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A bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework: inspired by Vimalakīrti wisdom

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Abstract

A number of studies have integrated Buddhist principles into therapeutic interventions, demonstrating effective outcomes; however, very little Buddhist textual data support the theoretical foundation of those models. This exploratory research conceptualises a counselling framework based on a canonical analysis of the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, together with a qualitative inquiry. Thirty-eight informants, including helping service practitioners, Buddhist masters, Buddhist volunteers, and beneficiaries, were recruited through cold calls, social networks, referrals, and electronic mail. Forty-six semi-structured interview sessions, involving individuals and focus groups, were conducted in the form of face-to-face discussions, telecommunication, and correspondence. Data collection was performed using multiple sources, consisting of interviews, expressive art, and autobiographies. Both scriptural and fieldwork data were analysed with the aid of ATLAS.ti 7, a software package; while interview data were processed under phenomenological interpretative analysis. Different levels of triangulation were employed to enhance the research rigour, including member-checking of transcriptions and data interpretation, and peer analysis, with an inter-rated reliability of 92%. This bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework was then finalised with two super-ordinate themes (*philosophical concepts* and *propositions for counselling*), 14 emergent themes, and 40 themes. This counselling framework, from the *prajñā* perspective, not only exhibits Mahāyāna wisdom, but also revitalises the practicality and applicability of *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables) in today's contemporary context, approving the aspiration of the Buddha to serve sentient beings.

Keywords: *Bodhisattva-mārga*; *Catvāri apramānāni*; Cross-disciplinary research; Expressive art; Mixed method; Qualitative fieldwork; Self-benefiting altruism; *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*

Background

Western scholars have increasingly been interested in Buddhism since the 17th century (Conze 1953), and particularly after the Second World War (Gethin 1998). Through the influence of their studies, Buddhism has expanded to not only religion circles, but also science (Kaklauskas and Olson 2008), art, social studies (Jones 2003), and psychology (Storhoff and Whalen-Bridge 2010, Loy 2000, Hsing-Yun 2006). Buddhism has been characterised as an “edifying philosophy” (Watson 1998, 14), and a “dialectical pragmatism with a psychological turn” (Conze 1953, 15). For instance, both *catvāri-ārya-satyāni* (the four noble truths 四聖諦), alluding to “the disease, the cause, the cure, and the medicine” (Gethin 1998, 59), and Chan (Zen 禪) meditation

have been considered as healing methods (Kief 2006) to dissolve mental challenges (Sugamura and Warren 2006). Interfacing one of the world's oldest religions (namely, Buddhism) with a relatively new discipline (psychology) (Bankart, Dockett, and Dudley-Grant 2003), intellectuals have continuously explored the similarities between these two domains (Kaklauskas et al. 2008). Having experienced these valuable Buddhist resources as "an ethical consciousness suitable for the global culture of the 21st century" (Wright 2009, 15), professionals have integrated Buddhist ideas into helping or caring professions (Walley 1986, Fielding and Llewelyn 1986, Welwood 1983, Heelas and Kohn 1986, Claxton 1986), including social work (Brandon 1976/1990, Canda and Furman 2010), and psychotherapy (Fromm 1963); for example, de Silva (1996), Epstein (1989), Goleman (1975), Kabat-Zinn (2011), Rubin (2009), Suzuki, Fromm, and DeMartino (1963), Wallace and Shapiro (2006), and Young-Eisendrath (2008). Supported by voluminous research projects, this "New Buddhist Psychology" (Kwee, Gergen, and Koshikawa 2006, 22; Kwee and Taams 2006, 435), as part of "Buddhist modernism" (Deeg 2005, 376), has developed a "brand of psychotherapy" (Ponce 2006, 331) centred around remedial and preventive measures tackling psychological disorders and life challenges, particularly by means of meditation and mindfulness (de Silva 2006, Kabat-Zinn 2003, 2011, Crane and Kuyken 2012, Gehart 2012, Teasdale, Segal, and Williams 1995, Thompson and Waltz 2010), attaining "the path of happiness" (Inoue 1997, 89). Focusing on the idea of "spirit-in-pouch, pouch-in-spirit, or body and mind as one" (Akizuki 1990, 115), this approach differs from Western traditions.

While the ultimate goal of "human-centred" (Guruge 2007, 62) Buddhism is to enable sentient beings to eradicate suffering (de Witt 2008, Long 2007) and achieve happiness (Rahula 1988), Buddhist masters play a conventional role in helping laity cope with life adversities and psychological difficulties (Dhammanaha 2000) through Buddhist practices, such as through using "mind training" (Thubten 2008, 32), and "thought transformation" (Thubten 2008, 32) to calm down an unquiet mind (Bankart, Dockett, and Dudley-Grant 2003). The mind collectively involves the "holistic feeling, judgements, prejudices, and bigotries, as well as the ability (or inability) to accurately take the feeling temperature of a social situation, physical space, or aesthetic presentation in one experience" (Walker 2008, 184), or otherwise simply termed "emotional intelligence" (Goleman 2008, ix; 1998, 7–10, 375–376). Within mind training, Buddhist masters, acting like counsellors, facilitate followers to possess a pure and crystal clear mind and to gain insight reflexively (Claxton 1986). Subsequently, sentient beings are able to convert suffering into motivation for personal growth (Hoffman 2008) and further self-exploration (Epstein 1999), which echoes with the Vimalakīrti teachings that are applied to the philosophical theories in this cross-disciplinary study integrating Buddhist resources into counselling. The *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (維摩詰所說經), an influential Mahāyāna canon, elaborates on the concepts of bodhisattva and *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道), hinting at propositions of counselling.

By honing in on the Buddhist focus on praxis (Kasulis 2004), rather than comparing it with Western psychotherapeutic approaches, the present research conceptualises a bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework for applying to a generic therapeutic context, wherein the practice of bodhisattva (菩薩) represents the core Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle 大乘佛教) theory (Kanbayashi 1938/1984), in which the mission of a

bodhisattva is to free living beings from suffering. This is compatible with the goal of helping professionals, such as counsellors, psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists. The present study applies the teaching of *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) to therapeutic settings because this notion offers a roadmap for how to practise *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道) in a way that inspires counselling theories and practices. This research has adopted a mixed research method, employing a canonical analysis of the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (維摩詰所說經) and qualitative interviews, so that it supplies primary data to strengthen the theoretical foundation for the available Buddhist-influenced interventions, especially in humanistic approaches (Watson 1998). Supported by the Buddhist traditional hierarchy of “theoretical considerations, methodological considerations, goals and implications” (Watson 1998, 19), this counselling framework consists of philosophical concepts and propositions for counselling that are elaborated upon respectively. The former includes views of human nature, worldviews, life views, and the bodhisattva spirit; whereas the latter covers therapeutic mission and goals, roles and qualities of a counsellor, case conceptualisation, therapeutic relationship, therapeutic strategies and tactics, skills, and techniques.

The conceptualisation of a counselling framework in this research, grounded on a Buddhist canon (discussing its practicality from a secular perspective), and qualitative fieldwork represents an exploratory inquiry, which not only offers doctrinal data and extends the horizons of Buddhism as applied to mental well-being, but also attempts to make this mixed method available for counselling research. Further discussion is invited for the purpose of enhancing the development of these approaches.

Methods

Research design

This cross-disciplinary research, while focusing on first-hand data, adopts a mixed method, mingling canonical analysis with qualitative study, from which the former provides textual evidence giving direct voice to a Buddhist text while the latter represents the lived experiences of interviewees, supporting the applicability and practicality of Buddhist teachings in modern society.

A canonical analysis

The *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (維摩詰所說經) (hereafter called the *Sūtra*), written from sometime in the late first century to the early second century A.D. (Lin 1997a), is one of the prominent Mahāyāna canons (Zheng 1986) explicating *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) (Kaziyama 1994). The details describes regarding the major Mahāyāna teachings, especially *madhyamaka* (the Middle School 中觀) (Lamotte 1976/1990), significantly affect other schools of Buddhism, including Chan (Zen 禪宗) (Sheng-yen 1988 and Suzuki 1938/1981a), Tiantai (天臺宗) (You 1999), and Vajrayāna (Tantric Buddhism 密宗) (Tam 1995), positively impact the culture of the upper and lower Chinese social classes (Mather 1968, He 2009). Its influence also extends to other countries, such as Vietnam (Lieu 2004), Japan (Zheng 1986), and Korea (Miller 1984).

Vimalakīrti, the protagonist of the *Sūtra*, is a “household bodhisattva” (Lopez and Rockefeller 1987, 28), practising *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道) in the *loka* (the secular world 世間). This *Sūtra*, designated thus by the Buddha, is named

after himⁱ, which is rare in Buddhist traditions. This symbolises the importance of Buddhist laymen who are devoted to practising Buddhist teachings in their daily life in the development of Mahāyāna (Yin-Shun 1979). This is particularly true in the case of self-benefiting altruism contributing to society, such as the helping or caring professions (for example, counselling, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, and education).

These characteristics offer a foundation for selecting the *Sūtra* in this study. The textual analysis uses Kumārajīva's (鳩摩羅什) Chinese rendition, along with English versions translated by McRae (2004) and Watson (1997) because of their readability. One mentor who is well-versed in the *Sūtra* was invited to enhance the validity of canonical interpretation, and ATLAS.ti 7, a software package, was employed for scriptural data analysis (Figure 1).

Qualitative inquiry

In this qualitative fieldwork, which was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Faculties, The University of Hong Kong, 38 participants in “purposeful sampling” (Patton 2002, 46) were recruited for this exploratory study. Demographic information for the participants is broken down into the following areas: gender (n=25 female, 65.8%; n=13 male, 34.2%), age (n=3 aged 18-30, 3.9%; n=12 aged 31-45, 31.6%; n=20 aged 46-60, 52.6%; n=3 aged over 60, 3%), and education (n=1 primary school, 2.6%; n=6 secondary school, 15.8%; n=8 undergraduate, 21.1%; n=15 post-graduate, 39.5%; n=8 doctoral degree, 21.1%).

The eligibility criteria for the informants included the following: First, beneficiaries were chosen who have experienced life challenges that have been resolved through Buddhist wisdom; however, whether they were not required to be Buddhists. Second, Buddhist masters were chosen who had experience preaching to followers, demonstrating that they actually connect with society. Third, Buddhist volunteers were chosen who regularly serve the community. Lastly, the helping service practitioners are those who tend to apply Buddhist teachings to their career or services, but are not necessarily Buddhists. Table 1 exhibits the participant details.

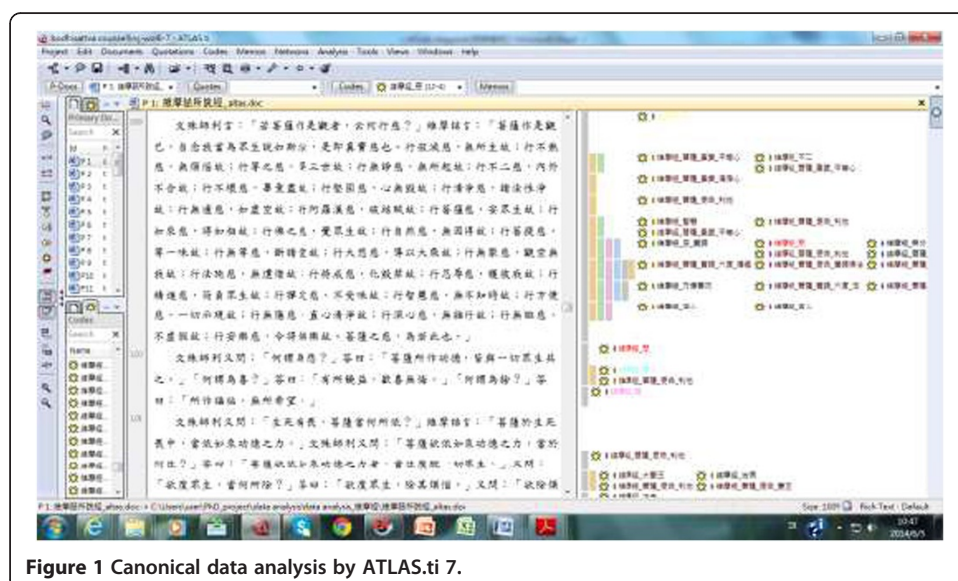


Figure 1 Canonical data analysis by ATLAS.ti 7.

Table 1 Demographic synopsis of the participants

Classification	Details
Categories of participants	Beneficiaries (n=9; 23.7%) Buddhist masters (n=11; 28.9%) Buddhist volunteers (n=6; 15.8%) Helping service practitioners (n=12; 31.6%)
Recruitment sources	Social networks (n=10; 26.3%) Cold calls (n=15; 39.5%) Electronic mails (n=7; 18.4%) Facebook page (n=0; 0%) Referrals and snowball effects (n=6; 15.8%)
Helping service practitioners	Clinical psychologist (n=1; 8.3%) Counsellor (n=3; 25%) Psychiatrist (n=3; 25%) Social worker (n=1; 8.3%) Teacher (n=4; 33.4%)
Selected in-text citations	Beneficiaries: Amara, Che Wai, Chi Sim, Esther, Dun Li, Pema Kazhuo, Puret� de Lotus Buddhist masters: Rinpoche K*, Venerable Chi Yiu, Venerable Foo Chai, Venerable Sander, Venerable Thong Hong, Venerable Yu Chun, VHU*, VHY* Buddhist volunteers: Betty, Yim Na Helping service providers: Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner), Dr Li (a psychiatrist), HW* (a helping service practitioner), Jackie (a social worker), JC* (a psychiatrist), Joe (a counsellor), KJ* (a psychiatrist), LP* (a counsellor), ML* (a counsellor), Polly (a clinical psychologist)

Remarks:
 Those with * are pseudonyms; and the remainder are real or dharma names, given by consent of the interviewees.

Forty-six semi-structured interview sessions (44 sessions with individuals, and two with focus groups), totalling 2,729 minutes, were conducted with the aid of guiding questions from March 2011 to October 2012, by means of face-to-face interviews in Hong Kong, telecommunication methods, or other correspondence. The two Buddhist volunteer focus groups not only shared their personal ideas, but also served as a means of triangulating the experiences of other individual informants.

