problems or illnesses. A cursory search through articles on loving-kindness meditation turns up claims of its benefits for those suffering from problems such as post-traumatic stress and schizophrenia.[83]

Scientists have been investigating the effects on positive mental outlook and psychological well-being of this BISM sub-family. Mind-body medical researchers and psychologists are increasingly focused on potential biological responses to meditation styles that predictably foster and sustain positive mental and emotional states. This is seen as a new and valuable locus of mind-body effects for the field of positive psychology. As Kok and colleagues note, "Meditative traditions, many honed over millennia, can serve as a source of inspiration for new hypotheses regarding mind-body interactions, and may also provide new ways of inducing mental states."[84] Research interests and desired clinical outcomes appear to have favored the development of BISMs that cultivate the first two of the Immeasurables, loving-kindness and compassion. At this time, no BISM claims to develop sympathetic joy or equanimity as its primary objective, however, if we look closely at the way BISMs are taught, it is clear that none of them targets a single trait exclusively.

For many involved in meditation research, contemporary mindfulness literature is a more familiar touchstone than Buddhist traditions for making sense of different BISMs. In a review article summarizing compassion meditation and loving-kindness meditation,

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[83] David P. Johnson, "A Pilot Study of Loving-Kindness Meditation for the Negative Symptoms of Schizophrenia.," *Schizophrenia Research* 129, no. 2/3 (2011); David J. Kearney, "Loving-Kindness Meditation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Pilot Study.," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 26, no. 4 (2013).

[84] Kok, Waugh, and Fredrickson, "Meditation and Health," 27.

Hofmann and colleagues discuss how these styles of meditation relate to mindfulness.[85] They argue that although mindfulness-based therapies have proven effective, there are other prominent practices drawn from Buddhism that involve attention to objects other than the mind and there are "emotional modes of attending" other than non-judgment.[86] They also point out ways in which compassion and loving-kindness meditations include, build on, and relate to mindfulness, though they certainly differ from it by intentionally cultivating specific affective states.[87] Loving-kindness meditation (LKM) seeks to foster feelings of love and kindness, and compassion meditation (CM) seeks to foster sympathy for the misfortunes of others and the desire to alleviate their suffering.[88] Both also involve either experiencing or at least imagining experiencing these emotions during meditation.[89]

The ways that LKM is conceived of and taught in experimental designs vary widely. Whereas MBSR was first developed to suit a single clinical context, an assortment of LKM protocols have been designed for a variety of laboratory experiments. The designs are so different from one another that it is questionable whether the results of different studies can even be compared. In the small sample taken by Hofmann et al., there was a surprising range of activities serving as LKM conditions in multi-variable experiments.[90] Each design had some initial eliciting of positive feelings of love and then

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[85] Stefan G. Hofmann, Paul Grossman, and Devon E. Hinton, "Loving-Kindness and Compassion Meditation: Potential for Psychological Interventions," *Clinical Psychology Review* 31, no. 7 (November 2011): 1126–32, doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2011.07.003.

[86] Ibid., 3.

[87] Ibid., 4.

[88] Ibid., 3.

[89] Ibid., 5.

[90] Hofmann, Grossman, and Hinton, "Loving-Kindness and Compassion Meditation."

participants were instructed to mentally expand that feeling and direct it to others. Among the simplest of the secularized LKM meditations, the study participants in the LKM condition used by Hutcherson and colleagues were told to visualize two "loved-ones" standing on either side of them and then direct any positive feelings they experienced toward a picture on a computer screen of a stranger with a blank expression.[91] At the more elaborate end of the spectrum, the LKM variable for a much larger study conducted by Fredrickson and colleagues involved seven weekly classes and frequent home practice.[92] LKM research is not as prolific as other subfields of meditation research. The pedagogy is less well established than what has been developed for mindfulness-based treatments, however, some LKM protocols are in a replicable format that could become the basis for growing a self-perpetuating BISM program focused on loving-kindness in the future.[93]

The Spectrum of Compassion Training Programs

Tania Singer, Director of the Department of Social Neuroscience at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, Germany, is one of the most influential proponents of compassion training. In a new eBook, *Compassion: Bridging Practice and Science*

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[91] Ibid., 5.

[92] Barbara L. Fredrickson et al., "Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through Loving-Kindness Meditation, Build Consequential Personal Resources," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 5 (November 2008): 1045–62, doi:10.1037/a0013262.

[93] For example, Sandra Finkel graciously provided me with the pedagogical materials and meditation scripts used in the "Open Hearts" study in response to my emailed request. She also informed me that, this protocol was affected by concerns that the participants, all employees of Compuware Corporation, were new to meditation and that they would have work-related motivation. Her LKM guided meditation scripts were based on an audio recording by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The first week's in-class lesson was about directing loving-kindness towards oneself. The subsequent sessions expanded the practice to include loved ones, acquaintances and people on the "periphery of life," and finally strangers. Her pedagogical materials include recorded guided meditations, meditation transcripts, and weekly class plans.

(2013), co-edited by Singer and Matthias Bolz, leading researchers describe rationales and definitions of compassion training, and training developers outline their respective programs' methods.[94] This book conceives of compassion training in its contemporary, secular forms as a process of overcoming obstacles, such as fear and difficult emotions, that can keep people from feeling and behaving compassionately. According to Bornemann and Singer, modern teachers of secularized compassion meditation do not see their task as building skills and traits from scratch. Instead, most compassion training programs presume that compassion is a natural, human capacity. Though the expression of compassion is often hindered, it can also be enhanced through meditation and other forms of training.[95]

There are six compassion training programs featured in *Compassion: Bridging Practice and Science*, which includes two chapters about CBCT.[96] These programs vary in length. The Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB) course developed by emotions expert, Paul Ekman, and his daughter, Eve Ekman, requires just forty-two hours of instruction,[97] while the ReSource Training Protocol, a large-scale program funded by the

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[94] Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz, eds., *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[95] Boris Bornemann and Tania Singer, "Preface II: What Do We (Not) Mean by Training," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 32, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[96] Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts"; Brooke Dodson-Lavelle and Lobsang Tenzin Negi, "Teaching Our Children Kindness and Compassion in Elementary Schools and Foster Care," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, ed. Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz, 37–49, accessed February 22, 2014, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#36.

[97] Eve Ekman and Paul Ekman, "Cultivating Emotional Balance: Structure, Research, and Implementation," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 398–414, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

European Union and the Max Planck Society and supervised by Tania Singer, lasts nine months.[98] Rōshi Joan Halifax's Being with the Dying (BWD) training program for professionals in end-of-life care is also included,[99] along with an article by Diego Hangartner on compassion in "classic" Buddhist meditation.[100] This compilation also includes articles on CBCT and two more compassion-focused BISMs with similar goals and approaches: Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) training and Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT).[101] Like CBCT, each of these programs goes beyond cultivating only compassion and includes mindfulness training and cultivation of positive mental states such as gratitude and love. Figure 1 lists each of these three programs' session topics.

Harvard Medical School Clinical Psychology instructor, Christopher Germer, and University of Texas-Austin professor of Human Development, Kristin Neff, developed the MSC training program. This training defines self-compassion as sensitivity to one's own suffering and a desire to alleviate that suffering.[102] This is a more general definition of self-compassion than the one contained in CBCT, which requires a commitment to

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[98] Boris Bornemann and Tania Singer, "The ReSource Training Protocol," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 452–65, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[99] Joan Halifax, "Being with the Dying - Curriculum for the Professional Training Program in Compassionate End-of-Life Care," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 466–78, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[100] Diego Hangartner, "A Practical Guide to Classic Buddhist Meditation," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 480–91, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[101] In order to compare details about the format, content, and topics of a CBCT course with these similar programs, please refer to the "CBCT Program Overview" in the introduction section and the list of CBCT session topics in Appendix A.