Thirty-two informants (84.3%) were interviewed in Cantonese, a dialect spoken in Hong Kong, while four others were interviewed in English (10.5%), one in Putonghua (Mandarin) (2.6%), and another in Tibetan (2.6%), aided by an instantaneous interpreter. Furthermore, multiple sources were utilised to enrich the fieldwork data collection and analysis; for instance, a genogram (McGoldrick, Gerson, and Petry 2008), an autobiographical timeline (Leung 2010), autobiographies, participatory observations, and expressive art that contains rich messages of personal experiences and ideas (Bertman 2000) (Figure 2). The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim in Chinese. Phenomenological interpretative analysis was employed for this qualitative data analysis by using ATLAS.ti 7, a computer-assisted programme, since this analysis method mainly explores lived experiences and meaningful life events of

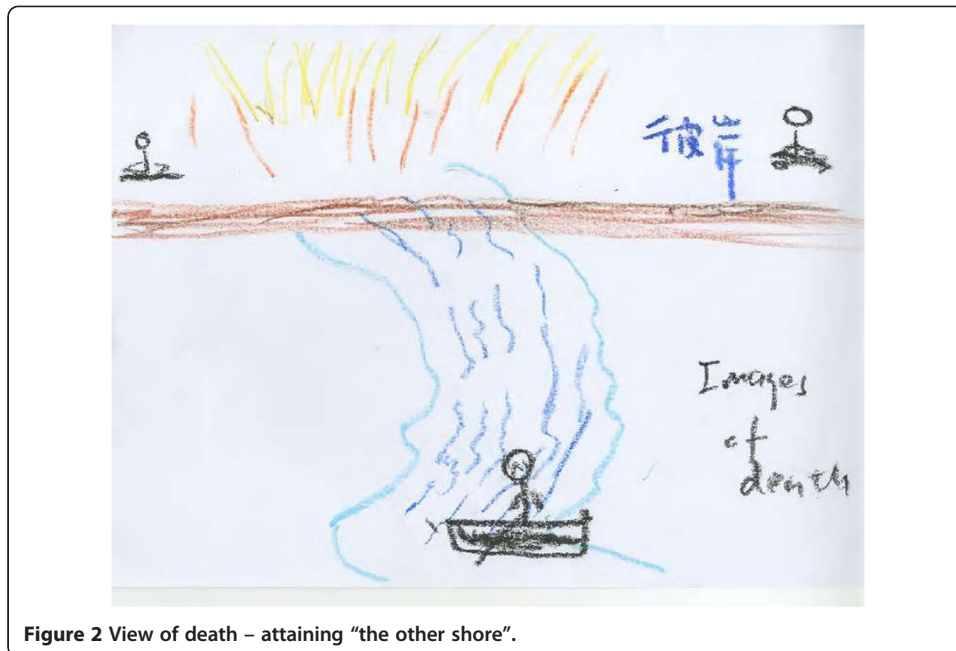


Figure 2 View of death – attaining “the other shore”.

the informants (Eatough and Smith 2006, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009), which aligns with the objectives of this research. The analysis resulted in two “super-ordinate themes” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009, 96) (philosophical concepts and propositions for counselling), 14 “emergent themes” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009, p. 91), and 40 “themes” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009, 79) (Table 2). Various methods of triangulation were also used to enhance the academic rigour of this study, encompassing member checks of transcription accuracy and data interpretation, and peer analysis at an inter-rater reliability rate of 92%.

Philosophical concepts

The philosophical basis of this counselling framework involves views of human nature, worldviews, life views, and the bodhisattva spirit from the perspective of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) in Mahāyāna. It potentially offers a theoretical ground for propositions for counselling that reflect the applicability and practicality of these teachings.

Views of human nature

The school of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) views human nature from the dimensions of nature and nurture, associated with inward and outward factors, using the metaphor of a dusty mirror.

Nature essentials

Regarding the nature aspect, the school of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) treasures the immaculacy and innocence of human nature; however, it also acknowledges an imperfect environment that causes defects in sentient beings. And yet, sentient beings are *anātman* (non-self 無我), and are in a changing state, implying the possibility of restoring their *bodhi* nature.

Table 2 Analysis themes of the bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework

Super-ordinate themes	Emergent themes	Themes
Philosophical concepts	Views of human nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nature essentials ● Nurture properties
	Worldviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Pratitya-samutpāda</i> ● Karma ● <i>Hetu-phala</i>
	Life views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Duḥkha</i> ● The other shore
	The bodhisattva spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bodhisattva ● <i>Bodhicitta</i> ● <i>Catvāri apramānāni</i>
	Therapeutic mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free from suffering
	Therapeutic goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rejuvenation of <i>bodhi</i> nature ● Enlightenment
	Roles of a counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A metaphorical doctor ● A facilitator
	Qualities of a counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wisdom ● Congruence ● Self-cherishing
	Case conceptualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Avidyā</i> ● <i>Ātma-grāha</i> ● <i>Viparyāsa</i> ● <i>Abhūta-parikalpa</i>
	Propositions for counselling	Therapeutic relationship
Therapeutic strategies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rejuvenation of purity and awareness ● Removal of <i>kleśa</i>, <i>avidyā</i>, and <i>moha</i>
Therapeutic tactics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Advaita</i> ● Transcendence of <i>kleśa</i> ● Gratitude for suffering
Skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Upāya</i> ● Intrigue
Techniques		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Metaphor ● Simile ● Humour ● Exaggerating ● Contrast ● Confrontation ● Silence ● Story-telling ● Psychoeducation ● Role Model

Bodhi nature

The *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) school values the inherent chastity of human natureⁱⁱ that leads sentient beings to awaken (Yamaguchi 1999/2006), referred to as the *bodhi*

natureⁱⁱⁱ, *tathatā* (suchness 真如), a pure mind (Zheng 1986), or the “Buddha-nature” (Abe 1997, 20); that inner force in which is able to dissipate delusion and attain one’s authentic self (Reichenbach 1990). Since the human nature is identical^{iv} across individuals, without divergence^v, both ‘angels’ and ‘devils’^{vi} can potentially be enlightened^{vii}. Based on the belief that “every person innately possesses the *buddha* nature,” Dr Li (a psychiatrist) concurred with Buddhism, that sentient beings have a high tendency towards self-actualisation, which establishes an essential rapport for counselling practitioners. This gives heart to the goals and strategies of counselling to energise the purity of human nature and achieve “brilliant sanity” (Townsend and Kaklauskas 2008, 47).

Anātman (non-self 無我)

Sentient beings are all identically living under *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), forming stages of birth, growth, deterioration, and death due to the combination of *hetu* (necessary causes 主因) and *saha-kāri-pratyaya*^{viii} (contributing causes 助緣), which produces changes and uncertainties. Thus, sentient beings as such, as well as these two types of causes, are delusive representations without fixed forms^{ix}, like clouds, foam, or bubbles^x. In Buddhism, this concept of self is associated with *anātman* (non-self 無我), an interdependent self (Wright 2009 and Dow 2008), explaining the transient physical, mental, and psychological states of human beings. Both the growth and ageing of individuals represent the temporality of the physical domain, while the mental and psychological states also change from time to time, being affected by physiological and emotional factors. These inescapable encounters cause the self to be unreal (not in a fixed form or state) (Zheng 1986).

Despite these challenges, sentient beings, with their *bodhi* nature, are capable of conquering their vexations and transcend *anitya* (impermanence 無常) (Soothill 1913) through “self-cultivation” (Wright 2009, 3), self re-enlightenment, and “self-transformation” (Wright 2009, 12), resulting in re-discovery of their “original self” (Akizuki 1990, 116). This optimistic proposition in Buddhism related to human nature encourages individuals to experience “emptiness of self” (Kornfield 2001, 76) and to make the best use of self.

Inspired by *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) teachings, Jackie (a social worker) believes that “people want to live happily. People hope they can be happy. ... They (the decadent persons) are eager to change. They want to be good. Only that kind of people can change to be good [when conditions are adequate]”. Esther (a beneficiary) personally experienced the power of change and recalled that, “because of the present environment, the present emotion, everything has changed”, by this belief she overcame her life challenges and recovered from depression.

Their support of short-term and long-term changes within the “self-system” (Markus and Nurius 1986, 966) intrinsic to the *bodhi* nature (Trungpa 1983) approves the discovery of their authentic self in the proper conditions, as well as the actualisation of their constructive “possible selves” (Markus and Nurius 1986, 954); that is, the ideal selves that individuals desire to become; “the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self” (Markus and Nurius 1986, 954). By referring to the concept of *anātman* (non-self 無我), a counsellor reinforces clients to revive from transgressions or life problems.

While self-actualisation remains the key principle in Mahāyāna, it also significantly engages humanistic counselling approaches, including the hierarchy of human needs (Maslow 1943), and person-centred therapy (Rogers 1947). These two cultural camps highlight the positive nature of human beings, which builds effective communication in counselling.

Nurture properties

Nurture properties consist of *avidyā* (ignorance 無明), along with individual attributes made up of the external factors which influence the life of sentient beings.

***Avidyā* (ignorance 無明)**

Regardless of situation, the immaculate human nature (inner characteristics) is contaminated by vexations and desires (outer conditions), as expressed by the metaphor “this body is impure, replete with defilements”^{xi} (Watson 1997, 83). The toughest defilement to address is *avidyā*, which consists of delusion and a false perception of one’s ever-changing environment, which instigates negative emotions, and cognition and behavioural problems. When sentient beings stubbornly hold^{xii} on to *avidyā*, which is the root of suffering, their mind is blemished, and distorts reality. Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner) analysed distress in the following manner:

“People are pure in nature. There are no defilements; if to otherwise, they are self-created. ... From the dimension of the *buddha* nature, everyone is in brightness; everyone has meaning and value”.

Referring to the goals and strategies of counselling, a counsellor facilitates clients to remove defilements and attain tranquillity^{xiii}, metaphorically brushing away dirt (that is, obstinate vexations) on a mirror (the pure human nature); for which Buddhist elements provide sources related to theories and practices (Zheng 1986).

Individual attributes

Although the human nature is consistently pure, sentient beings have individual features, varying according to experience, understanding^{xiv}, and capacity regarding the perception of this “evil world of the five impurities”^{xv} (五濁惡世) (Watson 1997, 114); namely, *sahā-lokadhātu* (world of saha 娑婆世界). In such a chaotic world, they remain obdurate^{xvi} in their delusion, unable to see the ultimate reality, and live with a jumping mind^{xvii}. In order to rectify their misperceptions, a counsellor is competent to apply various techniques in order to deal with individual difficulties and features, which technique is known as *upāya* (skilful means 方便) in Buddhism (Zheng 1986).

Worldviews

The fundamental Buddhist worldview comprises *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), from which arises the doctrines of karma (action 業) and *hetu-phala* (cause-and-effect 因果).

***Pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法)**

Pratītya-samutpāda, the core Buddhist theory across all Buddhist denominations and sects, explicates the formation of all beings in the empirical world. In Buddhism, what is apparent is merely the phenomenal manifestation that results from the aggregate of *hetu* (causes 因) and *saha-kāri-pratyaya* (contributing causes 助緣). For instance, a bicycle consists of wheels, tyres, a saddle, brake levers, chains, pedals, and other parts. All of these components appropriately come together and make the bicycle work. If there is a missing part, the bicycle will become inoperative; or if the tyres are on the saddle, instead of on the wheels, the bicycle likewise does not work. This illustrates that nothing is independent but all things are interconnected (Epstein 2005), which construes the “impermanence, dependence, and insubstantiality of all things” (Wright 2009, 23), and surrenders absolutism (Corless 2010), which is compatible with the post-modernist view (Watson 1998). In short, “to exist means to be interdependent” (Abiko 1982, 8). Venerable Chi Yiu further elaborated on it from the dimensions of daily life:

“All things are created by causes and conditions; that is, the connection of causes and conditions. ... The connection of causes and conditions represents the occurrence of everything. The meeting of you and me implies the connection of causes and conditions. Our making of friends, many other things, even family, family members are also incurred through the connection of causes and conditions”.

However, the *hetu* (causes 因) will change, and so will the *saha-kāri-pratyaya* (contributing causes 助緣); therefore, the phenomenon continues to change with “no lasting form” (Humphreys 1987, 20) only conjuring up a display of substance^{xviii}, showing reality to be fluid, uncertain, and dynamic (Gethin 1998). This illuminates the transient nature of existence as representing “impermanent phenomena as permanent” (Zopa 2012, 129). This is similar to Jackie’s (a social worker) experience:

“It is cause-and-condition, I agree very much. ... I feel that every step relates to causes and conditions. Where there are no causes and conditions. ... There will have no changes”.

Existence undergoes stages of change pertaining to “formation, existence, destruction, and void” (Hsu 2012, 2), denoting that “arising, staying, changing, and vanishing” (Hsu 2012, 2) present the phenomenal development of all beings. As Che Wai (a beneficiary) related the cycle of “causes arising when causes exist, causes gathering when causes exist, causes disappearing when causes are lost” that she personally experienced.

This teaching in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* is defined as “non-abiding”^{xix} – the truth behind all existence in the empirical world. This “non-abiding” nature specifies that “the various phenomena ultimately have no existence – this is the meaning of emptiness”^{xx} (McRae 2004, 43), and is termed “*śūnyata*” (voidness 空性) in Buddhism. The word “*śūnya*” in Sanskrit literally means “the swollen” (Conze 1953, 130), referring to hollowness, and representing an insubstantial nature (Zheng 1986); or with “pregnant” (Jones 2003, 13), referring to potentiality and creativity. When the nature of existence is insubstantial, so is its manifestation^{xxi}; hence, phenomena are delusive, specious, and formless^{xxii}, and concepts are phantom^{xxiii}. Conclusively, all beings are unreal and dreamlike, from the Buddhist perspective; and so is trespass.

The nature of trespass and transgression is volatile and uncertain^{xxiv}, and these are both induced by a series of causes. In other words, if one of these causes is removed, then the trespass or transgression will not occur. For example, a criminal commits a crime not because of her/his sin nature, as depicted by the notion of *bodhi* nature, but because of many other reasons, such as poverty, and family problems. This does not imply that the crime committed should be accepted, but that one should accept the influencing power of external factors – as expounded upon earlier by the metaphorical dust on a mirror. This also reveals that a counsellor must empathically investigate the latent causes of a criminal, and facilitate her/him in eliminating unfavourable causes while creating favourable agents.

Owing to “*sūnyata*” (voidness 空性), the quintessence of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) (Shi 2009), the ultimate truth (Gethin 1998), all beings are ephemeral^{xxv} and amorphous^{xxvi}; therefore Amara (a beneficiary) sighed, “nothing has never changed. Many things are out of our control”. Agreeing with this, KJ* (a psychiatrist) intelligently perceived the uncertainties of suffering (Shi 2009), expressing that:

“In fact, good and bad are void. [When] we understand that a good environment is impermanent, [we] will live carefully. But actually, predicaments are also impermanent”.

Change itself is open (Welwood 2003), unrestricted and unlimited (Rawlinson 1986), and offers chances for development and growth (Bernhard 2010), which is a fact worthy of appreciation (Cason and Thompson 1983). Jackie (a social worker) proclaimed the positive facet of evanescence, relating that “many things will change; and yet, changes create opportunities and changes bring hopes”. This reminds a counsellor to help clients create favourable conditions for change. More importantly, chances pave the way for a process of realising the meaning behind a distressful life, just as LP* (a counsellor) encouraged her clients:

“[It] is a process of self-transformation. ... [mis]-perceive that pain is real. But pain is not real. ... You [have to] transcend appearance and material form, and even outward form; that is transformation, and full freedom”.

Vimalakīrti in the *Sūtra* was metaphorically sick, through which he explains temporariness by using his fleeting and deteriorating body^{xxvii} that houses an assembly of elements to transitorily form the appearance of a body^{xxviii}. He perceives his body “as a conjurer looks on the beings he conjures up ... the moon in the water, or a face or form seen in a mirror; as shimmers of heat in a torrid season, as the echo that follows a cry, as clouds in the sky, as foam on the water, bubbles on the water, as a thing no firmer than the trunk of the plantain, no longer lasting than a flash of lightning; ...”^{xxix} (McRae 2004, 83). This exhibits a transiently phantom body^{xxx}, as with other beings, without a fixed state^{xxxi}, nor a real existence of life or death^{xxxii}.

The vicissitude of the body is also realised through “the impermanence of the five desires”^{xxxiii} (Watson 1997, 37), referring to the physical sensations of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The desires for sensory satisfaction are infinite, changing, and contextual. One may like to listen to classical music today but to popular songs tomorrow; or may relish sweet flavours today but sour tomorrow; or may covet a

car today but a house tomorrow; and so forth. This represents changes of mind, like a monkey's mind jumping ideas from idea to idea over time.

The physical and mental representations of sentient beings endorse the principle of *anātman* (non-self 無我), that is, the existence of selfless^{xxxiv} and egoless^{xxxv} beings. In Buddhism, *anātman* spells out the changes within individuals related to their physiological bodies and mental states (Watson 1998), rather than denying the existence of individuals. As explained earlier, sentient beings are non-autonomous because of *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), bound by conditions and external factors. The absence of autonomy uncovers the limitations of sentient beings, implying that there are no distinctions among individuals in nature. Therefore, there is no difference between “I” and “others”^{xxxvi}, which breaks the dualism within interpersonal relationships^{xxxvii} through an “open, unrestricted, immeasurable” (Rawlinson 1986, 141–142) mind. This realises the notion of *anātman*, which aims to dissolve “self-absorption and egoistic impulses” (Podvoll and Fortuna 2008, 88), surrender self-centredness (Epstein 1999), banish attachment to self (Parry and Jones 1986), overcome narcissism (Abe 1997), and develop an “immediate, non-self-centred response to life as it is” (Magid 2002, 79). As Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner) explained:

“The so-called non-self is not to live in our own world, not to live in a selfish space, ... not to work with others through self views, self angles, a narrow self, a selfish world”.

Śūnyata (voidness 空性) incorporates the forsaking of self-centredness and suffering that arise due to mis-perceptions of reality. Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner) looked at it through its positive connotation, relating the following:

“*Śūnyata* is to get rid of our defilements, get rid of our attachment. ... eliminate incorrect perception, ... terminate our delusive thoughts, and then return to the ultimate reality, to the truth. ... dispose of biases, dispose of prejudices, dispose of stubbornness, dispose of attachment, dispose of ideology, dispose of hatred, dispose of extant negative psychological attributes”.

Karma and cause-and-effect

As different causes come together and form an event, according to *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), some causes are created and incur a cause-and-effect, to wit, karma (action 業) that is carried forward from previous actions (Thubten 2008). An example of this is a body which has arisen from karmic effect^{xxxviii}. Although sentient beings are ever-changing without fixed forms, karma does not fade out but affects life^{xxxix}, which is “resultant of the forces brought into action” (Soothill 1913, 97). Jackie (a social worker), as a Buddhist, believed this principle, relating that:

“Things contain cause-and-effect. Sometimes, [I] experience [cause-and-effect] in [my] work. Regardless of whether [things] are going well or not, there are causes and consequences. In daily life, this can be explained”.

In accordance with cause-and-effect, good karma (action 業) comes from good actions that bring about happiness to oneself and others (Zopa 2012), and bad karma

likewise comes from bad actions^{xl}. In other words, good actions create good karma and bad actions create bad karma (Craig, Chase, and Lama 2010). Thus, “this cause makes this fruit. You make what causes and creates what fruit”, as Yim Na (a Buddhist volunteer) assented.

Therefore, karma (action 業), like a “wake-up call” (Thubten 2008, 38), governs Buddhists (Reichenbach 1990) to behave correctly and take responsibility for their own behaviour (Conze 1967). When believing in karma, individuals can peacefully accept reality (Kain 2013). This is the reason that Dun Li (a beneficiary) appreciated Buddhist teachings, as following quoted here:

“In Buddhism, the concept of cause-and-effect is a cane guiding me peacefully and at ease. ... Yet experiencing cause-and-effect in [my] daily life makes me understand that luck is created by myself and fate is made by my expectations. [I] firmly believe fate is in my hand”.

Betty (a Buddhist volunteer) echoed:

“I believe the view of cause-and-effect. In Buddhism, regarding this concept, I might have hurt other people in my previous lives. [Therefore, I] calmly face karma, confess, and reflect on whether I have hurt anyone. ... [I] am more vigilant with myself. I make good relationships with others every minute”.

JC* (a psychiatrist) summarised karma in that “the theory of cause-and-effect asks responsibilities of self [behaviour]”, which applies fairly to all beings alike, just as Pema Kazhuo (a beneficiary) concurred, explaining that “the operation of cause-and-effect [responds to] an individual’s behaviour. It is really fair”.

The Buddhist worldviews illuminate the latent causes of mental illnesses, as diagnosed here by KJ* (a psychiatrist):

“The law of dependent origination in Buddhism explains that formation is produced by an aggregate of causes and termination is induced by the loss of causes. Our problems are always related to the distortion of cause-and-effect. ... Therefore, we suffer. But many people are still warping cause-and-effect, not accepting the consequences. ... [If you] understand this cause-and-effect, evaluate it, and change [your] behaviour, thoughts, speech – in fact, the problem will have been solved”.

Buddhist worldviews also heighten the hopes of positive change in unfavourable environments, and simultaneously emphasise self-responsibility, which corresponds to humanistic psychotherapy; for instance, existential psychotherapy (Yalom 1980), and person-centred therapy (Rogers 1946).

Life views

Duḥkha (suffering 苦)

Duḥkha centres on the life views of Buddhism connected to powerlessness and dissatisfaction with such a transient life (Ray 1986 and Harvey 1990). Life is so imperfect (Huang 2011) and uncontainable (Schneider and Tong 2009), causing individuals to suffer from distress^{xli} where afflictions are inevitable and inescapable (Flowers and Stahl 2011) due

to attachment (Boeree & George 1997) and accumulated “destructive karma” (Thubten 2008, 38) in previous lives^{xlii}. Rinpoche K* (a Buddhist monk) elaborated on this as follows:

“Our present life, regardless of bodily, physiological, or psychological suffering, is in fact, rooted in bad karma from previous lives”.

Polly (a clinical psychologist) understood that suffering is induced by infinite desire:

“The meaning of suffering in Buddhism is very deep. Greed coming from desire is an affliction. Because you are greedy, you will expose yourself to hope for something. The results of such a hope contain two aspects: achieved, or not achieved. Therefore, your mind ever worries about gains and losses”.

Thus, suffering is self-created, to which Amara (a beneficiary) agreed:

“These afflictions are made by ourselves. In fact, they are our karma. I feel our suffering is non-stop”.

However, according to *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), suffering is also unreal and specious^{xliii}, and will become void and fade out. So is self, which is constantly changing, both physically and mentally (Townsend and Kaklauskas 2008). The unreal self and delusive suffering are present and continuously changing in response to surrounding conditions and karma (action 業). With a non-permanent self entity (Bernhard 2010), individuals experience the fact that “life is a process” (Bernhard 2010, 40), through which one learns to open one’s heart to accept life’s difficulties (Bernhard 2010) and also oneself (Flowers and Stahl 2011).

There is a consensus across Eastern and Western philosophers regarding the nature of suffering, in that no distinction is made as to whether it is good or bad. There are a few exceptions to this rule: for example, Schopenhauer always viewed suffering pessimistically (App 2010 and Wicks 2007). However, Buddhism expounds on *duḥkha* (suffering 苦) through a realistic view of life and the phenomenal world, neither optimistic nor pessimistic (Rahula 2001), and offers ways of expunging *duḥkha*, from which Buddhists search for meaning in life through suffering, which is concordant with person-centred therapy (Rogers 1964). In particular, the mission of Mahāyāna Buddhists is to transcend suffering (Mizuno 2003) through an “impermanent, uncertain, unpredictable, ever-changing” (Bernhard 2010, 28) life by practising *bodhicitta* (Ponlop 2008), which will be elaborated upon in the coming section.

The other shore (彼岸)

Death in Buddhism lies within the spectrum of life, instead of representing the end of life. Buddhists aim at ceasing their involvement in *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and death 輪迴) and attaining *nirvāṇa* (perfect stillness 涅槃), or “the other shore”, where all is peaceful, luminous, and hopeful, and where sentient beings are extricated from rebirth (Abe 1997). Amara (a beneficiary) elucidated her fearlessness towards death, aided by her drawing

(Figure 2); while at the same time she admitted that “the other shore” will be accessible only by enduring Buddhist practices.

“That ‘shore’ is full of hopes. Death unnecessarily stands for gloominess. Perhaps, after you die, you can reach ‘that shore’”.

Amara (a beneficiary) continued to explain her ideas, reiterating that the gap between “this shore” and “the other shore” was extremely wide, leading her to row upstream very hard. Nevertheless, she was confident in reaching it if she incessantly practised *vipāśyanā* (insight meditation 內觀). The transcendent individuals in the upper part of her drawing show her firm confidence in the possibility of finally attaining “the other shore”.

The bodhisattva spirit

The bodhisattva spirit signals a landmark in Mahāyāna that designates a bodhisattva’s missionary career, bearing the welfare of sentient beings through *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) activated by the intrinsic *bodhicitta*. In Sanskrit, “*bodhi*”, which stems from “*budh*” (Dayal 1932/1999, 18), refers to enlightenment (Leighton 1998); while “*sattva*”, is derived from “*sant*”, and denotes sentient beings (Leighton 1998). A *bodhisattva*, a “*buddha-to-be*” (Harrison 1987, 67 and Nagao 1981, 73), has become enlightened and is able to enter *nirvāṇa* (perfect stillness 涅槃), but is willing to live in the *loka* (the secular world 世間) in order to give succour to suffering living beings (Krishan 1984 and Wray et al. 1979). As a “heroic benefactor” (Leighton 1998, 1), a bodhisattva remains attentive to “the profound altruistic concern that all living beings become enlightened” (Sasaki 1982, 11), and “is dedicated to saving sentient beings from affliction,” as affirmed by Joe (a counsellor). For this, a bodhisattva unreservedly “gives all [s/he] possesses as a gift to others”^{div} (Watson 1997, 59), emphasising both the “act of living” (Kawamura 2000, 106) and their contribution to society, which is imitated admirably by Chinese Mahayanists (Suzuki 1938/1981b, Lancaster 1981).

In Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva, in a broad sense, could be anyone, and is not restricted to celestial bodhisattvas (Harrison 1987), regarding which Betty (a Buddhist volunteer) understood that “whoever can help other people is a bodhisattva; and everybody can do it”. In addition to the idea that a bodhisattva is also a “spiritual helper” (Leighton 1998, x) facilitating sentient beings to achieve personal growth and a meaningful life, helping professionals (such as counsellors, clinical psychologists, nurses, and social workers) perform bodhisattva tasks, providing human services to assist people in ameliorating their quality of life (Morales, Sheafor, and Scot 2007). Dr Li (a psychiatrist) then utilised a metaphor that illustrates how a psychiatrist works as a bodhisattva, explaining:

“A doctor (psychiatrist) is to enable patients to relieve suffering and acquire happiness. In the bodhisattva path, rescuing others is necessary. Therefore, a doctor needs to save people, to make patients free from affliction and have happiness”.

A bodhisattva practises *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道) through her/his altruistic activities (Batchelor 2004), from which s/he also gains benefits (Zopa 2012), particularly personal development (Hsing-Yun 2006). In order to enlighten other people, a bodhisattva enlightens her/himself first, demonstrating that this mutually beneficial relationship forms self-benefiting altruism, with the core of the bodhisattva

spirit (Li 1989) shrinking away from self-centred altruism towards selflessly “perfect altruism” (Williams 1998, 29). Self-benefiting altruism (that is, the bodhisattva spirit) inspires the propositions for counselling from within this counselling framework, especially in the practice of *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心).

A bodhisattva cares about everybody and will not give up anyone^{xlv}, and bearing the suffering of sentient beings^{xlvi}, which presents *mahāmaitrī-mahākaruṇā* (great loving-kindness and great compassion 大慈大悲) – the elements of *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) – activated by *bodhicitta* (菩提心).

Bodhicitta (enlightened mind 菩提心)

Bodhicitta is made up of “*bodhi*” and “*citta*”, in which the former means “awakening”, as explained earlier, and “*citta*”, which pertains directly to the mind (Dayal 1932/1999). Also known by the full term “*anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*”^{xlvii} (Watson 1997, 31) (the highest wisdom of awakening 無上正等正覺), this enlightened mind (Bloom 2000, Gethin 1998) is concerned with “minds on the Great Vehicle”^{xlviii} (Watson 1997, 44), initiating the bodhisattva’s vow on behalf of all beings (Lan 2009). On one hand, “activating *bodhicitta* is to make a vow regarding the benefit of sentient beings”, Joe asserted. On another hand, HW* (a helping service practitioner) perceived that “activating *bodhicitta* is the process of practising Buddhist teachings”. In being a bodhisattva, *bodhicitta* is the fundamental quality that activates *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心), especially *karuṇā* (compassion 悲), which was addressed by Polly (a clinical psychiatrist) when she elucidated that “activating this vow is caused by compassionate regrets for the suffering of all beings”.

Catvāri apramānāni (the four immeasurables 四無量心)

Based on *śūnyata* (voidness 空性) (Nakamura 1959/1997), *catvāri apramānāni*, which comprises *maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈), *karuṇā* (compassion 悲), *muditā* (empathetic joy 喜), and *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨), negates the discrimination between “myself” and “others”, which guides not only the mental capabilities of a bodhisattva, but also the behavioural performance, for the mission of serving sentient beings (Chen 2005).

Maitrī (loving-kindness 慈), from a Sanskrit root meaning “friendliness” (Nakamura 1959/1997), yearns for sentient beings to experience cheerfulness (Wallace 1999), and aims to deliver “contentment to all beings”^{xlix} (Watson 1997, 84) and to cope with cruelty (Salzberg 2010). Venerable Thong Hong put it simply, “loving-kindness is to give happiness to people”, or as VHU* (a Buddhist nun) similarly denoted, “loving-kindness is to enable living beings to be happy”.

While *maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈) leans towards happiness, *karuṇā* (compassion 悲) implies afflictions, representing a bodhisattva’s defining passion (Gomez 1987) and a critical motivation for altruistic contribution (Harvey 1990). Venerable Foo Chai preached that, “compassion is to liberate one from his suffering”, and “[save] living beings”¹ (Watson 1997, 60). Since the *buddha* nature represents the inborn human nature, everyone carries an innate sense of compassion that can be applied to counselling as ML* (a counsellor) experienced:

“I will encourage them (clients) to empathically observe others around them.
Compassionate observation is also a process of self learning”.

Muditā (empathetic joy 喜) illustrates that one does not simply feel satisfied with “one’s own pleasure yet celebrate[s] the pleasure of others”^{li} (McRae 2004, 161), which addresses the issue of jealousy (Harvey 1990, Wallace 1999) and causes the practitioner to become humble. LP* (a counsellor) defined “empathetic joy as ...to rejoice in other people’s success, be happy because they are happy”. In “developing joy with others’ success and well-being”, one is “happy for others’ achievements without [feeling] jealousy”, Venerable Sander and Venerable Yu Chun supplemented respectively.

Upekṣa (equanimity 捨) consists of three aspects: generosity, egalitarianism, and indiscriminate. First, as Venerable Chi Yiu preached, from the domain of “forsakes one’s various possessions”^{liii} (McRae 2004, 162), “*upekṣa* is to share with sentient beings what you have and what you should enjoy”. Second, the “principle of equanimity”^{liii} (Watson 1997, 40) “means egalitarianism” (Venerable Thong Hong), promoting the principle that there are no differences among any sentient beings. A bodhisattva cares for every individual, regardless of good or bad. Thus, *upekṣa* develops to the third dimension, indiscriminate^{liv}. Esther insightfully related her understanding that “sentient beings are equal. This reminds us not to develop a discriminative mind. ... In fact, this can apply to life”. Applying *upekṣa* to counselling, LP (a counsellor) shared that “equanimity implies that there are no differences between clients and myself”.