[102] Christopher Germer and Kristin D. Neff, "Being Kind to Yourself," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 291, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

Figure 1: Three Compassion Training Programs' Session Topics[103]

		Mindful Self-Compassion	Compassion Cultivation Training	Cognitively-Based Compassion Training
Sessions	1	Discovering Mindful Self-Compassion	Introduction	Developing Attention and Stability of Mind
	2	Practicing Mindfulness	Settling and Focusing the Mind	Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience
	3	Practicing Loving-Kindness Meditation	Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One	Cultivating Self-Compassion
	4	Finding Your Compassionate Voice	Loving-Kindness and Self-Compassion (Part 1)	Developing Equanimity
	5	Living Deeply	Loving-Kindness and Self-Compassion (Part 2)	Developing Appreciation and Gratitude for Others
	6	Managing Difficult Emotions	Establishing the Basis for Compassion towards Others	Developing Affection and Empathy
	7	Transforming Relationships	Cultivating Compassion Towards Others	Realizing Wishing and Aspirational Love and Compassion
	8	Embracing Your Life	Active Compassion Practice	Realizing Active Love And Compassion for Others

[103]Germer and Neff, "Mindful Self-Compassion Training Program," 366; Langri and Weiss, "Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," 446–7; Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts."

personal transformation and helping others. Germer and Neff identify three main elements of self-compassion: (1) *kindness* exemplified by soothing and supporting, (2) recognizing one's *common humanity* by accepting flaws and having an inclusive perspective, and (3) *mindfulness* characterized by openness and awareness of suffering that does not "overidentify"[104] with negative thoughts.[105] A self-compassionate attitude is demonstrated by behaviors such as nurturing, comforting, admitting shortcomings, forgiveness, and respect.[106]

The MSC training protocol includes eight weekly class sessions with a "mini-retreat" following either the fourth or fifth session. Class size is limited to between ten and twenty-five students with one or two instructors. Each session includes guided meditation, discussion, presentation on the week's topic, and a question and answer period.[107] Participants learn a variety of practices. Awareness of breathing, termed "affectionate breathing," and a form of loving-kindness meditation including open monitoring of physical sensations and repeating verbal aspirations of comfort and kind behavior are the two "core practices."[108] MSC has its own twelve-month teacher-training program including supervised teaching. A complete manual of the program is due to be published in 2014. Current support materials and media include a booklet of handouts for

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[104] If practitioners overidentify with their suffering, or any negative thoughts it is problematic, because they see these negative aspects as more prominent than positive or neutral ones. Not overidentifying with thoughts of suffering is very similar to the observant, non-judgmental attitude described in MBSR.

[105] Germer and Neff, "Being Kind to Yourself," 294.

[106] Ibid., 291.

[107] Christopher Germer and Kristin D. Neff, "Mindful Self-Compassion Training Program," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 366, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[108] Ibid., 365.

each topic and audio recordings of guided meditations for students to use in their daily practice. Guided meditation audio recordings and other materials can be downloaded from the website www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org.[109]

Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) is an educational program of Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE).[110] Geshe Thupten Jinpa developed it in collaboration with a team of experts from the fields of neuroscience, psychology, and contemplative studies.[111] Jinpa, a former Tibetan Buddhist monk, teaches Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy at McGill University and is also the Dalai Lama's principle English translator.

CCT incorporates concepts from a variety of disciplines, including (1) "psycho-cognitive education" on the connections between thoughts, feelings, behavior, and habits, (2) training in secularized Tibetan Buddhist contemplative practices, (3) dyadic exercises with a partner to elicit specific affective states, and (4) homework assignments with daily meditation for fifteen to thirty minutes.[112] This eclectic format reflects the program's interdisciplinary origins. CCT pedagogy seeks to cultivate the following "elements of compassion": (1) awareness of suffering, (2) sympathetic concern, (3) a wish to see

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[109] Christopher Germer, "Mindful Self-Compassion, Christopher Germer, PhD," 2013, http://www.mindfulselfcompassion.org/.

[110] "About Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," *The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education*, 2012, http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/.

[111] Thupten Jinpa Langri and Leah Weiss, "Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," in *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 1st ed. (Munich, Germany: eBook, 2013), 441, http://www.compassion-training.org/en/online/index.html?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%#8.

[112] Ibid.

suffering relieved, and (4) responsiveness or readiness to help.[113] The program consists of eight weekly two-hour classes. Each class session includes guided meditation, pedagogical instruction, and practical exercises. Each week's topic and guided meditation build upon previous weeks' work, so that the final meditation practice integrates all of the topics into one cumulative practice that can be used as a daily meditation after the course is completed.[114] CCT participants practice guided meditations at home with audio recordings.[115] The program inaugurated its teacher certification program in 2012 with a cohort of fifty teacher-trainees.[116]

These examples demonstrate the widening array of secular compassion meditation protocols. The traceable similarities between them and CBCT are partly due to the trailblazing precedent of MBSR with its stepwise, weekly format, and partly due to the success of the Dalai Lama in bringing compassion to the forefront of conversations about secular contemplative practices. Francisca Cho has pointed out that the secular discourses of psychology and neuroscience have begun to include "…non-reductive talk about things such as religious experience and self-transformation."[117] She also notes how including these topics "unseat" the cultural split between the religious and the secular.[118] These BISMs' central focus on compassionate self-transformation as a direct objective is

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[113] Ibid., 443.

[114] Ibid. For a list of each week's topic, see Figure 1, page 48.

[115] Ibid., 446.

[116] Ibid., 448.

[117] Francisca Cho, "Buddhism and Science: Translating and Re-Translating Culture," in *Buddhism in the Modern World*, ed. David L McMahan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 284.

[118] Ibid., 276.

a testament to the cultural space that has opened up to accommodate values shared by religions (to wit, Buddhism) within secular forums and therapeutic modes.[119]

Compassion Training and the Dalai Lama's Secular Ethics

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, studies showing the secondary effects or benefits of meditation began to challenge an interdisciplinary divide between secular, evidence-based modern science and religion. While these inquiries focused initially on locating body-based mechanisms for the effects of religious practices, a second phase beginning in the 1990's focused more attention on the physiological differences observed in the brains of long-term meditators or "adepts." Harrington notes that this "…distinctively exotic phase of research into meditation…" demonstrates much less aversion to the religious status of practices and the religious identity of those who engage in them.[120] However, the BISMs discussed in this project form a separate movement toward teaching meditation to beginners and observing similar, but shorter-term effects.

Some voices have expressed concern about a latent pro-meditation bias, which David Brooks has referred to as "neural Buddhism," underlying the questions and hypotheses of neuroscientific studies of meditation.[121] Richard H. Seager discusses the term, "stealth Buddhism," used in the late 1990's to refer to promulgating "Buddhist-like practices and values" in forms that American audiences and institutions could accept.[122] His primary example is the "stripped-down dharma" contained in Jon Kabat-Zinn's

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[119] See Ibid., 283.

[120] Harrington, *The Cure within*, 233.

[121] David Brooks, "The Neural Buddhists," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2008, sec. Opinion, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/opinion/13brooks.html.

[122] Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 211.

MBSR program. However valid the concerns about meditation researchers' optimism may be, the contention that Buddhists and researchers have *stealthily* promoted contemplative practices in secular fields is no longer tenable. Mindfulness research and training programs are now regular topics in popular magazines and newspapers, which often pair discussions of meditation with health-related themes. When we look at analytical-style BISMs that promote compassion as a normative ethical value, there is a similar absence of "stealth." In fact, these can be seen as an answer to the Dalai Lama's public call for extending "secular ethics" in education.[123] There is nothing secretive about this Buddhist leader's public effort to spread a message of what he calls "inner values," a universal basis for ethics that even people with different perspectives on religion can still share.[124] In his recent book, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (2011), the Dalai Lama advocates reintroducing these values, including kindness and compassion, into education for the general public.[125]

Among the various compassion training programs, there are several connections to Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. CBCT and CCT, for example, were both developed by former Tibetan Buddhist monks with the same elite scholastic training and are based on Tibetan Buddhist *lam rim* (stages on the path to enlightenment) and *lojong*

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[123] Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, Dalai Lama XIV, "The Pillars of Responsible Citizenship in the 21st Century Global Village (Public Talk)" (presented at the The Visit 2013, Gwinnett Center Arena, October 8, 2013); Dalai Lama XIV Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), v, 4, 56.

[124] Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, *Beyond Religion*, xiv–xv.

[125] Ibid., 56, 74, 94, 187.

(mind training) traditions.[126] The CEB program, co-developed by the Ekman's and Alan Wallace, also a former Tibetan Buddhist monk, was first conceived during conversations facilitated by Mind and Life Institute between CEB's developers and the Dalai Lama. During this exchange, the Dalai Lama challenged them to start a secular training program to help "improve the emotional lives of people around the world."[127]

In his book *Ethics for the New Millennium* (2001), the Dalai Lama distinguishes ethics that arise out of a concern for others' suffering from ethics arising due to a religious recognition of absolute truth.[128] This theme comes into sharper focus in *Beyond Religion,* where he proposes that a range of individual, societal, and even ecological problems could improve if people were to cultivate the positive qualities that enable more ethical behavior. The Dalai Lama describes this training in secular ethics as learning to become "wise selfish," meaning recognizing that helping and caring for others is also of benefit to oneself. "Foolish selfishness," in contrast is seeking personal benefits even when they cause harm to others.[129]

These secular ethics concepts are contained within the CBCT pedagogy, which is partly inspired by the Dalai Lama's teachings. In fact, *Beyond Religion* is required reading for the CBCT Teacher Training Practicum. The CBCT program's rhetoric employs the same definition of "secularism" used in *Beyond Religion* that creates room

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[126] Singer and Bolz, *Compassion - Bridging Practice and Science*, 504, 525; Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," 417; Langri and Weiss, "Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," 441.

[127] Ekman and Ekman, "Cultivating Emotional Balance: Structure, Research, and Implementation," 400, 402.

[128] Dalai Lama XIV Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (Penguin, 2001), 27–28.

[129] Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, *Beyond Religion*, 58.

for discernment of ethical values and virtues outside exclusively religious institutions. The Dalai Lama defines secularism as "mutual tolerance and respect for all faiths as well as for those of no faith."[130] He explains that this is the way secularism is understood and implemented by the Indian state and contrasts this meaning with the western idea that secularism entails hostility to religion.[131] The Indian scholar Amartya Sen has also argued for this alternate understanding of secularism in the Indian context.[132] The view that secularism can be a stance "equidistant" from and respectful of all religious viewpoints, one that values but does not favor religion, provides a counterpoint to understandings of secularism that assume it has an anti-religious subtext. If we define secularism as an absence of religion, then it implies that all religious content is similar enough across cultural barriers to be identified and removed. However, a model of secularism as a policy that seeks equal treatment for a variety of religious positions recognizes that religious status is always imputed and culturally relative. In a society of diverse religions, some religious content varies from one community to the next. Yet, values and ideas that are shared across traditions and communities, including traditions of religious skepticism, are also evident. This shared content, especially a shared value for kindness and compassion, is the domain of secular ethics, according to the Dalai Lama.[133]

In their article on teaching CBCT to elementary school students and adolescents in foster care, Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle argue that there are parallel problems

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[130] Ibid., 6.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Cited in Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle, "An Education of Heart and Mind: Practical and Theoretical Issues in Teaching Cognitive-Based Compassion Training to Children," 8.

[133] Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, *Beyond Religion*, 12–13, 16.

with the ways that anti-religious definitions of secularism has affected both the medicalization of contemplative practices and the removal of ethical values from education.[134] They maintain that analytical styles of meditation that aim at "…reorienting perspectives and encouraging the active cultivation of positive traits such as empathy, impartiality, and compassion…" could potentially increase personal and societal well-being.[135] This vision of well-being transcends the bounds of biomedical science that recognizes health as a mere absence of disease. Instead, the authors propose that secular ethics as espoused by the Dalai Lama could serve as a better framework accommodating a more holistic scope for healing and flourishing, because it is neither restricted by identity with a religious tradition nor reductive in its conception of human flourishing.[136]

Whether or not most people will ever agree that secular ethics or any set of values could be universal, these ideas are included in a growing number of BISMs taught in secular institutions. Secular ethics as explained by the Dalai Lama attempts to create a cultural space for secular values, especially in the domain of education. Analytical styles of meditation such as CBCT are innovative instances of value-laden contemplative pedagogy whose claims to secular status lean partly on the potential for this ethical conversation to move forward. Scientific studies indicating that contemplative practices of all sorts have medical and psychological benefits also support BISMs claims to secular status. Much of the experimentation work on meditation and health has focused on mindfulness-based practices, which lack analytical meditation pedagogy. These practices

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[134] Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle, "An Education of Heart and Mind: Practical and Theoretical Issues in Teaching Cognitive-Based Compassion Training to Children," 6.

[135] Ibid., 4.

[136] Ibid., 7–9.

partake of a kind of rhetoric germane to the Zen and Seon Buddhist traditions that preceded them in which "meditation" emphatically lacks any particular conceptual content. This lack of concepts requires practitioners to abstain from evaluation and discernment. In analytical-style BISMs, however, evaluation is a key ingredient their approach. It is arguable that mindfulness-based practices have been able to stake an easier claim to secular status for this very reason. They do not claim to teach ethics or normative values and instead focus on ways of sustaining, shifting, and qualifying attention.

The compassion training programs, on the other hand, while making the Buddhist sources of much of their content explicit, continue to make the case for an extra-Buddhist, universal value for kindness, compassion, and related virtues. In Singer and Bolz's eBook, the chapter on the CEB program by Paul and Eve Ekman identifies the Four Immeasurables of Buddhism, Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity as "broad and all-encompassing" "heart values," that "provide a basis for the arising of Prosocial behavior."[137] They also challenge the idea that the practice of science brackets all virtues and values, stating:

> Science is not value free; truth and values are always intertwined. Central to the curriculum of CEB is the promotion of a set of values about the importance and worth of well-being, flourishing and a meaningful life (*eudaemonia*).[138]

In their chapter on CCT, Jinpa and Weiss explain their program's secular status as the result of more general sensitivities to the religious, ethnic, and cultural pluralism of the compassion training participants:

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[137] Ekman and Ekman, "Cultivating Emotional Balance: Structure, Research, and Implementation," 409–10.

[138] Ibid., 409.

> The formal meditations presented in this protocol are principally derived from compassion practices found in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. They have, however, been adapted to suit the sensibilities and requirements of a multicultural context and for use by people from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Special care has been taken to ensure that the practices presented here are thoroughly non-denominational and secular.[139]

Ozawa-de Silva and Negi address values and secularity by unifying the secular status of CBCT with the Dalai Lama's understanding of secularism. They also describe ways that this secular status is a function of CBCT's particular Buddhist inspirations, methods, and textual roots. This might seem paradoxical if the potential for some religious content and values to be shared by multiple traditions and by people who are not religious were not recognized. In addition, they discuss the decision to not incorporate certain concepts requiring acceptance of the doctrine of reincarnation/rebirth:

> Different approaches for cultivating affection are described in various lineages of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, each lineage providing robust pedagogical and experiential training tools. Dr. Negi chose the materials for the protocol from the lineages that would be appropriate for a secular research context. Since some strands of reasoning for developing compassion rely heavily on the Buddhist philosophical doctrine of reincarnation, they were not incorporated. Our use of the term "secular" should not be understood as implying a rejection or exclusion of religion. Rather, it aligns with the usage employed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to connote respect to all religious traditions.[140]

Constructing secular status in these ways should not, in the context of compassion-focused BISMs, be misunderstood as a move to deflect or obscure the influence of the Dalai Lama or of any particular religious values. That programs like CEB, CCT, and CBCT assert their secular status actually demonstrates the influence of the Dalai Lama's priority for secular ethics and his particular view of secularism.

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[139] Langri and Weiss, "Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," 443.

[140] Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," 417, 420.