The achievement of *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨) enables one to possess tranquillity, a balanced mind (Harvey 1990), and an ordinary mind (Magid 2002) to observe reality as it is (Pruett 1987), and to empathically look after other people’s distress with no sentimentalised reactions (Manne-Lewis 1986).

The unity of the four interdependent and inseparable essentials of *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心), represents their individual functions and interactions, working together just as do hands, feet, body trunk, and organs. *Maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈) and *karuṇā* (compassion 悲) are two sides of a coin (Wallace 2010), as “intertwined forces” (Salzberg 2009, x), while *muditā* (empathetic joy 喜) strengthens *maitrī*, and vice versa. Only when *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨) is activated, can the other three components also activate to produce “boundless benevolence” (Oi 1982, 9) and limitless compassion, leading to great wisdom (Tada 1982, Wray 1986), which perfects *catvāri apramānāni* (Wallace 1999). A reminder from VHY* (a Buddhist nun) that “you have to indiscriminately treat others with loving-kindness and compassion”, illustrates the interactive relationship among them. The four essentials relate to diverse aspects and feelings, but aim towards the same path, that is, *nirvāṇa* (perfect stillness 涅槃), the spiritual state of tranquillity. *Catvāri apramānāni* has often been used for psychological and spiritual growth (Kornfield, Dass, and Miyuki 1983), on which these theories applied to counselling settings will be elaborated in the next part.

Propositions for counselling

Buddhist teachings, as discussed previously, offer a far-reaching opportunity for healing through insightful self-awareness (Thurman 2005), which supports the counselling theories from within this counselling framework, covering four tiers: first, its therapeutic mission and goals; second, the roles and qualities of a counsellor; third, case conceptualisation, therapeutic relationships, and therapeutic strategies; and lastly, therapeutic tactics, skills, and techniques.

Therapeutic mission

A bodhisattva practises her/his sacred mission by implementing *bodhicitta* in order “to benefit sentient beings”^{lv} (McRae 2004, 82), relieve them from suffering^{lvi} (Keown 2000), and prune away *avidyā* (ignorance 無明) (Claxton 1986) and misconceptions. Freedom from suffering^{lvii} indicates significant personal growth, marking the presence of two aspects: self attainment, and altruism^{lviii}. A bodhisattva aims to help sentient beings in order to release them from desire and cause them to acquire an inherently pure mind^{lix} so that they can bring themselves happiness^{lx}. Also, s/he strives to lead sentient beings to be bodhisattvas and help others^{lxi}. In practising the “helper therapy principle” (Riessman 1965, 28), a bodhisattva enables sufferers to help others who are suffering from similar distress. In conclusion, a bodhisattva is a bodhisattva to her/himself as well as to other people for the purpose of attaining a richly nuanced level of well-being, as defined by Fromm (1983, 63):

“Well-being is the state of having arrived at the full development of reason not in the sense of a merely intellectual judgement, but in that of grasping truth by ‘letting things to be’ (to use Heidegger’s term) as they are. Well-being is possible only to the degree to which one has overcome one’s narcissism; to the degree to which one’s open, responsive, sensitive, awake, empty (in the Zen sense). Well-being means to be fully related to man and nature affectively, to overcome separateness and alienation, to arrive at the experience of oneness with all that exists – and yet to experience *myself* at the same time as the separate entity *I am*, as the in-dividual. Well-being means to be fully born, to become what one potentially is; it means to have the full capacity for joy and for sadness or, to put it still differently, to awake from the half-slumber the average man lives in, and to be fully awake. If it is all that, it means also to be creative; that is, to react and to respond to myself, to others, to everything that exists-to react and to respond as the real, total man I am to the reality of everybody and everything as he or it is. In this act of true response lies the area of creativity, of seeing the world as it is *and* experiencing it as *my* world, the world created and transformed by my creative grasp of it, so that the world ceases to be a strange world ‘over there’ and becomes *my* world. Well-being means, finally, to drop one’s ego, to give up greed, to cease chasing after the preservation and the aggrandisement of the ego, to be and to experience oneself in the act of being, not in having, preserving, coveting, using”.

Fromm’s (1983) delineation of well-being affirms that the inborn wisdom and enlightenment of sentient beings offer the qualities of self-actualisation that benefit not only oneself, but also others and society. Similarly, a counsellor believes that anyone will tend to change towards the direction of truth, good and beauty; and this can result from any adversity, when the favourable conditions and environment are offered. The mission of a counsellor in a “therapeutic venture” (Corey 2009, 6) is therefore to facilitate clients in alleviating their distress and solving problems by her/himself (acting as her/his own bodhisattva), and to eventually acquiring inner peace due to “the full awakening of the total personality to reality” (Fromm 1983, 67).

Therapeutic goals

In fulfilling this mission, the therapeutic goals are: first, to rejuvenate the true nature of sentient beings, that is, to aid them in becoming their “absolute self” (Reichenbach

1990, 54) and achieving genuine “human-beingness” (Trungpa 1983, 126); second, to liberate them from *avidyā* (ignorance 無明) and *tri-doṣa* (three poisons 三毒), or *rāga* (greed 貪), *dveṣa* (hatred 瞋), and *moha* (delusion 癡). As a result, they attain “spiritual freedom” (Reichenbach 1990, 54), with no fears, anxiety, or worries. In order to enable clients to achieve enlightenment, a counsellor seeks to guide them away from self-centredness (Krieglstein 2002). When clients let go of egotism, they can accurately perceive reality, truly get in touch with their authentic self, and sincerely connect with other people. Well-being comes from genuine acceptance of self and others, as suggested by Fromm (1983).

Roles of a counsellor

A counsellor, acting like a bodhisattva, plays the roles of therapist and facilitator in order to fulfil the therapeutic mission and goals.

A therapist

A bodhisattva is “the physician king, healing the host of illnesses”^{lxii} (McRae 2004, 110), where “illnesses” refers to afflictions and psychological problems. Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner) expounded on this facet in the following manner:

“The Buddha is a great doctor, ... dealing with our ignorance. Buddhism offers a theoretical base which supports counselling theories”.

Metaphorically, to be an “inexhaustible lamp”^{lxiii} refers to the illumination of the darkness, equivalent to the mission of a counsellor who helps clients leave their darkest life period behind, regarding which Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) further explained, “in Buddhism, this is the ‘lamp of heart’, that is, spiritual transmission: being willing to experience through the heart”. His emphasis on heartily caring for patients is reminiscent of a helping service practitioner who practises *maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈) and *karuṇā* (compassion 悲) towards clients. Thus, a compassionate therapist advocates the client-centred principle. “[This] doesn’t focus on [the therapist], but on the patient. ... [It] isn’t for the self [of the therapist], but follows the patient’s needs”, VHY* (a Buddhist nun) reiterated.

A facilitator

A bodhisattva is also “the Great Guide of All”^{lxiv} (McRae 2004, 74), who “[releases] people from their delusions”^{lxv} (McRae 2004, 139), acting as a life coach^{lxvi}. “A good bodhisattva and *kalyāṇamitra* (a good companion 善知識) must inspire [her/his] patients to develop faith [in the law of karma], virtuous behaviour (*śīla* in Sanskrit), generosity, and wisdom, so that [the patients] will be able to find happiness in their present and future lives”, related Venerable Sander.

Summarising the role of a bodhisattva in a counselling setting, Venerable Sander continued, “a counsellor should aim to not only relieve the patient’s distress, but also to teach him to take care of himself using dharma, and to develop an aim in life to find happiness in the present life in a wise way, as well as in the future life, and even the happiness of *nirvāṇa*”, that is, blissful well-being (Conze 1953).

Qualities of a counsellor

Consummating her/his mission, goals, and roles, a counsellor embodies three qualities, which pertain to wisdom, congruence, and self-cherishing; not only for the sake of clients, but also for personal and career development when exposing clients' adversities.

Wisdom

Wisdom represents a cluster of attributes: in addition to sincerity^{lxvii}, a profound mind^{lxviii}, and *bodhicitta*, it also covers non-dualism, *maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈), *karuṇā* (compassion 悲), *muditā* (empathetic joy 喜), and *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨). Having attained compassionate wisdom (Slater 1981) to maintain a balanced mind and engage a mindfully psychological state in respect to emotion, cognition, behaviour, and spirituality (Kristeller and Jones 2006), a counsellor "must purify [her/] his mind"^{lxix} (Watson 1997, 29) posits "in equality without dualism"^{lxx} (Watson 1997, 106).

A purified mind is a non-self-centred mind which is non-judgemental and impartial, without bias, prejudice, preconception, and unfairness. Emerging out of non-duality and indiscrimination, it enables a counsellor to see reality correctly without distortion^{lxxi}, build mutual trust with clients, and touch clients' inner feelings more easily. Non-duality refers to the absence of positive or negative criticism, which opens a counsellor's mind to the greatest level of acceptance without avoidance (Magid 2002) and allows the counsellor to create possible solutions. Based on indiscrimination and impartiality, or *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨) in Mahāyāna and unconditional regard in person-centred therapy, a counsellor does pass judgement on clients whoever they may be. With a pure mind, having no non-dualism or discrimination, a counsellor is able to practise *maitrī* (loving-kindness 慈) and *karuṇā* (compassion 悲), "the true spirit of Buddhism" (Dockett and North-Schulte 2003, 231), for this "compassionate service" (Silverberg 2008, 239), especially in the "talking cure" (Glaser 2005, 5) related modes of caring professions. K)* (a psychiatrist) illuminated the prominence of this spirit:

"[A counsellor] must be compassionate, and have loving-kindness and compassion. [When a counsellor] has the heart of loving-kindness and compassion, [clients] will trust you (the counsellor)".

As "a compassionate witness" (Kornfield 2001, 220) who heartily cares for clients, a counsellor better understands clients (Whipps 2010) when s/he "experience[s] what patients experience. ... Most importantly, [a counsellor] can experience [these things] through the heart", Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) continued to share his empathic understanding:

"I do my best to look after patients, to get involve in their daily life, to enter their life. I consider whether I understand them, because, [I] must understand them in order to help them. Otherwise, [I] cannot help them".

Empathic understanding results from "nowness" (Brandon 1983, 143) and non-judgement, and reflects "empathetic resonance" (Prendergast 2003b, 102) in responding to a client's internal feelings and thoughts, as though the counsellor had experienced it intimately and directly (Hunt 2003), showing thought empathy (Burns 2008) and feeling empathy (Burns 2008).

In order to empathically understand clients, *karuṇā* (compassion 悲) is a key attribute, as elaborated here by Polly (a clinical psychologist):

“When [we] can do such basic work (compassion), [we] have helped him (a client) to recognize his emotion. When a person can recognise his own emotion, and can listen to his [inner] voice, he has a natural ability ... [When] a person can see her/himself in other people – in fact, I (a clinical psychologist) function as a mirror, and can more or less help [him] to see himself”.

Through empathy, a compassionate counsellor can also rejoice in a clients’ happiness and achievements, which is known as *muditā* (empathetic joy 喜). The capability of feeling the happiness and sadness of clients as they are differentiates a bodhisattva-counsellor from a counselling technician.

Congruence

Congruence refers to the ability to “be myself” (Bondarenko 1999, 10) and be transparent to oneself (Cornelius-White 2007), which leads a counsellor to develop openness, unconditional regards and empathic understanding towards clients (Quinn 2008 and Rogers 1959). In order to be genuine, a counsellor must be able to listen to clients non-judgementally (Rogers and Nelson 1977) and to facilitate clients in unveiling their genuineness, thereby allowing clients to enhance their self-awareness and express their true feelings (Rogers 1957, Quinn 2008 and Cornelius-White 2007).

A counsellor, also an ordinary person, has life challenges (Morales, Sheafor, and Scot 2007) that can become assets in her/his counselling career, because a “wounded healer” (Stone 2008, 48) may provide greater healing effects to clients (Kornfield 2001) if the counsellor is congruent to her/his true self, experience, and feelings. S/he is in this way able to feel the distress empathically. As Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) reiterated:

“The Buddha perceives his own suffering first, and also perceives suffering in the secular world, in which he’s also a member. Therefore, he needs to free [himself] from his afflictions, and then rescue suffering people”.

Self-cherishing

Compassion fatigue, similar to the “sentimental compassion”^{lxxii} (McRae 2004, 112) denoted in the *Sūtra*, severely deteriorates the enthusiasm of counsellors, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion due to prolonged exposure to caring for others’ tribulations through codependency (Walley 1986). Self-cherishing is a panacea for enabling a counsellor to take care of her/himself for both personal growth and career development (Bankart 2006), since, ML* (a counsellor) emphasised as follows:

“[You] have capability and endless energy towards others. You must first know to take care of yourself. ... When you reasonably look after yourself, you then have the ability [to taking care of yourself]”.

In order not to “be limited by any affectionate view” (McRae 2004, 112), a counsellor implements *prajñā*^{lxxiii} (wisdom 般若) and *upāya*^{lxxiv} (skilful means 方便) in order to

compassionately and skilfully help clients, while not overwhelming clients with their distress and pain^{lxxxv}. Initially, a counsellor properly understands the nature of beings, that is, *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法) and *śūnyata* (voidness 空性), indicating the temporality of existence and that their existence varies in light of karma (action 業) and *hetu-phala* (cause-and-effect 因果). The effectiveness of a case depends on conditions and causes that are not in the counsellor's control, reflecting a bilateral counsellor-client relationship.

Also, a counsellor learns self-kindness and self-compassion (Germer 2009 and Ding 2009), through which s/he retains a positive attitude towards her/himself with the least amount of self-criticism and self-blame (Neff 2003, Neff, Kirkpatrick, and Rude 2007). This healthy and balanced psychological state enables the counsellor to maintain self-awareness, self-esteem, self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-motivation (Neff 2004, Williams, Stark, and Foster 2008, Neff, Kirkpatrick, and Rude 2007, Neff and Vonk 2009), which is especially important for counselling practitioners to prevent burnout or compassion fatigue (Patsiopoulos and Buchanan 2011), and avoid over-involvement in others' miseries (Cheng 2013). In other words, a counsellor retains passion to help clients^{lxxxvi} but neither attaches themselves to their situation nor over-invests compassion^{lxxxvii}, because the *bodhi* nature is inherent in sentient beings, and is able to adjust her/his mental contentment accordingly.

Self-cherishing, as a learning process, offers chances for a counsellor to have a better self-understanding, and a better overview of life, and to improve her/his professional techniques. During counselling, a counsellor helps clients, and gains insight from them, which is the essence of self-benefiting altruism, resulting from this interactive process.

Therapeutic relationships: bodhisattva-bodhisattva interplay

As the foundation for the quality of a counsellor, *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) also nurtures the therapist-client relationship. HW* (a helping service practitioner) advocated that "*catvāri apramānāni* is a channel through which to develop the relationship between a counsellor and a client", while KJ* (a psychiatrist) emphasised the need to "treat other people with loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. Let them (clients) feel loved and accompanied. Don't let [them] feel alone".