Reciprocally, the Dalai Lama encourages efforts to teach compassion. He explicitly mentions the CBCT program in a letter dated May 3, 2013, which was included in the printed program for his visit to Emory University in October of 2013.[141] In a narrow sense, this letter is a funding appeal for the Emory-Tibet Partnership, but it also demonstrates that the Dalai Lama is deeply aware and supportive of the CBCT program. He opens by stating his longstanding interest in dialogue and exchange between modern science and Tibetan Buddhism. This interest serves as the context for the Dalai Lama's personal account of his connection with Emory University through Emory-Tibet Partnership. Of CBCT, he specifically writes:

> Since 2005, the Emory-Tibet Partnership also has developed a robust research program in Cognitively Based Compassion Training that is investigating the physiological, psychological, and behavioral benefits of the cultivation of compassion. It also is looking into how compassion can be implemented in education, health care, and society at large, which is another example of the convergence of science and inner values in which we are engaged…. Because I believe so deeply in the importance of its projects, I have, through the Dalai Lama Trust, made a donation towards establishing an endowment for the Emory-Tibet Partnership, and annually make a contribution to its operational funds. [142]

I first saw the original of this letter, with its waxy, red emblem and real, blue ink signature, at the close of an eight-day CBCT retreat. It gave me a different view of how CBCT intertwines with many of His Holiness's most important priorities and projects related to scientific research, and the benefits of developing compassion.

In *A Secular Age* (2007), Canadian philosopher of selfhood, modernity, and secularity, Charles Taylor defines his object of study as a restricted definition of

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[141] "The Visit 2013: His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Presidential Distinguished Professor, Emory University (Program)," October 2013, http://dalailama.emory.edu/Visit%202013%20Program.pdf.

[142] Ibid., 5.

secularity as a particular set of changes in the conditions surrounding religious belief.[143] He traces a series of what he sees as unprecedented developments that bring on this "secular age" and make "naïve," "unreflective" belief no longer possible.[144] With this multi-stage onset of secularity, people consciously recognize that religious belief is "…one human possibility among many others."[145] Taylor expresses the factors leading to these changes in three stages. First, within the institutions of orthodox religion, an elite minority conceives of an exclusively humanistic alternative to religious faith.[146] Then, within this elite minority, a critical discourse flourishes, catalyzing runaway diversification among philosophical positions of unbelief, which Taylor likens to a "nova effect."[147] In the final stage of onset, a position of unbelief becomes thinkable for individuals across all social classes of North Atlantic societies. Taylor is adamant that secularization is not some rise in the rate of acceptance of secular humanism or other forms of unbelief.[148] It is simply the circumstance in which a widening sector of society recognizes unbelief as an option. Thus, the conditions of belief are altered, regardless of whether people change their beliefs.[149]

This conceptualization of what secularity means experientially for individuals leads to helpful questions about the conditions that make participation in value-laden

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[143] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1–2.

[144] Ibid., 12.

[145] Ibid., 3.

[146] Ibid., 299.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 19.

[149] Ibid., 18–19.

BISMs possible for a growing number of people in the West. Whereas individuals' conditions of belief are under investigation in Taylor's work, similar inquiries into the "conditions of practice" would augment our understanding of why secularized meditation is viewed as both beneficial and possible. Two veins of public discourse contribute to this change: research on meditation and health and the Dalai Lama's encouragement of secular ethics. In different ways they each reconceive of Buddhist-inflected ethical and contemplative practices as vehicles for conveying universal human values and developing universal human capacities. Yet interestingly, the cases for universality never need to be completely proved in order to succeed. At the individual level, no single practitioner ever has to agree that compassion and kindness are completely universal values. They simply need to be able to adopt the objectives and values contained in a BISM pedagogy as "universal enough" to be relevant for their own lives.

The fact that individuals from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds find themselves able to incorporate compassion training into their lives indicates that a kind of *pragmatic pluralism* characterizes the attitude of a growing number of people. It is possible that pragmatic pluralism is a stance among the diversity of religious perspectives that is just as evident as acceptance of secular humanism, strict materialism, or other metaphysical stances.

Conclusion

The context of secular meditation training includes a variety of programs. This group of programs that I call Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation is distinctive, because each of the programs is rooted in Buddhist contemplative practices, and yet they differ from one another in terms of their objectives and their pedagogy. BISMs that

cultivate mindfulness have non-prescribed, non-analytical pedagogy, that is, they give a great deal of instruction about modes of attention without encouraging any particular thoughts, concepts, or values besides personal authenticity and honesty. Other BISMs, ones that impart normative values such as loving-kindness and compassion, have meditation pedagogy that is either affective or evaluative.

In some ways, non-analytical BISMs may have a simpler claim to secular status than those that teach ways of evaluating emotions, thoughts, and behaviors according to ethical standards, such as compassion. By including virtues and values from Buddhist tradition, analytical-style BISMs can seem to traverse a boundary between the religious and the secular. Scientific measurements of the biological effects of meditation help constitute contemplative practices as real and universally applicable, because they have measurable effects. However, CBCT is an analytical-style compassion-focused BISM that asserts its secular status by also reframing secularism in the same terms as the Dalai Lama. This model of secularism is neutral and respectful with regard to all religious points of view, including religious skepticism. By insisting on this definition, a secular meditation program need not extract all religious content from its curriculum. Instead, values that transcend religious traditions may be deemed a "human" or "universal" value and therefore secular. CBCT and similar BISMs' secular status rests partly on the possibility that Loving-Kindness and Compassion, the first two of the four Buddhist "divine abidings" or "immeasurable" qualities, are universal human values.

CHAPTER 2

DETECTING SECULARIZATION BETWEEN TSONGKHAPA AND CBCT

The concepts and meditation pedagogy of Cognitively-Based Compassion Training are based on the Tibetan Buddhist *lojong* (mind training) and *lam rim* (stages of the path to enlightenment) textual traditions. These two vast genres of literature are intimately related, sharing origins, logics, methods, and goals. According to Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, CBCT combines two specific methods: "The Seven-Limb Cause and Effect" (also translated as the "Seven Cause and Effect Personal Instructions"[150]) and "Equalizing and Exchanging Oneself with Others."[151] The *Lam rim chen mo*, or *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment,* which Tsongkhapa (Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, 1357-1419) completed in 1402, contains a systematic account of these methods.[152]

This chapter compares CBCT with the first of these two methods, in an attempt to trace a series of variances and emphases that illuminate secularizing choices in the development of the CBCT protocol. What follows is a description of the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" followed by an analysis of structural parallels and

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[150] Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 2, 1st edition. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2004), 35.

[151] Ozawa-de Silva et al., "Compassion and Ethics: Scientific and Practical Approaches to the Cultivation of Compassion as a Foundation for Ethical Subjectivity and Well-Being," 155.

[152] The translation into English by The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee serves as the reference text for this chapter. Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 3 vols. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000).

dissimilarities with CBCT and general discussion of some of the dynamics and resonances that these variances and emphases have with theories of the secular.[153]

Background Information on Atiśa and Tsongkhapa

Tsongkhapa influence upon Tibetan Buddhism cannot be overstated. He had a huge impact on Buddhist monasticism in Tibet during his lifetime and many of his students became major religious leaders, eventually forming the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, the school in which CBCT's founder, Dr. Negi, trained as a monk.[154] Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo* or *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* represents the most important systematization of Buddhist philosophy for this school, wherein it is regarded as supremely authoritative.[155]

The *Lam rim chen mo* is a profoundly orderly work, and its comprehensive sequential outline locates the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" and the teaching on "Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others" near the middle of the English translation. The main body of the work is taken up with explaining the gradual path of Buddhist training suitable for persons of low capacity (Tib. *skyes bu chung ngu*), those who merely seek a favorable rebirth in cyclic existence. The section on gradual training for persons of "middling" capacity (*skyes bu 'bring*), who seek personal liberation, comes next. The lengthiest explanation is given for training in the Mahayana path for persons of great capacity (*skyes bu chen po*), who work for the liberation of all beings out of their

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[153] See "Introduction" this volume for a description of meditation instruction in CBCT.

[154] Georges B. J. Dreyfus, "Dge Lugs (Geluk)," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism [electronic Resource] / Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Editor in Chief.*, ed. Robert E Buswell, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 215.

[155] D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Introduction," in *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, by Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, vol. 1 (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000), 17.

great compassion.[156] According to David Jackson, all true *lam rim* texts provide a complete introduction to spirituality for any student by including instructions for these three types of individuals.[157] The major section of the *Lam rim chen mo* on training for persons of great capacity begins by demonstrating the necessity of developing *bodhicitta,* the spirit of enlightenment (Tib. *byang chub kyi sems*), which is the requisite attitude for Mahāyāna practice. Tsongkhapa goes on to explain the causes and conditions necessary for developing this spirit followed by how to train in the spirit of enlightenment through the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" in the lineage descended from the Great Elder [Atiśa].[158]

The *Lam rim chen mo's* main source of inspiration is the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (t. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*, sk. *Bodhī-patha-pradīpa*) by the Bengali Buddhist scholar, Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054), also known in Tibet as Jowojé (*Jo bo rje*). Atiśa is a major historical figure and object of religious veneration. He is credited with reorganizing and reviving Buddhist monasticism in Tibet at a time when it had declined. His *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is as foundational for *lam rim* literature as it is for the mind training or *lojong* (Tib. *blo sbyong*) tradition.[159] This is not surprising, since the *lojong* tradition traces back to Atiśa's oral teachings, also, as Michael J. Sweet has noted in his chapter on *lojong*:

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[156] Ibid., 18; Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, ed. Joshua W. C. Cutler and Guy Newland, trans. The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, vol. 1 (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000), 130–31.

[157] David Jackson, "The bsTan Rim ('Stages of the Doctrine') and Similar Graded Expositions of the Bodhisattva's Path," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. Geshe Lhundup Sopa, José Ignacio Cabezón, and Roger Reid Jackson (Ithaca, NY, USA: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 229.

[158] Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2004, 2:13–25, 28, 51.

[159] Ruegg, "Introduction," 2.

> The mental purification texts are often indistinguishable… from works on the stages of the path… except in their succinct presentation, practical orientation, and concentration on one portion of the path, i.e., generation of an enlightenment-directed attitude…. The stages of the path contain the mental purification teachings within them.[160]

In the introduction to his translation of *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (2006), Geshe Thupten Jinpa writes that all *lojong* is aimed at generating the enlightenment-centered attitude.[161] This is achieved through "a disciplined process for radically transforming our thoughts and prejudices from natural self-centeredness to other-centered altruism."[162] The desired result is a full reversal of one's tendencies to cherish personal welfare and neglect the welfare and suffering of others. Recognizing that one's "true enemy" is inner self-cherishing, the *lojong* practitioner overcomes the problems caused by a selfish attitude through generating and practicing compassion.[163] Tibetan *lojong* texts share the same goals and means as Tsongkhapa's "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." They each guide practitioners through logical steps of mental training for cultivating *bodhicitta.*

On the Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions[164]

The "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" are a list of seven subjective states or attitudes culminating in *bodhicitta*, the spirit of enlightenment.[165] Each stage

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[160] Sweet, "Mental Purification (Blo Sbyong): A Native Tibetan Genre of Religious Literature.," 248.

[161] Thupten Jinpa, "Introduction," 1.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid., 3–4.

[164] I did a preliminary analysis of this section of the *Lam rim chen mo* in a paper for the course, Tibetan 201, taught by Tsepak Rigzin.

contains specific concepts and meditation instructions to guide the practitioner to properly achieve each attitude and explanations of the sequential logic by which each stage is both the effect of what precedes and the cause of what follows it. The seven stages are: (1) recognition of all beings as having been one's mother, (2) recollection of their kindness, (3) the wish to repay their kindness, (4) love, (5) compassion, (6) wholehearted resolve, (7) the spirit of enlightenment.[166]

An examination of the *Lam rim chen mo*'s overall structure, however, shows an alternate level of organization beyond a simple list of seven items. Instead, the exposition of the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" begins by establishing two lines of argument that develop certainty about the order of its stages and the critical role of compassion (stage 5) within the overall scheme. Reaffirming compassion's prominence is crucial for (1) "showing that the root of the Mahāyāna is compassion," and (2) for showing "how the six other personal instructions are either causes or effects of compassion."[167] It is not entirely clear why placing compassion as the fifth of the seven stages has necessitated these tangential reassurances about the sequence. However, Tsongkhapa's explanation of how compassion is a focal point around which the other instructions revolve indicates that compassion is so central to his systematization of Buddhist training that it needs to be established as an anchor for any spiritual practice whether or not it is the culminating goal of the practice.

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[165] Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2004, 2:28.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid., 2:27–32.

Tsongkhapa begins his argument for the exact sequential placement of compassion by describing a common attitude that regards all people as either friends, enemies, or neutral strangers. By reifying these mutable categories of friend, stranger, and enemy we are only able to generate biased responses to the sufferings of others. It is almost impossible to bear the suffering of those we love. The suffering of adversaries can bring pleasure. The suffering of neutral people is neither unbearable nor pleasurable.[168] Then he establishes that the first four stages of the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" are preliminary steps to building compassion. By (1) seeing all beings as mothers, (2) recollecting their kindness, (3) wishing to repay them and (4) developing affectionate love, practitioners undo the bias evinced by unequal responses to suffering. Since compassion is the desire to free all beings from suffering, and bias is an obstacle to compassion, the first four steps that enable impartiality are considered foundational for unbiased compassion.[169] Tsongkhapa also demonstrates how a wholehearted resolve to help all beings (stage 6) and the spirit of enlightenment (stage 7) are the direct effects of developing compassion, because compassion makes the suffering of others unbearable to the practitioner who then feels s/he must commit to take positive action.[170]

It is only after explaining the anchoring role of compassion that Tsongkhapa begins to describe each step in the process. His in-depth discussion of the instructions divides the stages in yet a different way. He inserts a preliminary practice to develop impartiality toward all beings through eliminating all attachment and hostility toward

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[168] Ibid., 2:31–32.

[169] Ibid., 2:32.

[170] Ibid., 2:33.

living beings.[171] This is pursued through contemplative visualization. The practice begins with meditation on a specific person, one who is a neutral acquaintance. Practitioners should make an effort to eliminate even subtle hostility and attachment they may feel regarding this person by considering that all beings wish to be happy and prefer not to suffer and by remembering that since beings have been reborn countless times, all of them have been friends at one time or another. Therefore, there is no firm basis for attachment or hostility.[172] Next, the practitioner should carry out the same meditative analysis while focusing on a friend or loved-one and then on an adversary or enemy. Finally, the practitioner should extend this impartiality toward all beings.[173]

The first three steps in the seven main instructions—Recognizing All Beings as Mothers, Recollecting Their Kindness, and Wishing to Repay Their Kindness—are grouped together as "Having affection for all beings," because these three are the successive precursors of the fourth stage, Love.[174] In the first stage, Tsongkhapa advises how to develop the conviction that all living beings have been one's mother at some point throughout beginningless time, stating, "There is absolutely no kind of body which you have not assumed in cyclic existence. There is absolutely no place where you have not been born, and there is no person who has not been a relative such as your mother."[175]

To achieve the second stage of recollecting the kindness of all mother-beings the instructions say to first think on all the kind actions of one's current mother in this

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[171] Ibid., 2:36.

[172] Ibid., 2:36–37.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid., 2:35, 37.

[175] Ibid., 2:38.

lifetime, from carrying you in the womb to cleaning, feeding, and rearing you. Then, considering how close friends and relatives have also been one's mother in previous lifetimes, practitioners must expand this thought to include neutral people as well as enemies. Tsongkhapa writes that, "When you have an attitude toward your enemies that is like the one you have toward your mother, recognize that all beings in the ten directions are your mothers, and then gradually…cultivate a remembrance of their kindness."[176]

This unbiased, internal "remembrance" of the kindness of all beings gets joined in the third stage with the recognition that all beings are suffering. The pervasiveness of suffering motivates practitioners to repay the kindness of all former and future mother-beings by liberating them from their suffering. In one of the most moving passages of this section, Tsongkhapa instructs:

> …[T]he madness of the afflictions disturbs the peace of mind of living beings, your mothers…. When these mothers see the edge of the precipice of cyclic existence in general and the miserable realms in particular, they naturally take hope in their children, and the children have a responsibility to get their mothers out of this situation.[177]

Tsongkhapa labels the next trio of instructions "The development of the attitude of being intent on others' welfare."[178] Developing Love (stage 4) begins with recognizing that the recipients of love should include all living beings who do not have happiness. The subjective aspects of this attitude are condensed into the following three thoughts: "How nice it would be if […] were happy;" "May they be happy;" and "I will cause them

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[176] Ibid., 2:39.