Through retaining *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨), and majoring in *samatā* (equality 平等), both counsellors and clients are equal in nature, in *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and death 輪迴), in karma, and in *hetu-phala* (cause-and-effect 因果). Superior and inferior are not necessarily distinguishable. This causes Polly (a clinical psychologist) to be humble towards clients, in that "[it] is not really that there is an expert; or rather, that an expert is not superior. An expert is only more experienced, or more willing to learn from sickness. The real expert is that sickness [itself]". Polly (a clinical psychologist) had experienced this dynamic between counsellor and client, from which she gained mutual benefit that aided her personal growth and career development; that is, self-benefiting altruism.

Counsellors and clients engender an interrelated, "fluid and permeable" (Prendergast 2003a, p. 8), and equal relationship (Raskin 1996). A counsellor, just like a bodhisattva, helps a client to become a bodhisattva who can help her/himself. In this process, the

counsellor may review her/his own problems and better understand her/himself, through which the client becomes a bodhisattva to the counsellor. This interaction within the counselling process provides healing for the client, and self-learning for the counsellor, through which the counsellor experiences “a journey of evolving self–other understanding and growth” (Finlay 2011, 7). This forms a bodhisattva-bodhisattva relationship, through which both parties are counter-partner bodhisattvas, both gaining personal development and potentially furthering self-actualisation. This non-linear interplay, for the counsellor, realises self-benefiting altruism.

Case conceptualisation

Case conceptualisation contains a series of assessments utilised to investigate the problem(s) of a client, including family and education background, presenting problem(s), and psycho-social development history (Corey 1996). Hereafter in this study, this term refers to the primordial cause(s) of a client’s suffering.

Sickness in the *Sūtra* metaphorically refers to “bondage”^{lxxviii} (McRae 2004, 112), “defilement”^{lxxix} (Watson 1997, 70), and “vexation”^{lxxx} (McRae 2004, 83); in other words, suffering. “Ignorance and feelings of attachment”^{lxxxi} (Watson 1997, 65) are the roots of defilement (Chang 2007). Sentient beings are ignorant of *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), the ultimate truth of reality, not knowing that existence is a phenomenon formed by causes and conditions. This ignorance leads them to hold on to possessions; for instance, clinging to her/his own body^{lxxxii} (Watson 1997, 86). This possession of her/his own body directs her/him to eagerly seek after an unchanging substantive body. For instance, individuals often endeavour to maintain good health, good figures, and beautiful faces, and feel dissatisfied with the inevitability of getting old age. In this sense, the body is an aggregate of defilements and suffering^{lxxxiii}.

The “attachment of self”^{lxxxiv} (McRae 2004, 110), reflected by this clinging on to the body, directs a person to their “centre of gravity” (Roshi 1983, 71), which reinforces a misunderstanding of “the integrative force, the function, that unifies you as yourself” (Roshi 1983, 71). This attachment to self makes one cultivate “desire and greed”^{lxxxv} (Watson 1997, 86) so as to fulfil one’s endless wants. *Rāga* (greed 貪) leads an individual to seize upon external desires, to wit “troublesome entanglements”^{lxxxvi} (*ālambana* 攀緣) (Watson 1997, 69), in Buddhism, which causes one to tenaciously hold on to external factors. For instance, an individual will often feel happy when praised, but sad when criticised. This entanglement creates “a confused [view]”^{lxxxvii} (*viparyāsa* 顛倒) (McRae 2004, 111) that distracts a person from being able to perceive the phenomenal reality and one’s own self. These deluded thoughts magnify “false and empty distinctions”^{lxxxviii} (*abhūta-parikalpa* 虛妄分別) (Watson 1997, 86) that discriminate between “you” and “I” and reinforce the attachment to “I”, “me”, and “mine” (Flowers and Stahl 2011, 24), building a wall of rejection towards other people and hanging on to self-centredness.

The *Sūtra* points out that there is a cluster of causes behind suffering, including *avidyā* (ignorance 無明), *ātma-grāha* (self-attachment 我執), deluded thoughts, *viparyāsa* (confused view 顛倒), and *abhūta-parikalpa* (false dichotomy 虛妄分別), which agitate the *bodhi* nature of sentient beings and forms a second nature. A counsellor helps clients clarify the most crucial root factor for them from among these causes of suffering and thus helps them improve their second nature.

Therapeutic strategies

The therapeutic strategies resonate with the views of human nature that have been delved into and targeted early on: first, there is a need for a rejuvenation of purity and awareness; and second, the removal of *kleśa* (defilement 煩惱), *avidyā* (ignorance 無明), and *moha* (delusion 愚癡) is also essential. The former re-discovers the *buddha* nature, whereas the latter brings about a comfortable life in the empirical world. Indeed, the two strategies are interdependent, emphasising the positive facets of the former and undermining the negative aspects of the latter. As a result, sentient beings can live with “the true self in the here-and-now” (Akizuki 1990, 64), where the present moment not only indicates the exact moment now, but also extends to every moment continuing into the future.

These therapeutic strategies accede to the views of human nature and develop therapeutic tactics that guide the operational purposes in order to fulfil the therapeutic mission and goals, as covered previously.

Therapeutic tactics

Therapeutic tactics, reflecting therapeutic strategies, embraces three domains: non-dualism, transcendence of *kleśa* (defilement 煩惱), and gratitude for suffering.

Advaita (non-dualism 不二)

In eliminating *kleśa* (defilement 煩惱), *avidyā* (ignorance 無明) and *moha* (delusion 愚癡), and restoring the *bodhi* nature, precluding *anta-dvaya* (duality of extremes 二邊) plays a critical role in awakening^{lxxxix} (Dalai 1999). De-polarising two extremes does not deny the existence of the two poles; instead, it accepts the interdependence of two truths: duality in *lokasamvṛti-satya* (secular truth 世俗諦), and non-duality in *paramārtha* (superlative truth 真諦).

In the empirical world, phenomena of opposites do exist; for instance, bright/dark, long/short, white/black; but this relativity does not exist in absolute truth, or *paramārtha* (superlative truth 真諦), implying that there is “no intrinsic reality” (Dalai 1999), as explained earlier. If there is no “one” reality and *lokasamvṛti-satya* (secular truth 世俗諦) is relatively true, any judgement is therefore contextual and non-absolute. For example, “entering” and “leaving” are relative, meaning that when one enters a forest, that same person is also leaving the forest after s/he has traversed through half of it, even while going in the same direction. So is any judgement of good and bad, or right and wrong. In fact, such pairs of extremes are symbiotic: they are opposite but paired, inter-related, and interdependent (Dao-an 1997). Where there is no rich, there is no poor; likewise for quick or slow. Judgement relies on comparison: When compared with 5 meters, 10 meters away is far; but compared with 100 meters, 10 meters away is near. In conclusion, *advaita* (non-dualism 不二) challenges programmed thoughts and the second nature, which enables sentient beings to cross over relativity and personal boundaries so that they can openly accept others and even opposite opinions, and become inclusive.

However, sentient beings mistakenly hold to relativity and suffer from the effects of comparing themselves with others, causing Dr Chan (a helping service practitioner) to illuminate with a sigh:

“We live in relativity. Relativity is opposition. Opposition creates resistance. Resistance yields fighting, and eventually leads to war. People’s vexation originates from relativity. ... that is, comparison will cause the loss of autonomy, and become powerlessness”.

Unlike “non-duality therapy” (Fenner 2003, 26) that integrates the empty-mind concept of Zen with the *advaita* (non-dualism 不二) of Hinduism, the chapter on “Entering the Gate of Non-dualism” in the *Sūtra* criticises the binary concept and asserts a detachment from dichotomy. Examples include the antitheses between life and death^{xc}, purity and defilement^{xcⁱ}, between good and not good^{xcⁱⁱ}, and between sin and blessing^{xcⁱⁱⁱ}. These appear to be mutually exclusive: Death cannot come together with life, nor purity with contamination; goodness cannot join with evil, nor trespass with benediction. When getting rid of non-duality, one removes the desire for possession, abases narcissism, and lessens the feeling of being afflicted^{xc^{iv}}. However, beings are formed under *pratītya-samutpāda* (the law of dependent origination 緣起法), and their nature is *śūnyata* (voidness 空性) without fixed forms or states. Sin is incurred through some certain causes and conditions^{xc^v}, by which a counsellor may understand, from an alternative view, how to help clients lessen their feelings of guilt and reduce their psychological burdens so that clients are more willing to correct their misbehaviour.

Transcendence of defilements

Having understood non-dualism, one can detach her/himself from phenomena that are delusive and contextual. Phenomena as such are insubstantial; therefore, “freedom from attachments” (Inoue 1997, 125) (where attachment is a type of defilement) indicates freedom from clinging to materialistic and psychological desires^{xc^{vi}}. In Vimalakīrti wisdom, the method is presented where one is instructed to “just eliminate the illness; do not eliminate dharmas”^{xc^{vii}} (McRae 2004, 111), where “illness” means defilements and distress, and “*dharma*” herein refers to all natural phenomena (Dao-an 1997). This denotes that one may obviate the causes of suffering but not necessarily discard the phenomenon of suffering itself. While the phenomenon is neutral, the reactions to the phenomenon vary from individual to individual. Similarly, a love film can be romantic to one individual but sorrowful to another, because of disparate life experiences and feelings. More practically, suffering is inevitable in life, but how to deal with suffering is a choice for each individual (Germer 2009).

When the causes of suffering are eradicated, the phenomenon is only a presence and it is unimportant whether or not it exists because these causes of suffering will no longer evoke negative emotion in the sufferer. In this sense, an individual who is capable of “accepting the world as it is” (Kaklauskas and Olson 2008, 146), disregards whatever afflictions may appear to exist^{xc^{viii}}, and attains *nirvāṇa* (perfect stillness 涅槃) through their suffering^{xc^{ix}}; in which *nirvāṇa* refers to the state where afflictions have been expunged. In practice, emotion management itself is the critical issue, rather than negative emotional reactions towards those afflictions that are inseparable from life. In addition to proper emotional management, the individual is able to help other people avoid experiencing agony and help them transcend defilements, which is the achievement of Mahāyāna wisdom.

In one case in this study (Cheng and Tse 2014), Pureté de Lotus (a beneficiary), who suffered the loss of her spouse, did not intentionally avoid feelings of guilt, although she retained guilty feelings about not staying with her late husband when he was seriously ill. She lived with feelings of guilt, which had no negative impact on her daily life; and she practised good behaviour in order to achieve good karma. Furthermore, she was working as a social worker helping vulnerable people. Her experience

is inspiring, in that a counsellor may lead clients to face reality and live with pain, or in other words, to transcend suffering.

Gratitude for suffering

The *Sūtra* values suffering because sentient beings learn from affliction^c. When they experience suffering, they can understand the nature of existence, and afflictions offer chances for them to discover their potentiality^{ci}, to wit personal growth. Treasuring the experience of suffering helps them to realise the meaning of life, like obtaining a pearl after entering an ocean^{cii}, implying that suffering is valuable. In this sense, all hindrances that afflict individuals are a learning process through which to overcome their weaknesses and become strong^{ciii}.

Beneficiaries in the study were often thankful for the distress that gave them a new life after overcoming their suffering. By way of illustration, Esther re-built her self-confidence and learned forgiveness after recovering from depression, and Che Wai and Chi Sim improved their mother-child relationship, likewise expressing gratitude for their suffering. A counsellor guides clients in managing suffering positively, and in transforming misery into motivation.

Principles of skills

The *Sūtra* has inspired two major principles of therapeutic skills, covering *upāya* (skillful means 方便), and intrigue.

Upāya (skillful means 方便)

Upāya, in aiming to cultivate the well-being of sentient beings (Kaziyama 1994), is the key principle which a bodhisattva practices^{civ} (Pye 2003) flexibly to help sentient beings^{cv} through various methods and techniques, complying with the characteristics of an individual, and that individual's needs (Schroeder 2001).

Even though the nature of sentient beings, that is, the *buddha* nature, is innately identical for all, the karma of individuals is diverse, which manifests differences in presence affected by causes and conditions. Therefore, the background, characters, attributes, habits formed (second nature), and temperament are different from individual to individual. A bodhisattva builds a pure land according to the capabilities and characteristics of these sentient beings, where they are able to attain the pure land^{cvi}, in order to save them^{cvi}, enable them to be peaceful^{cvi}, and eradicate their afflictions^{cix}. Similarly, a counsellor is sensitive to clients' personality traits when applying counselling models and techniques to each independent therapeutic case, aiming to facilitate them in solving their own problems. HW* (a helping service practitioner) reacted by explicating, "some people prefer self-benefit. ... My tactic is to encourage [them] in how to achieve self-benefit. If someone is suited to altruism, I will apply altruism in leading [them] to leave their current predicament".

Also, a bodhisattva can intelligently make out the individual needs of sentient beings, and fulfil their demands^{cx}. Clients have distinct needs because of their disparate milieu and predicaments; and reacting to their actual needs is particularly vital for reaching "co-constructing solutions" (Corey 2009, 6). Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) shared his experience as follows:

"*Upāya* is to recognise the individuality of every person, and a bodhisattva fits [each of] them. That is, you need to accommodate patients, but not make patients

accommodate you. ... If a patient believes in Kuan-Yin (a bodhisattva), then [you] may talk about Kuan-Yin”.

The fictitious sickness (Schroeder 2001) of Vimalakīrti in the *Sūtra* highlights “an upayic story” (Schroeder 2001, 75) by exemplifying his feigned body, from which Vimalakīrti preaches the doctrines of *anitya* (impermanence 無常), non-autonomy, interconnectedness, suffering, and causes of suffering and does not use a fixed method for teaching. When preaching, any method is permissible as long as it achieves the goals, such as when metaphoric fragrance is effectively adopted for facilitation^{cx1}.

Intrigue

With the help of *upāya* (skilful means 方便), intrigue will then be employed. After a bodhisattva skilfully attracts sentient beings first^{cxii} by whatever means available, s/he leads them to acquire a meaningful life. In this sense, a counsellor may adroitly draw her/his clients’ attentions, particularly for “complainants” (Corey 2009, 383); that is, involuntary clients who resist counselling services. Converting complainants to “customers” (Corey 2009, 383), clients who are aware of their life difficulties and are willing to seek professional help, is always one of the critical responsibilities of a counsellor.

Counselling techniques

Counselling, as a “talking cure” (Watson 1998, 6), largely uses verbal activities for healing and facilitation; whereas the *Sūtra* artfully utilises both verbal and non-verbal expression techniques in order to enhance the readability and effective delivery of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) thoughts. Many of the techniques are compatible with those currently used in therapeutic settings, pertaining to metaphor, simile, humour, exaggerating, contrast, confrontation, silence, story-telling, psychoeducation, and role model, illustrating cross-reference between the two disciplines but not excluding other possible techniques for counselling purposes.

Metaphor

A metaphor facilitates an understanding of a concept, the target domain (Kövecses 2002, 4), through another concept, the source conceptual domain (Kövecses 2002, 4). As “humans are metaphorising animals” (Johnson 1995, 159), always performing a metaphorical, imaginative, and “aesthetic function” (Schwabenland 2012, 80), they are able to map a similar frame of reference from the source conceptual domain to the target concept (Schwabenland 2012).

Metaphorical representations are popularly used not only in Western literature, but also in clinical interpretive practices. For instance, medical anthropologists employ a variety of metaphors in implicitly describing a body, such as the illustration of poison (Kirmayer 1992). Not only useful in facilitating understanding, metaphors are also utilised in emotional expressions and articulation (Averill 2009, Crawford 2009), especially for evaluative feelings (Emanatian 1995, Helm 2009).