[177] Ibid., 2:41.

[178] Ibid., 2:35.

to be happy."[179] Practitioners should apply these thoughts to specific people, beginning with a friend, a neutral person, and an enemy. Finally these thoughts are gradually expanded and directed toward all beings equally.[180] The instructions go on to say that familiarity with this practice will cause practitioners to naturally and spontaneously wish for all beings to be happy. In response, practitioners should bring various forms of happiness to mind in meditation and visualize offering them to living beings.[181]

The method for developing Compassion (stage 5) parallels the previous instruction for developing love. The recipients of compassion, in this case, should include all living beings who experience suffering. The three subjective aspects of the compassionate attitude are: "How nice it would be if […] were free from suffering;" "May they be free from suffering;" and "I will cause them to be free from suffering."[182] The practitioner familiarizes cultivating compassion first toward specific friends, then neutral people, enemies, and finally toward all beings equally.[183] At this point, Tsongkhapa inserts an important parameter for the visualization technique of these meditations, saying:

> If you train in these attitudes of impartiality, love, and compassion without distinguishing and taking up specific objects of meditation…you will just seem to generate these attitudes. Then, when you try to apply them to specific individuals, you will not be able to actually generate these attitudes toward anyone. But once you have a transformative experience toward an individual in your meditation practice …you may then

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[179] Ibid., 2:42.

[180] Ibid., 2:42–43.

[181] Ibid., 2:43.

[182] Ibid., 2:44.

[183] Ibid.

> gradually increase the number of individuals you visualize within your meditation.[184]

The instruction on developing compassion is the most extensive of the seven stages of this method, and includes ways to initiate and intensify compassion by considering mother beings' suffering in light of one's own experience of suffering. Remembering one's own suffering leads to a determination to be free from it (t. *nges 'byung*), while considering the sufferings of others results in a feeling of compassion.[185] Tsongkhapa also instructs practitioners to study the classical Buddhist texts, in order to realize that compassion is the root of Buddhist training and that the spirit of enlightenment is the entrance into the Mahāyāna, Then he advises analyzing all explanations with discernment and sustaining them in meditation in order to internalize them.[186]

The next stage in becoming intent on others' welfare is the sixth stage of the overall instructions, developing wholehearted resolve. This is a simple yet demanding training in taking responsibility for liberating all beings from their sufferings. It is based on internalizing the meditative statement, "Alas, these dear living beings for whom I feel affection are deprived of happiness and tormented by suffering; how can I provide them happiness and free them from suffering?"[187] Assuming this responsibility requires more than just wishing others were happy and free from suffering. It is absolutely necessary to

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[184] Ibid.

[185] These same dual results of recognizing suffering are key elements of CBCT's step 3: Self-Compassion.

[186] Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2004, 2:45.

[187] Ibid., 2:47.

firmly decide to provide these benefits to all beings, and to maintain this resolve both during and between meditation sessions.[188]

When taking up the final stage of the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions," the intention to attain enlightenment is said to arise through several different means.[189] The process of training and recognizing the good qualities of buddhas may inspire practitioners to attain these qualities as well. Alternatively, the conviction that enlightened omniscience is necessary for the welfare of both self and others may provide the motivation.[190] Once the mind is intent on enlightenment, the two components of the spirit of enlightenment—the desire for enlightenment and the desire for others' welfare— are present, the spirit of enlightenment, *bodhicitta,* is the result.

Shared Emphases

In order to approach questions about CBCT's secularization process, it is important to identify the parallel dynamics that manifest in comparing it with its earlier sources. Let's begin by tracking structural parallels between the CBCT protocol and the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." A parallel sequence of roughly five states that flow logically from one to another appears in each of these methods. First, ***impartiality***, the elimination of bias toward others, prepares the mind so that all the subsequent positive thoughts and feelings developed in the training will be directed toward all beings equally. The second state, ***gratitude,*** recognizing the benefit that all other beings provide becomes a foundation for the third state, ***affection***, which cherishes

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid., 2:48.

[190] Ibid.

all beings. Realizing the preciousness of all beings leads practitioners to desire happiness for others and to desire to relieve their suffering (i.e. ***love*** and ***compassion***) and finally to ***resolve*** to take active steps toward achieving these goals. Figure 2 shows a table matching CBCT topics four through eight with corresponding topics from the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions."

In each of these methods, the sequence above uses practitioners' intuitive concepts of kinship-based altruism as a reference point for the endearment that eventually can be directed impartially toward all others regardless of kinship. However, CBCT uses concepts of interdependence and reciprocity in the development of gratitude and endearment. Ozawa-de Silva discusses the different Tibetan textual precedents for using kin-altruism and reciprocal altruism in these ways. He states that:

> Whereas the "seven-limb cause and effect" method seems to employ the biological basis of kin altruism to create a platform upon which to cultivate boundless compassion, the "equalizing and exchanging self and other" method seems to employ reciprocal altruism as a basis. Since one method may be more effective for some people than the other, both styles are combined in CBCT. In the end, however, both techniques (and CBCT) intend a universal, unbiased compassion that is not limited to kin or reciprocity.[191]

As stated above, a key feature of CBCT and a key way that it parallels the method of Tsongkhapa is its analytical, logical flow. Each step of the sequence—equanimity, gratitude, affection, love/compassion, resolve—is profoundly primed by what precedes it and foundational for what follows. Dodson-Lavelle and Ozawa-de Silva propose examining this interplay in light of the psychological theory of social embodiment. Social embodiment holds that unconscious processes of cognition, affect, and bodily response

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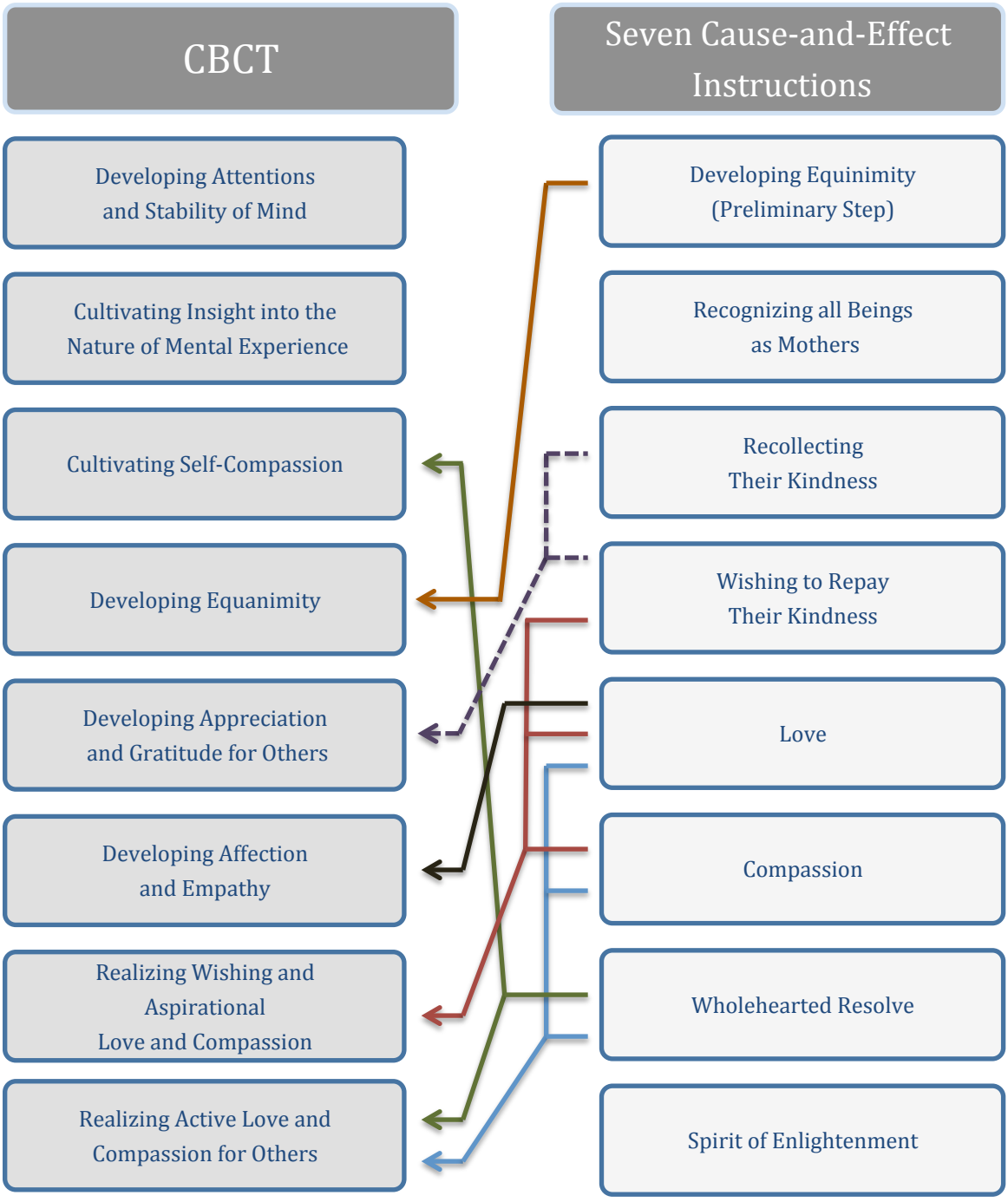
[191] Ozawa-de Silva et al., "Compassion and Ethics: Scientific and Practical Approaches to the Cultivation of Compassion as a Foundation for Ethical Subjectivity and Well-Being," 156.

Comparing CBCT and Its Antecedent[192]



[192] Tsoń-kha-pa Blo-bzań-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2004, 2:28–36; *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)*.

determine subsequent ones.[193] Dodson-Lavelle and Ozawa-de Silva apply this model to the much higher-order, conscious cognitive-affective states and processes involved in CBCT, calling their model "Embodied Cognitive Logics." They write:

> "Embodied cognitive logics" refers to the dynamic and complex sets of causal relationships in cognition, affect, and body function that are deployed by religious practices to generate powerful concordant cognitive-affective state and trait changes, but which, because they are cross-culturally shared due to being grounded in human embodiment, can be employed in non-religious contexts as well.[194]

Positing "underlying" bodily phenomena may serve to propel CBCT's secularization process forward. The secondary health effects of secular meditation have been sought and studied for a few decades. Embodied Cognitive Logics is a distinctive move because it provides a creative psychological corollary to the building-block reasoning of analytical-style meditation pedagogy. It hypothesizes a connection between centuries-old contemplative techniques and mind-body interactions. Theorizing a mechanism of action that correlates contemplative methods to body-based social psychological theory mirrors other cases of secularization and medicalization of practices that originate in religious contexts.

Anne Harrington gives vivid accounts of the historical precedents for this process in *The Cure Within* (2008).[195] In her view, the most powerful "doctor-led rituals" of mind-body medicine are rooted in religious practices such as exorcism and confession.[196] Harrington casts Anton Mesmer's invention of "animal magnetism," as an alternative,

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[193] Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle, "An Education of Heart and Mind: Practical and Theoretical Issues in Teaching Cognitive-Based Compassion Training to Children," 26–27 n. 51.

[194] Ibid., 17.

[195] Harrington, *The Cure within*.

[196] Ibid., 245–46.

naturalistic explanation for the bodily convulsions observed in Catholic exorcisms. Seeing a naturalistic explanation for spirit-based convulsions secularizes thereby supplants the practice and interpretation of exorcism.[197] A similar interpretive transformation occurs in the history of the miraculous grotto at Lourdes, France. French physicians Hippolyte Bernheim and Jean-Martin Charcot, in order to quell claims of miracle healing documented by the Catholic Church, posit that a newly discovered mental faculty of "faith," often fostered by religious places and practices, could work healing upon the body.[198] In these and other *natural histories*, secularization happens when bodily experiences of purportedly spiritual cause are recast as the results of body-based, natural causes.

Embodied Cognitive Logics also adds a helpful dimension to our discussion of the parallel cognitive-affective cascades in CBCT and the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." It recognizes the potential cumulative effects that initial cognitive-affective states have on later ones. This theory also implies that pedagogies aiming to cultivate higher-order states, such as compassion, are more potent when they proceed through steps that prime or enhance the desired outcome.

Subtracting, Adding, and Rearranging the Steps

Subtraction, addition, and relocation are among the discontinuous dynamics between CBCT and the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." One notable subtraction is the total absence in CBCT of the fundamental step of "Recognizing All Beings as Mothers" from the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." Instead,

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[197] Ibid., 39–43.

[198] Ibid., 105–10.

CBCT uses teachings on interdependence, which are more comprehensible to Western audiences, to prime feelings of impartiality and gratitude. "Recognizing All Beings as Mothers" relies on metaphysical views—namely, that time has no beginning and that death is followed by reincarnation—which are assumed to be true in traditional Buddhist cultures. However, many in the West do not share them. Ozawa-de Silva and Negi have explicitly noted that culturally specific ideas and "strands of reasoning" that depend heavily on the metaphysical view of reincarnation have been left out of CBCT.[199]

Another instance of subtraction is evident in the different objectives of the two methods. The primary goal of the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" is developing the spirit of enlightenment, or *bodhicitta*. This stage is left out of CBCT. In recent conversations, Dr. Negi has confirmed that because *bodhicitta* is a very specific goal in Mahāyāna Buddhism, it could never be an appropriate objective for a secular meditation program. He doesn't see this as a limitation for the practice. Rather, he insists that teaching *compassion* as a universal benefit to personal and societal well-being must be understood in a positive light. Since, our modern, daily social experience is one of religious pluralism, wherein we encounter people of differing faiths and people who are not religious, secularization is the only way to make the helpful practices that originate within contemplative religious traditions available for general audiences.

The applicability of CBCT's objective, compassion, for a plural audience is supported by the Dalai Lama, who sees compassion as a universal basis for ethical choices, and by a small group of scientific researchers, including Richard Davidson, Frans de Waal, and Philippe Rochat, who theorize that compassion and empathy are

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[199] Negi and Ozawa-de Silva, "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) - Protocol and Key Concepts," 417.

universal human values whose building blocks are evident in other mammals and in early childhood development. For this line of reasoning, the evolutionary advantages and health benefits of empathy and compassion signal its universal value and imply that compassion may, in fact, be a secular value.

David. L. McMahan has written that modernist Buddhist meditation is often linked with "extra-Buddhist goals," such as reduced stress.[200] It seems that Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation (BISM) tends to include only those *intra-Buddhist* goals that might be considered universally valuable and therefore secular. In any case, Tsongkhapa's careful explanation of the central role that compassion plays in his training method justifies CBCT's exclusive focus on compassion as its main objective. Compassion is such an important stepping-stone for developing *bodhicitta* in the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions," that, in theory, CBCT could be seen as preparation for the spirit of enlightenment, even though it stops short of actually cultivating *bodhicitta*. As Sweet puts it:

> …[T]he generation of universal love and compassion through empathic identification with all living beings, which similarly belongs to the most ancient stratum of Buddhist teachings… is, according to the great philosopher-saint sGam po pa (1079-1153), the very means by which the purification of the mind (*sems sbyang ba*) is brought about.[201]

So far, the discontinuities between CBCT and the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" have involved subtraction. The subtraction of "Recognizing All beings as Mothers" from CBCT renders it a more secular cultural product, because its resulting internal logic depends on interpreting everyday occurrences in light of

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[200] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 57.

[201] Sweet, "Mental Purification (Blo Sbyong): A Native Tibetan Genre of Religious Literature.," 246.

interdependence rather than acceptance of doctrines that are not cross-culturally shared. Subtracting the goal of *bodhicitta* from CBCT also has a secularizing effect, because it removes an objective specific to Buddhism. Unlike *bodhicitta,* compassion can be couched as a universal value. This subtractive dynamic resonates with Charles Taylor's first definition of secularity.[202] He explains that in order for modern political structures to serve a religiously plural citizenry, they must maintain compatibility with a variety of systems of belief. This is accomplished by removing references to the transcendent from shared institutions.[203] In this case, CBCT is likewise emptied of some references to metaphysical concepts contained in its antecedent.