Metaphoric preaching is a traditional and powerful approach among teachings in Buddhist scriptures, and one which brings out insightful understandings of the more complex tenets (Cheng 2011 and Sugioka 2009). In the *Sūtra*, metaphors are heavily

utilised to explain *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) philosophy. One of these is the illustration of Vimalakīrti's sickness and his ever-changing body. His sickness connotes *anitya* (impermanence 無常), and the non-autonomy of all beings^{cxiii}, in which it is presented that the body will get sick, degenerate and die^{cxiv}. Such a body is a phenomenal, delusive, and temporal body^{cxv} which should be let go of it. Sickness itself functions as a metaphor for a series of bondage – attachment^{cxvi} and entanglement^{cxvii} that causes suffering.

Similarly, a lotus epitomises such unadulterated and resilient features^{cxviii}. Growing in grimy mud, an immaculate lotus shows its untainted character, shrinking away from the influence of its contaminated environment, implying its persistence and noble characteristics. Conversely, a lotus will perish in clean earth where it does not get nourishment from marshland, denoting that predicaments and failures are motivations that drive success.

Metaphors serve as a communicative operation in psychotherapy (Witztum, van der Hart, and Friedman 1988), covering psychoanalytic approaches to investigating clients' unconsciousness (Punter 2007 and Rogers 1978), cognitive behavioural therapy (Kopp 1995), family therapy (Kopp 1995), solution-focused therapy for problem solving and self reflection (Cheng 2011, Solberg, Nysether, and Steinsbekk 2012, Walsh 2010), and play therapy (Snow et al. 2005), particularly using common life experiences as examples (Larkin and Zahourek 1998, Clarke 2013), and forming a “metaphor therapy” (Kopp 1995, xvi-xvii) to enhance metaphoric communication for emotional ventilation (Laranjeira 2013).

Simile

A simile, a poetic similitude (Bronner 2007), is usually used in a looser form of association but with a higher degree of common ground of understanding (Punter 2007); and therefore it offers a more explicit connection between the target concept and the source concept.

The *Sūtra* uses numerous similes in its preaching, for example, “the inexhaustible lamp”, standing for the bodhisattva's missionary career^{cxix}; “a conjured person”, indicating the *śūnyata* (voidness 空性) of living beings^{cxx}; and phantasmic presence, specifying the nature of existence^{cxxi}.

Similes, like metaphors, used in therapeutic settings (Cade 1994) effectively enable clients to think more deeply as outsiders; in particular, when employed together with confrontation, in order to prevent embarrassment. They are sometimes more effective than metaphors in dealing with children (Callow 2003).

Humour

The use of humour plays an important role in Western religious traditions (Geybels and van Herck 2011), which is an art from relating funny stories and jokes from religious sources, showing comic and tragic connotations (Taels 2011) through magnifying and exaggerating effects (Bergson 1911). The rich humour in Buddhist literature (Van Herck 2011) purposefully enables one to review her/his life (Taels 2011).

Fables and parables in the *Sūtra* are full of “conversational humour” (Dyrel 2011, p. 217) that portray the “absurdity of contradiction” (Taels 2011, 26) but exhibit the wisdom of Vimalakīrti (Lamotte 1976/1990). Śāriputra, one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha, displays such irony (Lin 1997b) when failing to argue with a goddess. When he despised the goddess and suggested that she became a god, he was

magically changed to the appearance of a goddess^{cxxii}, and thereby understood that there are no gender differences in nature. Humour has been widely adopted in psychotherapy (Banman 1982, Davidson and Brown 1989, Klein 1976, Moran 2002) as a coping strategy to turn negatives into positives, or pessimism into optimism, and to increase happiness levels (Wilkins and Eisenbraun 2009).

Exaggerating

The technique of exaggeration intensifies the discussion theme in a therapeutic process in order to draw out the creative and imaginative potential of the client (Dolliver 1991, Ciuffardi, Scavelli, and Leonardi 2013).

In the *Sūtra*, the chapter “Inconceivable” uses this technique frequently. For example, it elicits thirty-two thousand giant chairs in a one-square-foot cell^{cxxiii}, Sumeru Mountain in a mustard seed^{cxxiv}, and an ocean of water in a tiny hair^{cxxv}. These break the relativity of objects, leading one to outpace their habitual thinking mode and open themselves up to limitless feasibility, resulting in not only “the total acceptance of, and opening up to, the transience and fragility of our human condition” (Jones 2003, p. 9), but more crucially, to “the emptying of the wants and desires of the clinging agitated and opinionated ‘I’” (Jones 2003, 9); that is, to full emancipation from self-created afflictions.

Contrast

Using contrast in Buddhist literature is the traditional method of preaching (Cheng 2011). In the *Sūtra*, Vimalakīrti, a layman, rectifies the ten great disciples’ understanding of dharma, spelling out the imperfection of Theravāda (the doctrine of the elders 上座部佛教) and emphasising the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle 大乘佛教) spirit for the welfare of living beings^{cxxvi}. Also, the reflections of the Fragrance bodhisattvas coming from a peaceful world report the great will of the Buddha and bodhisattvas because they relinquish *nirvāṇa* (perfect stillness 涅槃) and live in such a chaotic *sahā-lokadhātu* (saha world 娑婆世界) for the sake of sentient beings’ happiness^{cxxvii}. Furthermore, they also share limitless merit^{cxxviii} with all beings. Applying the contrast technique, a counsellor makes comparisons showing the advantages and disadvantages of a client’s decision.

Confrontation

As a therapeutic technique, confrontation bombards clients and pushes them to deeply reflect on their thoughts and feelings (Bakes 2012) by challenging clients’ “incongruence, discrepancy, inconsistency, or mixed message[s]” (Brems 2001, 256), particularly when they avoid painful feelings (Brink and Farber 1996); whereas non-hostile “caring confrontation” (Boukydis 1979, 32) or “compassionate confrontation” (Bratter and Sinsheimer 2008, 108) enables clients to enhance their self awareness and clarity regarding their inner world.

The *Sūtra* repeatedly employs confrontation for the clarification of dharma. Maitreya (彌勒菩薩), the predicted future *buddha*, was challenged by Vimalakīrti that his ability to become a *buddha* was no different from that of others^{cxxix}, which re-states the egalitarianism of beings in nature. Similarly, the goddess confronts Śāriputra’s dogmatism about his removal of flowers from his robe. She then brings up the teaching of indiscrimination^{cxxx}.

Silence

Maintaining and breaking silence is a prominent technique in various therapeutic approaches (Lovelady 2006), especially in person-centred approaches (Brink and Farber 1996), even for coping with burnout of therapists themselves (Baranowsky 2002). “Constructive silence” (Egbochuku 2013, 30) and “attentive silence” (International Organization for Migration 2009, 49) allow clients to think deeply, reflect, and express feelings.

The “thunderous silence” (Leighton 1998, 8, McRae 2004, 59) of Vimalakīrti marks his wisdom in that he is capable of surpassing language barriers and transcending the ultimate truth of dharma^{cxxxix}. His silence not only presents the teaching of non-duality by acts, but also offers insight to his audience.

Story-telling

Story-telling engages a long history in religious education (Manternach (2013), Arthur 1987) and counselling (McMahon and Watson 2013, Ciuffardi, Scavelli, and Leonardi 2013), which is able to build rapport, effectively communicate with different levels of audiences (Myers, Tollerud, and Jeon 2012, Larkin and Zahourek 1998), capture their attention easily, and facilitate self reflection (Ng 1994). Story-telling also offers clients the opportunity to narrate their experiences and personal ideas (McMahon and Watson 2013). As a “supernatural agency” (Phillips and Morley 2003, 4), a myth connects personal stories to help clients share ideas and ventilate emotion (Greene 2011) which can yield healing effects on mental disorders (McClary 2007). Practitioners use these “creative expressions” (Glazer and Marcum 2003, 131) for grief counselling, including therapy for adolescents.

Stories in the *Sūtra* produce theatrical effects (Cui 2008), and are always adapted to drama performance (Golden Lotus Theatre 1998). The stories of the “inexhaustible lamp”^{cxxxix} illuminate care for sentient beings, and those of “flowers scattered by a goddess”^{cxxxix} further explain the notion of *upekṣa* (equanimity 捨). They provide an easier means of understanding these profound doctrines.

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation combines psychotherapy and education in mental health interventions (Lukens and McFarlane 2004), especially in cognitive-behavioural approaches (Bauml et al. 2006), and in family therapy (McFarlane et al. 2003).

Buddhist canons are collections of preaching, equivalent to psychoeducation in counselling (Cheng 2011). The *Sūtra* compiles Vimalakīrti’s preaching, initiated from his sickness that connects the major Mahāyāna theories^{cxxxix}, as illustrated previously.

Role model

The systematic “Socratic method” (Howard 2011, 15) has been imitated in therapeutic questioning; thus, Socrates has been much admired as a role model for counsellors. Role modelling is one of the primary techniques in behavioural and cognitive behavioural approaches (Safren et al. 2001, Thigpen et al. 2007).

The Buddha has demonstrated the “experiential verification” (Szkredka 2007, 193) of the *buddha* path in the *loka* (the secular world 世間), role modelling for his followers as depicted in Buddhist literature (Cheng 2011). A bodhisattva acts as a role model to

compassionately save sentient beings, which demonstrates the ideal of Mahayanists (Abe 1997). In the *Sūtra*, Vimalakīrti has practised the bodhisattva path and *upāya* (skilful means 方便), modelling how to implement the bodhisattva spirit and practise *upāya*^{xxxxv}. For instance, he visits gambling dens, brothels, and wine houses to save them from transgression^{xxxxvi}, and gains respect from various social classes, including from common people^{xxxxvii}.

Discussion

Reviewing this bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework, four areas lead to further discussion: interactions between philosophical concepts and propositions for counselling, compatibility between Buddhism and psychotherapy, limitations and future research directions, and the features of this framework.

Interactions between philosophical concepts and propositions for counselling

This bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework, by combining a canonical analysis with a fieldwork study; and achieving cross-validation from the data collected by these two methods, features the application of *prajñā* (wisdom 般若) philosophy that developed 2,000 years ago, together with the contemporary experiences of various stakeholders, including helping service practitioners, Buddhist masters and volunteers, and beneficiaries. Analysing the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* and integrating its doctrines into the personal experiences of the participants, this counselling framework (Figure 3) concludes the core of the bodhisattva spirit, that is, the Mahāyāna spirit, which is embedded in philosophical concepts and propositions for counselling. While the philosophical concepts (including views of human nature, worldviews, and life views) shed light on, and incorporate *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) into the propositions for counselling, the propositions for counselling put the philosophical concepts into practice; in particular, *catvāri apramānāni* (loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity) which permeates most sectors (including mission, goals, qualities and roles of a counsellor, therapeutic relationship and strategies, therapeutic tactics, skills, and techniques).

A bodhisattva, an awakening sentient being and Mahayanist ideal (Basham 1981), deeply beholds the original human nature (Abe 1997) (the *buddha* nature or *bodhi* nature), worldviews and life views, which activates *bodhicitta* (enlightened mind 菩提心) and *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心). The rise of *mahā-maitrī-mahā-karunā* (great loving-kindness and great compassion 大慈大悲) reinforces a bodhisattva's aspiration of enlightening her/himself and other people, which remains close to a counsellor's mission. This commonality represents the vein of this counselling framework, pertaining to the four layers of propositions for counselling from therapeutic mission to counselling technique, by which a counsellor practises self-benefiting altruism. Each tier functions as the guidance for the next tier: The first tier, covering the therapeutic mission and goals, governs the second tier, which regards the roles and qualities of a counsellor that formulate the therapeutic relationship and strategies, as well as the case conceptualisation. The last tier contains therapeutic tactics, skills, and techniques, which reflects the practicality of the previous tiers.

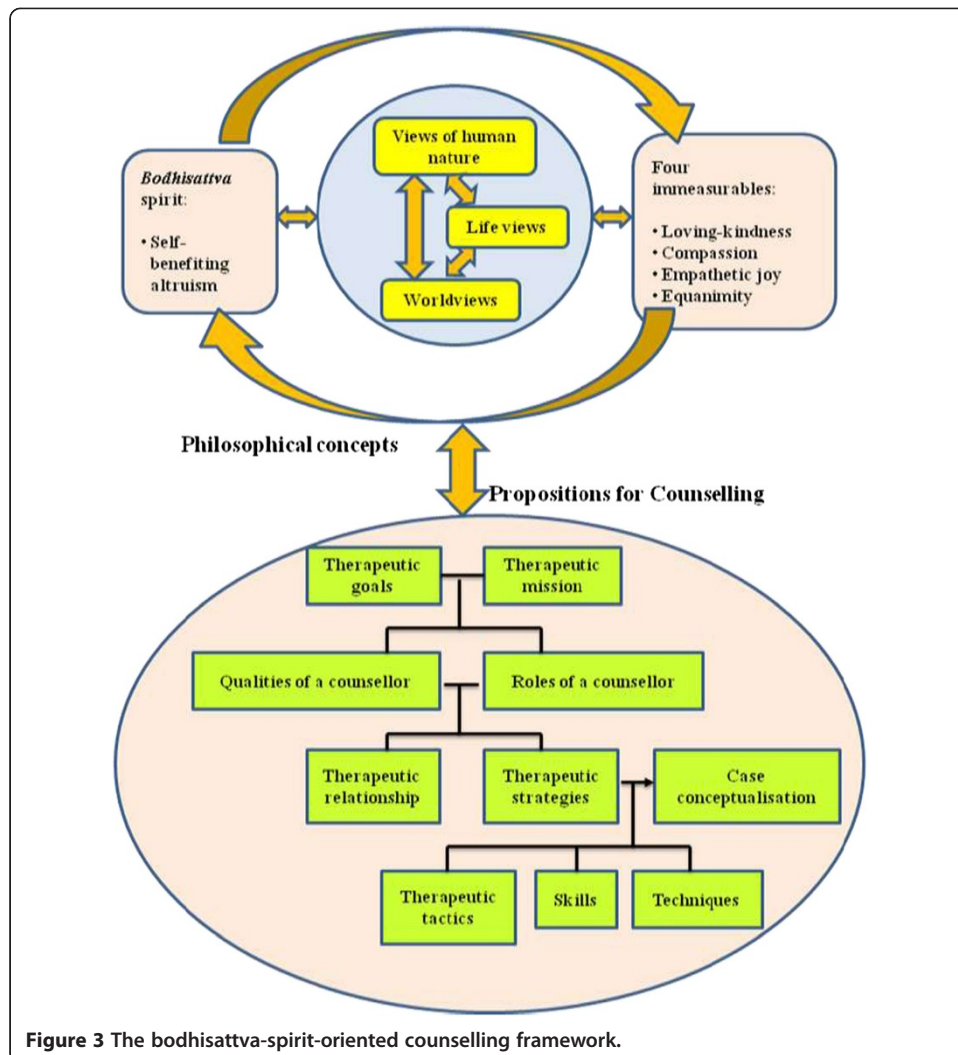


Figure 3 The bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework.

Compatibility of Buddhism and psychotherapy

Despite the agreement among the participants that Buddhist teachings are helpful for people affected by emotional disorders and dealing with life adversities, whether or not Buddhist elements can fulfil the requirements of modern counselling or psychotherapy is still refutable among the helping service practitioners in this research. KJ* and Dr. Li (both are psychiatrists and participants of this study) converge on the inborn healing function of Buddhism, in which both Buddhism and psychotherapy are communicative, as KJ* (a psychiatrist) perceived, relating:

“Learning Buddhism is a kind of psychotherapy. ... [It] is psychotherapy for the whole life. ... Buddhism mainly raises suffering. Suffering is psychopathology. ... Largely, it is about psychological aetiology. It (Buddhism) is about expunging distress and achieving happiness. This is identical to the objective of psychotherapy”.