The step that primes *bodhicitta* in the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions is developing "Wholehearted Resolve." This step has not been left out of CBCT's protocol, but it is reordered and differently employed. Wholehearted resolve is heavily thematized in CBCT's third step, "Self-Compassion." Here, it is a means for overcoming the habits that cause personal suffering and pursuing the lasting causes for happiness. This resolve arises through recognizing the suffering that pervades the everyday pursuit of what we desire and avoidance of what we dread. In this stage it can also arise in light of the equally unfortunate sufferings of other beings. Also, CBCT's final stage of "Realizing Engaged Love and Compassion" invokes the resolve to relieve others' suffering and work for others' happiness and well-being.

It can be argued that the *addition* of certain elements from traditional Buddhist training also render CBCT practice more amenable to a general audience and therefore

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[202] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1–2.

[203] Ibid., 15.

more secular. This is surprising, since adding material would seem to make the method narrower and more specialized. The first two CBCT topics of "Developing Attention and Stability of Mind" and "Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience" are not present in the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions." This additive dynamic can further the process of secularization because it gives CBCT some shared content with Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a program whose secular status has been long established. Furthermore, in the *Lam rim chen mo*, these skills appear at quite a late stage of advanced practice.[204] Therefore, it is possible to take the introduction of stabilizing practices at the beginning of CBCT as evidence of a leveling-out of seniority or hierarchy.[205]

In Buddhist modernism, minimizing the impact of seniority can entail feminization, equalizing the status of men and women, or laicization, balancing the importance of lay practice and leadership with monasticism. CBCT's openness to people, regardless of their religious perspectives, is in-line with tendencies in Buddhist modernism toward teaching meditation and ritual practices to a broadening swath of Buddhist adherents at many different levels of commitment and training. The processes of modern Buddhist laicization and the secularization of meditation are propelled by similar undercurrents.

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[204] *Cognitively-Based Compassion Training Manual (draft)*, 13; Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2004, 2:209–11; Tsoṅ-kha-pa Blo-bzaṅ-grags-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 3, 1st edition. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2002), 27–55.

[205] This is consonant with features of democratization characteristic of Buddhist Modernism and American Buddhism more generally. Christopher S Queen, "Introduction," in *American Buddhism*, Curzon Critical Studies in Buddhism (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1999), xix; McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 242–44.

The *lojong* and *lam rim* traditions that CBCT draws from are germane to Tibetan monastic education. Dr. Negi affirms that monastic teachers in this institutional context would measure their students' progress by observing gradual changes in their attitudes and behavior. In the secular institutional fields in which CBCT functions, however, scientists measure the effects of practice either empirically via changing biological markers or through statistics of practitioner self-reporting. Experiences attested by individuals therefore play an important role in establishing the benefits of secular meditation. In her ethnography of spiritual practitioners in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Courtney Bender "unsettles the logics" of uncritical notions of the polar opposition of religious and secular institutional fields. She asks whether, "…we might understand spirituality as simply religion that is produced in secular institutions or settings."[206] Bender also frames secularization as an embedded, practical tradition and spiritualities as *differently organized* religions cohabitating within medical, religious, and arts institutions.[207] She helpfully proposes that spiritualities' ability to function in ostensibly secular cultural spaces is bound up with rhetoric about "socially and culturally unmediated" *individual* experience, yet she questions the logic behind the rhetoric she observes:

> The secularization and restriction of religion into the sphere of the religious… suggests that any religious activity, action, or purpose that is located "outside" of the religious institutional field is the work of 'individuals' rather than produced within the discourse, practices, or structures of non-religious fields. The spiritual, defined as *individual* acts, make it possible to argue for the secularity of increasingly differentiated fields…. If the production of religion within these settings has been

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[206] Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals : Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 19.

[207] Ibid., 23, 183.

> neglected, it has frequently been due to the explanatory power of mysticism, individualism, and the spiritual, all of which deflect sociological attention… (emphasis mine) [208]

It remains to be seen whether the category of spirituality, as Bender conceives it, would include BISMs. Her outspoken insights are relevant to CBCT and BISMs more generally for two main reasons. First, she hints that the authority accorded to individual agency and experience within a practice tradition may signify a practices' secular status, because it makes it more palatable to secular institutions. Second, she convincingly proclaims that a secular-religious polarity is inadequate to explain cultural practices in America.[209]

Cross-cultural comparison also reveals that the categories of religious and secular are imputed inconsistently in different contexts. Robert A. F. Thurman describes Tibetan civilization from the time of Atiśa to the Chinese takeover in the 1950's as completely subsumed under the "totalizing mainstream presence of Buddhist culture."[210] He sees this social order as a unique example of a state in which Buddhism rises above counter-culture status to form a "sacred canopy" sheltering a culture-wide pursuit of enlightenment in the present life for all beings within its domains.[211] In light of this characterization, describing CBCT as a Buddhist practice transplanted out of a religious context into a secular one is less accurate. Indeed, the cultural environment of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism that encompassed the traditions of Mahāyāna mind training (*lojong*) and training in the stages of the path to enlightenment (*lam rim*) would have also

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[208] Ibid., 45–46, repeated on 182.

[209] Ibid., 183.

[210] Robert A. F. Thurman, "Tibetan Buddhism in America : Reinforcing the Pluralism of the Sacred Canopy," in *A Nation of Religions : The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*, ed. Stephen R Prothero (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 99, 111.

[211] Ibid., 97, 99, 105, 111.

encompassed medical, social, and educational institutions analogous to those that now house CBCT, if it were located in that earlier time and place.

Conclusion

Pointing out that the modern, western way of dividing culture into religious and secular domains is a product of specific historical developments in no way implies that the inscribed boundaries should be ignored. This awareness may instead teach a greater sensitivity to detect choices we might call secularizing in the development of Buddhist-Inflected Secular Meditation (BISM). There is an inherent secularizing action in recreating a Buddhist practice for and within a secular setting. This is the way that we in the West commonly understand the secularization of meditation. However, because the religious-secular divide in embedded in North Atlantic cultures, to secularize in this way becomes a process of practical translation, requiring those who develop and teach BISMs to assert their programs' secular status in ways attentive to the receptivities and sensitivities of their target audiences and target institutions.

This chapter's comparative analysis of CBCT and one of its source texts has helped shed light on other secularizing choices by looking at dynamics of parallelism, emphasis, subtraction, addition, and reorganization between the two training methods. Significantly, the parallel cognitive-affective cascade that CBCT maintains from its antecedent becomes the site of a new theory of "Embodied Cognitive Logics," a body-based, naturalistic reinterpretation of analytical contemplative practice. This kind of explanation is evocative of other histories of mind-body medicalization and secularization of phenomena formerly conceived as miraculous or supernatural. The fact that patterned reinterpretations facilitate the change from religious to secular status

indicates that secular fields are more receptive to practices that have been explained through naturalistic mechanisms of action.

In contrast, subtracting of concepts depending on religiously specific doctrines and objectives—beginningless time, reincarnation, *bodhicitta*— from CBCT attests to the protocol's heedfulness of the sensitivities of secular fields to any idea that restricts a practice to a particular religious tradition. It is therefore unsurprising that a public discussion of the universality of compassion is so important within CBCT's own discourse. Addition has proved as important as subtraction in universalizing and secularizing CBCT. The addition of mindfulness practices not present in the "Seven Cause-and-Effect Personal Instructions" serves to make CBCT more similar to long-established mindfulness-based BISMs and also to affirm the value of stabilizing meditation for all people, regardless of their level of experience or religious persuasion.

Observing similarity and difference between a Tibetan monastic training method and a derived secular protocol is an imperfect but still a productive vehicle for organizing questions about the process of secularizing contemplative practices. In addition, attention to other studies, histories, and theories of secularization has highlighted important insights and misperceptions of what this process requires and entails. It is my hope that this work can contribute to new inquiries into contemplative practices designed for secular contexts and that further studies employing a broader range of methods and a greater depth of research can make use of some of these ideas

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