Nevertheless, Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) identified a point of divergence, arguing,

“Buddhism and psychiatry are identical in mission, namely, freedom from suffering and acquisition of happiness. This is the core. However, there are differences in nature to some extent”.

Focusing on their similarities, KJ* (a psychiatrist) traced the interaction between Buddhism and psychoanalysis, as well as later humanistic approaches, reiterating,

“Jung advocated individuation since the 1920s or 1930s. Individuation raises [the idea] that people search for an authentic self. Later, humanistic psychotherapy ... elicits actualisation and transcendence. ... This may be considered [to be similar to] the concept of pursuing to be a *buddha*. ... [Mahāyāna] refers to how to develop a human being's *buddha* nature, self nature and potentiality, and so on. This and client-centred therapy in the West are different in approach but with similar results, talking about the real self in a similar way to Buddhism”.

In contrast, Dr. Li (a psychiatrist) emphasised the religious aspect of Buddhism that is ambivalent towards the objective of psychiatry, commenting:

“Buddhism focuses on the supermundane world, while psychiatrists focus on the secular world. The two are different from each other. One is superlative truth, and one is secular truth. Even though they cooperate compulsorily, it is difficult. ... One more core problem that resists us ... needs self breakthrough, self transcendence, and have a chance to reach the supermundane world, and reach the bodhisattva path. Traditional psychiatry or counselling, basically is to strengthen the self, but not to transcend the self. We don't have this plan. Therefore, on this dimension, we attain a better self, but do not attain a transcendent self”.

However, Dr. Li's (a psychiatrist) opinion overlooked the teaching that a Mahāyāna bodhisattva serves sentient beings in the secular world, for which using *catvāri apramānāni* (the four immeasurables 四無量心) to accomplish the bodhisattva's vow targets the implementation of *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道) for rooting out suffering. In this sense, the paramount mission of Buddhism, particularly for Mahāyāna, is to extinguish the afflictions of sentient beings, which is congenial to psychotherapy.

Limitations and future research directions

The limitations of this research and directions for future research involve three premises: first, this counselling framework does not present much of a therapeutic process due to very few sources from the *Sūtra*. Grounded on this bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework, future studies are advisable to develop a counselling process, and a training manual, which can result in formulation of a counselling model. Second, this research, as an exploratory study, disregarded psychotherapy process research to evaluate the association, interaction, and bilateral influence of therapeutic process-outcome effects (Marmar 1990, Beutler 1990 and Garfield 1990); and thus was unable to fully validate the detailed implementation of this framework. Future projects, therefore, are recommended for carrying out psychotherapy process research designs to tone up

this embryonic inquisition. Lastly, the research outcomes are supported by textual and qualitative data, to which further future studies are proposed, to use surveys and quantitative data to validate these results.

Characteristics of this counselling framework

This bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework focuses on the inner revolution (Thurman 1998), a self-help approach as a sword of wisdom expunging hindrances^{xxxx-viii}, through “a journey of understanding one’s own experience” (Kaklauskas and Olson 2008, 136) with the aid of “edifying” (Watson 1998, 84) Buddhist wisdom. This self healing characteristic not only provides practicable teachings for Buddhists to tackle their life difficulties, as evidenced by the beneficiaries in this research, but also for non-Buddhists who may seek to help themselves through counselling settings. In this respect, this counselling framework chiefly aims at the long-term effectiveness incurred by thought transformation and self-actualisation, rather than at short-term solutions.

As a proponent of the bodhisattva spirit, this counselling framework not only advocates an “I-thou relation” (Buber 1923/1937, ix) respecting a person as a subject, but most importantly establishes bodhisattva-bodhisattva interplay between counsellor and client, affirming egalitarianism and resulting in self-benefiting altruism through non-judgementalism, acceptance, and empathic understanding (Brown, Elkonin, and Naicker 2013), which are concordant with Mahāyāna philosophy and humanistic therapies.

Moreover, this research synchronises a doctrinal approach substantiated by qualitative data, from which it voices Buddhist values directly from Buddhist textual evidence. This mixed method differentiates itself from the available models of “Buddhist-inspired psychotherapy” (Watson 1998, 249 and Dow 2008, 273), and accentuates the significance of primary data sources in studying Buddhist-informed therapeutic interventions. This may offer references for scholars who are interested in studying Buddhist-related psychotherapy as supported by first-hand data, and in applying Buddhist teachings to helping or caring professions differently.

Conclusion

This cross-disciplinary research, for a theory-building purpose, re-interprets the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (維摩詰所說經) as to its applicability on the secular level, and applies its wisdom to propositions for counselling based on its philosophical constructs. It covers the overarching Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle 大乘佛教) doctrines, focusing on *prajñā* (wisdom 般若), which shapes a counselling framework that may offer fundamental elements for use in specific therapeutic settings or populations, such as family therapy, bereavement, and mental health interventions. This bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counselling framework emphasises mind training and thought transformation, which enables clients to transcend self-created suffering produced by ignorance, dualism, and attachment to self. This self-help approach focuses on a sense of self responsibility, the acquisition of innate resources, including the authentic self, and self-actualisation, through an inclusiveness between counsellor and client. This dynamic strengthens the connected and the one being connected during the counselling process, forming bodhisattva-bodhisattva interplay, where both parties act as the bodhisattva for themselves (self-benefiting) as for their counter-partner (altruism). This interplay achieves self-

benefiting altruism through the letting go of self-centredness and through bearing the afflictions of other people. However, this counselling framework is still in development, even though it does present the practicality of *bodhisattva-mārga* (the bodhisattva path 菩薩道) in the contemporary milieu, substantiated by canonical evidence and the lived experiences of participants in this research.

Endnotes

ⁱ“The Buddha said, ‘Ānanda, this *sūtra* is named the Discourse of Vimalakīrti”. (McRae 2004, 179) 「佛言：阿難！是經名為“維摩詰所說”。」《囑累品第十四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0557b21.

ⁱⁱ“The characteristics of the minds of all sentient beings are likewise, in being without defilement”. (McRae 2004, 93) 「一切眾生心相無垢。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541b14-15.

ⁱⁱⁱ“All sentient beings are the characteristic of *bodhi*”. (McRae 2004, 98) 「一切眾生即菩提相。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a35.

^{iv}“All living beings are a part of Suchness”. (Watson 1997, 53) 「一切眾生皆如也。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a33.

^v“identical with living beings, free of distinctions with regard to things” (Watson 1997, 131) 「同眾生，於諸法無分別。」《見阿闍佛品第十二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554c36-37.

^{vi}“do not differentiate yourself from the host of Maras and the sensory troubles” (McRae 2004, 89) 「汝與眾魔，及諸塵勞，等無有異。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540b25-26.

^{vii}“If you, Maitreya, are able to attain *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*, then all living beings should likewise be able to attain it. Why? Because all living beings in truth bear the marks of *bodhi*”. (Watson 1997, 53) 「若彌勒得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提者，一切眾生皆亦應得。所以者何？一切眾生即菩提相。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a34-35.

^{viii}“You are in this immediate present born, aged, and extinguished”. (McRae 2004, 97) 「汝今即時，亦生亦老亦滅。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a31.

^{ix}“All things are just the same – they have no fixed form”. (Watson 1997, 91) 「一切諸法亦復如是，無有定相。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0548b26.

^x“As if he were a magician seeing a conjured person, so should a bodhisattva view sentient beings, like a wise person seeing the moon in water, like seeing the image of a face in a mirror, like a mirage when it is hot, like the echo of a shout, like clouds in the sky, like water collecting into foam, like bubbles upon water, like the firmness of the banana tree, like the prolonged abiding of lightning, ...” (McRae 2004, 123) 「譬如幻師，見所幻人，菩薩觀眾生為若此。如智者見水中月，如鏡中見其面像，如熱時焰，如呼聲響，如空中雲，如水聚沫，如水上泡，如芭蕉堅，如電久住，…」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547b01-02.

^{xi}「是身不淨，穢惡充滿。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b16.

^{xii}“stubborn and strong-willed beings who are difficult to convert” (Watson 1997, 118) 「剛強難化眾生。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 0552c33.

^{xiii}“When the mind is pure, the Buddha land will be pure”. (Watson 1997, 29) 「隨其心淨，則佛土淨。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538b29.

^{xiv}“The Buddha explains the Dharma with one sound, and sentient beings each attain understanding according to their capacity”. (Watson 1997, 74) 「佛以一音演說法，眾生隨類

各得解。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0537b53; “The Buddha preaches the Law with a single voice, but each living being understands it in his own way”. (Watson 1997, 24)

「佛以一音演說法, 眾生各各隨所解。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0537b55.

^{xv}「五濁惡世。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 0552b09.

^{xvi}“The sentient beings of this land are obdurate and difficult to convert”. (McRae 2004, 153) 「此土眾生剛強難化。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 0552c26.

^{xvii}“These people who are difficult to convert have minds like monkeys”. (Watson 1997, 118) 「以難化之人, 心如猿猴。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 0552c32.

^{xviii}“All things in the phenomenal world are just such phantoms and conjured beings”. (Watson 1997, 43) 「一切諸法, 如幻化相。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540b28.

^{xix}“The non-abiding is its fundamental basis. ... All dharmas are established on the fundamental [basis] of non-abiding.” (McRae 2004, 127) 「無住則無本。… 從無住本, 立一切法。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c21.

^{xx}「諸法究竟無所有, 是空義。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541a14.

^{xxi}“Form is emptiness – it is not that form extinguishes emptiness but that the nature of form is of itself empty”. (McRae 2004, 145) 「色即是空, 非色滅空, 色性自空。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, 0551a19.

^{xxii}“... understand that all phenomena are no more than phantom forms”. (Watson 1997, 40) 「知諸法如幻相; 無自性, 無他性。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540a28.

^{xxiii}“All the dharmas are generated and extinguished, without abiding. Like phantasms or lightning bolts, the dharmas do not depend on each other. They do not abide even for a single instant. The dharmas are all false views, like a dream, like a mirage, like the moon [reflected] in water, like an image in a mirror – [all] generated from false conceptualization”. (McRae 2004, 93) 「一切法生滅不住, 如幻如電, 諸法不相待, 乃至一念不住; 諸法皆妄見, 如夢、如炎、如水中月、如鏡中像, 以妄想生。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541b16-17.

^{xxiv}“The nature of those transgressions does not reside within, it does not reside without, and it does not reside in the middle. ... The mind likewise does not reside within, does not reside without, and does not reside in the middle. Just so is the mind, and just so are transgression and defilement. The dharmas are also likewise, in not transcending suchness”. (McRae 2004, 93) 「彼罪性不在內、不在外、不在中間, … 心亦不在內、不在外、不在中間, 如其心然, 罪垢亦然, 諸法亦然, 不出於如。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541b12-14.

^{xxv}“All things are impermanent in nature”. (Watson 1997, 31) 「知有為法皆悉無常。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538c30.

^{xxvi}“Emptiness is none other than formlessness”. (Watson 1997, 108) 「空即無相。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0551b07.

^{xxvii}“The body is impermanent”. (McRae 2004, 110) 「說身無常。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c18.

^{xxviii}“This body is insubstantial, being housed in the four elements”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「是身不實, 四大為家。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b15.

^{xxix}「譬如幻師, 見所幻人, 菩薩觀眾生為若此。如智者見水中月, 如鏡中見其面像, 如熱時焰, 如呼聲響, 如空中雲, 如水聚沫, 如水上泡, 如芭蕉堅, 如電久住, …」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0548b01-02.

^{xxx}“This body is like an echo, dependent on causes and conditions”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「是身如響, 屬諸因緣。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b14.

^{xxxi}“Phantoms have no fixed form. ... All things are just the same – they have no fixed form”. (Watson 1997, 90–91) 「幻無定相，… 一切諸法亦復如是，無有定相。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0548b25-26.

^{xxxii}“Sentient beings are likewise without death and birth”. (McRae 2004, 131) 「眾生猶然，無沒生也。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0548c11.

^{xxxiii}「五欲無常。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543a12.

^{xxxiv}“This body is without self, like fire”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「是身無我，為如火。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b14-15.

^{xxxv}“The body is without ego”. (Watson 1997, 67) 「說身無我。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c18.

^{xxxvi}“no ‘I’, no doer, no recipient” (Watson 1997, 22) 「無我無造無受者。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0537b38.

^{xxxvii}“There is no self in the self, yet no duality: this is the meaning of non-self.” (McRae 2004, 91) 「於我、無我而不二，是無我義。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541a15.

^{xxxviii}“This body is like a shadow, manifested through karmic conditions”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「是身如影，從業緣現。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b13-14.

^{xxxix}“Yet good and bad karma never cease to function”. (Watson 1997, 22) 「善惡之業亦不亡。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0537b38.

^{xl}“These are misdeeds of the body; these are the retribution for misdeeds of the body. These are misdeeds of the mouth; these are the retribution for misdeeds of the mouth. These are misdeeds of the mind; these are the retribution for misdeeds of the mind. This is the killing of living beings; this is the retribution for killing living beings. This is taking what has not been given to you; this is the retribution for taking what has not been given to you. This is sexual misconduct; this is the retribution for sexual misconduct. This is lying; this is the retribution for lying. This is being double-tongued; this is the retribution for being double-tongued. This is harsh speech; this is the retribution for harsh speech. This is specious talk; this is the retribution for specious talk. This is greed; this is the retribution for greed. This is wrath; this is the retribution for wrath. These are erroneous views; this is the retribution for erroneous views. This is stinginess; this is the retribution for stinginess. This is breaking the precepts; this is the retribution for breaking the precepts. This is anger; this is the retribution for anger. This is sloth this is the retribution for sloth. This is distractedness; this is the retribution for distractedness. This is stupidity; this is the retribution for stupidity”. (Watson 1997, 117–118) 「是身邪行，是身邪行報；是口邪行，是口邪行報；是意邪行，是意邪行報；是殺生，是殺生報；是不與取，是不與取報；是邪婬，是邪婬報；是妄語，是妄語報；是兩舌，是兩舌報；是惡口，是惡口報；是無義語，是無義語報；是貪嫉，是貪嫉報；是瞋惱，是瞋惱報；是邪見，是邪見報；是慳悋，是慳悋報；是毀戒，是毀戒報；是瞋恚，是瞋恚報；是懈怠，是懈怠報；是亂意，是亂意報；是愚癡，是愚癡報。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 552c27-29.

^{xli}“the sufferings of the body” (Watson 1997, 67) 「說身有苦。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c18.

^{xlii}“the innumerable kalpas of suffering of one’s past lives” (McRae 2004, 110) 「宿世無數劫苦。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c19.

^{xliii}“The five components are wide open, empty, nothing arising in them – this is the meaning of suffering”. (Watson 1997, 45) 「五受陰，洞達空無所起，是苦義。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541a13.

^{xliv}「一切所有施於彼者，是為菩薩。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543b13.

^{xlv}“and while the bodhisattva is in the realm of birth and death he does not scorn their company” (Watson 1997, 66) 「菩薩於生死而不捨。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c07.

^{xlvi}“to bear the burden of all [sentient beings] using the dharmas of birth” (McRae 2004, 163) 「以生法荷負一切。」《菩薩行品第十一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554c05.

^{xlvii}「阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538c29.

^{xlviii}「大乘心」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540c26.

^{xlix}「行菩薩慈,安眾生故。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547b16-17.

^l「以救眾生,起大悲心。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543c05-06.

^{li}「不著己樂,慶於彼樂。」《菩薩行品第十一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554b09.

^{lii}「捨諸所有。」《菩薩行品第十一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554b09-10.

^{liii}“the Dharma of universal sameness” (McRae 2004, 87) 「平等法」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540a26.

^{liv}“identical with living beings, free of distinctions with regard to things” (Watson 1997, 131) 「同眾生,於諸法無分別。」《見阿闍佛品第十二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554c36-37.

^{lv}「饒益眾生。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539a20.

^{lvi}“do away with the ills that afflict all living beings” (Watson 1997, 36) 「斷一切眾生病。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b33.

^{lvii}“cut off the source of illness” (Watson 1997, 69) 「斷病本。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a15.

^{lviii}The term “altruism” was coined by Comte (1854, 18).

^{lix}“to enable all living beings to acquire a clean and pure land” (Watson 1997, 135) 「願使一切眾生得清淨土。」《見阿闍佛品第十二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0555c17.

^{lx}“releasing the bonds of sentient beings” (McRae 2004, 105) 「解眾生縛。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543c11.

^{lxi}“causing innumerable thousands of people to all generate the intention to achieve *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*” (McRae 2004, 84) 「令無數千人皆發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539c11.

^{lxii}「當作醫王,療治眾病。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c20.

^{lxiii}“The inexhaustible lamp is like a lamp that ignites a hundred thousand lamps, illuminating all darkness with an illumination that is never exhausted. ..., if a single bodhisattva guides a hundred thousand sentient beings, causing them to generate the intention to achieve *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*, that bodhisattva’s intention to achieve enlightenment will also never be extinguished”. (McRae 2004, 103) 「無盡燈者,譬如一燈,燃百千燈,冥者皆明,明終不盡。如是,諸姊!夫一菩薩開導百千眾生,令發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心,於其道意亦不滅盡。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543b16-17.

^{lxiv}「大導師」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0537b59.

^{lxv}「因以解人惑。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b73.

^{lxvi}“guiding living beings” (Watson 1997, 127) 「引導眾生。」《菩薩行品第十一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554b14.

^{lxvii}「直心」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538a29.

^{lxviii}「深心」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538a29.

^{lxix}「當淨其心。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538b29.

^{lxx}「平等無二。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0551a16.

^{lxxii}“To have false concepts is defilement; to be without false concepts is purity. Confusion is defilement, and the absence of confusion is purity. To grasp the self is defilement, and not to grasp the self is purity”. (McRae 2004, 93) 「妄想是垢,無妄想是淨;顛倒是垢,無顛倒是淨;取我是垢,不取我是淨。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541b15-16.

^{lxxiii}「愛見悲」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a26.

^{lxxiiii}“To contemplate the body as impermanent suffering, empty, and non-self is called wisdom”. (McRae 2004, 113) 「又復觀身無常、苦、空、非我,是名為慧。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a33-34.

^{lxxv}“Although the body is ill, it always exists in *samsāra*. To benefit all without tiring – this is called skilful means”. (McRae 2004, 113) 「雖身有疾,常在生死,饒益一切,而不厭倦,是名方便。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a34.

^{lxxvi}“It means that, with a mind free of affection and concern, a bodhisattva sets about to adorn the Buddha lands, lead numerous living beings to them, and regulate himself with the doctrines of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaction, never experiencing weariness or revulsion. This is called the liberation of wisdom with expedient means”. (Watson 1997, 71) 「謂不以愛見心莊嚴佛土、成就眾生,於空、無相、無作法中,以自調伏,而不疲厭,是名有方便慧解。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a30-31.

^{lxxvii}“Though he moves in the realm of formlessness he yet saves many living beings”. (Watson 1997, 73) 「雖行無相,而度眾生。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545b28.

^{lxxviii}“Though he addresses himself to all living beings he does so without affection or attachment”. (Watson 1997, 72) 「雖攝一切眾生,而不愛著。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545b27.

^{lxxix}「縛」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a27.

^{lxxx}「煩惱」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a26.

^{lxxxi}「惱」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b12.

^{lxxxii}「從癡有愛。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544b20.

^{lxxxiii}「身」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c17.

^{lxxxiiii}“Alternately suffering and vexatious, it accumulates a host of illnesses”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「為苦、為惱,眾病所集。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b12.

^{lxxxv}「又此病起,皆由著我。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c28.

^{lxxxvi}「欲貪」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c17.

^{lxxxvii}「從有攀緣,則為病本。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a16.

^{lxxxviii}「顛倒」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544c30.

^{lxxxix}「虛妄分別」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c18.

^{xc}“Non-duality is *bodhi*”. (McRae 2004, 98) 「不二是菩提。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a39-40.

^{xc}“Birth and extinction form a dualism. But since all dharmas are not born to begin with, they must now be without extinction. By grasping and learning to accept this truth of birthlessness one may enter the gate of no-dualism.” (Watson 1997, 104) 「生滅為二。法本不生,今則無滅,得此無生法忍,是為入不二法門。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0550c1-2.

^{xc}“Defilement and purity constitute a duality. If one sees the real nature of defilement, then there is no characteristic of purity, and one accords with the extinction of characteristics. This is to enter the Dharma gate of non-duality”. (McRae 2004, 143)

「垢、淨為二。見垢實性，則無淨相，順於滅相，是為入不二法門。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0550c11.

^{xciii}“What is good and what is not good constitute a duality. If one does not generate the good and what is not good, entering into and penetrating the limit of the non-characteristics, this is to enter the Dharma gate of non-duality”. (McRae 2004, 144)

「善、不善為二。若不起善、不善，入無相際而通達者，是為入不二法門。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0550c22.

^{xciii}“Transgression and blessing constitute a duality. If one penetrates the nature of transgression, then it is not different from blessings. Using the *vajra* wisdom to definitively comprehend this characteristic, and to be neither in bondage nor emancipated, is to enter the Dharma gate of non-duality”. (McRae 2004, 144) 「罪、福為二。若達罪性，則與福無異，以金剛慧決了此相，無縛無解者，是為入不二法門。」《入不二法門品第九》T14, no. 0475, p. 0550c24-25.

^{xciv}“It is without ties or attachments, without personal possessions, without thought of possessions, without fluster or confusion. It means harbouring joy within”. (Watson 1997, 49) 「無繫著；無我所，無所受；無擾亂，內懷喜。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541c12.

^{xcv}“Because their offense by its nature does not exist either inside them, or outside, or in between. ... When the mind is pure, the living being will be pure. As the mind is, so will be the offense or defilement. The same is true of all things, for none escape the realm of Suchness. ... In the same way, when all living beings gain an understanding of the nature of the mind, the no defilement exists. Where there is no topsy-turvy thinking, that is purity. Belief in the self is defilement. Where there is no such belief, that is purity. ... All phenomena are born and pass into extinction never enduring, like phantoms, like lightning. ... One who understands this is called a keeper of the precepts, one who understands this is called well liberated”. (Watson 1997, 47) 「彼罪性不在內、不在外、不在中間，如佛所說，心垢故眾生垢，心淨故眾生淨。心亦不在內、不在外、不在中間，如其心然，罪垢亦然，諸法亦然，不出於如。…妄想是垢，無妄想是淨；顛倒是垢，無顛倒是淨；取我是垢，不取我是淨。…一切法生滅不住，如幻如電。…其知此者，是名奉律；其知此者，是名善解。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0541b12-17.

^{xcvi}“Non-grasping is *bodhi*”. (McRae 2004, 99) 「無取是菩提。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a42.

^{xcvii}「但除其病，而不除法。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a15.

^{xcviii}“neither possesses earthly desires nor is separated from earthly desires” (Watson 1997, 41) 「非有煩惱，非離煩惱。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0540a29-30.

^{xcix}“not to eradicate the afflictions yet enter into *nirvāṇa*” (McRae 2004, p. 85) 「不斷煩惱而入涅槃。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b20.

^c“All the afflictions constitute the seed of the Tathāgata”. (McRae 2004, 135) 「一切煩惱，為如來種。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b07.

^{ci}“The field of the sensory troubles constitutes the seed of the Tathāgata”. (McRae 2004, 135) 「塵勞之疇為如來種。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b16.

^{cii}“If you do not descend into the vast ocean, you can never acquire a priceless pearl. In the same way, if you do not enter the great sea of earthly desires, you can never acquire the treasure of comprehensive wisdom”. (Watson 1997, 95–96) 「譬如不下巨海，不能得無價寶珠。如是不入煩惱大海，則不能得一切智寶。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b7-8.

^{ciii}“Hindrances are *bodhi*”. (McRae 2004, 98) 「障是菩提。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a38.

^{civ}“Wanting to save people, [Vimalakīrti] used his excellent skilful means”. (McRae 2004, 81) 「欲度人故,以善方便。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539a11.

^{cv}“Skilful means are the place of enlightenment, because of the salvation of sentient beings”. (McRae 2004, 100) 「方便是道場,教化眾生故。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542c15.

^{cvi}“Bodhisattvas acquire the *budhha* lands according to the sentient beings they convert. They acquire the *buddha* lands according to the sentient beings they discipline. They acquire the *buddha* lands according to what country sentient beings need to enter into *buddha* wisdom. They acquire the *buddha* lands according to what country sentient beings need to generate the roots [for becoming] bodhisattvas”. (McRae 2004, 75) 「菩薩隨所化眾生而取佛土,隨所調伏眾生而取佛土,隨諸眾生應以何國入佛智慧而取佛土,隨諸眾生應以何國起菩薩根而取佛土。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538a21-22.

^{cvii}“Because the bodhisattva’s acquisition of a pure land is wholly due to his having brought benefit to living beings”. (Watson 1997, 26) 「菩薩取於淨國,皆為饒益諸眾生故。」《佛國品第一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0538a22-23.

^{cviii}“to enable all living beings to acquire a clean and pure land” (Watson 1997, 135) 「願使一切眾生得清淨土。」《見阿闍佛品第十二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0555c17.

^{cix}“If one wishes to save sentient beings, the afflictions should be eradicated”. (McRae 2004, 126) 「欲度眾生,除其煩惱。」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c12.

^{cx}“In accordance with the needs of others, he causes them to enter into the path of buddhahood. Using the power of good skilful means, he provides sufficiency to all”. (McRae 2004, 141) 「隨彼之所須,得入於佛道,以善方便力,皆能給足之。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b105-106.

^{cxii}“The Thus Come One in our land does not employ words in his exposition. He just uses various fragrances to induce heavenly and human beings to undertake the observance of the precepts”. (Watson 1997, 117) 「我土如來無文字說,但以眾香令諸天、人得入律行。」《香積佛品第十》T14, no. 0475, p. 0552c22.

^{cxiii}“first enticing them with desire, and later causing them to enter the wisdom of the Buddha”. (McRae 2004, 140) 「先以欲鉤牽,後令入佛道。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b97.

^{cxiiii}“This body is like earth that has no subjective being”. (Watson 1997, 35) 「是身無主,為如地。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b14.

^{cxv}“This body is impermanent, without durability, without strength, without firmness, a thing that decays in a moment, not to be relied on”. (Watson 1997, 34) 「是身無常、無強、無力、無堅、速朽之法,不可信也!」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b11-12.

^{cxvi}“This body is like a dream, an illusory view. ... This body is without lifespan, like the wind”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「是身如夢,為虛妄見;… 是身無壽,為如風。」《方便品第二》T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b13-15.

^{cxvii}“This illness of mine is born of ignorance and feelings of attachment”. (Watson 1997, 65) 「從癡有愛,則我病生。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0544b20.

^{cxviii}“It is through objectified mentation that the basis of illness is constituted”. (McRae 2004, 111) 「從有攀緣,則為病本。」《文殊師利問疾品第五》T14, no. 0475, p. 0545a16.

^{cxviii}“It is just as lotus flowers do not grow on dry land on the high plateau – these flowers grow in the muddy filth of the lowly marshes. ... It is like planting is seed in space, where it would never grow – only in nightsoil-enriched earth can it flourish”. (McRae 2004, 135) 「譬如高原陸地,不生蓮華,卑濕淤泥乃生此華;… 糞壤之地,乃能滋茂。」《佛道品第八》T14, no. 0475, p. 0549b04-06.

^{cxix}“The inexhaustible lamp is like a lamp that ignites a hundred thousand lamps, illuminating all darkness with an illumination that is never exhausted”. (McRae 2004, 103) 「無盡燈者,譬如一燈,燃百千燈,冥者皆明,明終不盡。」《菩薩品第四》T14, no. 0475, p. 0543b15.

^{cxx}“As if he were a magician seeing a conjured person, so should a bodhisattva view sentient beings. Like a wise person seeing the moon in water, lie a mirage when it is hot, like ...” (McRae 2004, 123) 「譬如幻師,見所幻人,菩薩觀眾生為若此。如智者見水中月,如鏡中見其面像,如熱時焰,…」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0547b01-05.

^{cxxi}“There are [other *buddha* lands] where dreams, phantasms, shadows, echoes, images in mirrors, the moon [reflected in] water, mirages during times of heat, and other metaphors perform the Buddha’s work”. (McRae 2004, 159) 「有以夢、幻、影、響、鏡中像、水中月、熱時炎,如是等口而作佛事。」《菩薩行品第十一》T14, no. 0475, p. 0554c18-19.

^{cxxii}“At that time the goddess employed her supernatural powers to change Śāriputra into a goddess like herself, while she took on Śāriputra’s form. Then she asked, ‘Why don’t you change out of this female body?’ Śāriputra, now in the form of a goddess, replied ‘I don’t know why I have suddenly changed and taken on a female body’”. (Watson 1997, 91) 「即時天女以神通力,變舍利弗令如天女,天自化身如舍利弗,而問言:何以不轉女身?舍利弗以天女像而答言:「我今不知何轉而變為女身?」《觀眾生品第七》T14, no. 0475, p. 0548b47-49.

^{cxxiii}“His (the Buddha) lion seat is eight-four thousand yojanas high ... Buddha dispatched thirty-two thousand lion seats, tall, wide, and pure in ornamentation, which arrived in Vimalakīrti’s room. ... The breath of the room entirely accommodated the thirty-two thousand lion seats with no obstruction”. (McRae 2004, 118–119) 「其師子座高八萬四千由旬,嚴飾第一。…即時彼佛遣三萬二千師子座,高廣嚴淨,來入維摩詰室,…其室廣博,悉皆包容三萬二千師子座,無所妨礙。」《不思議品第六》T14, no. 0475, p. 0546b02-06.

^{cxxiv}“Vimalakīrti said, ‘O Śāriputra, the buddhas and bodhisattvas have an emancipation called inconceivable. For a bodhisattva residing in this emancipation the vastness of [Mount] Sumeru can be placed within a mustard seed without [either of them] increasing or decreasing in size. Sumeru, king of mountains will remain in appearance as before, ...’” (McRae 2004, 119) 「以須彌之高廣內芥子中無所增減,須彌山王本相如故。」《不思議品第六》T14, no. 0475, p. 0546b24-25.

^{cxxv}“take the waters of the four great oceans and pour them into the opening that holds a single hair” (Watson 1997, 78) 「又以四大海水入一毛孔。」《不思議品第六》T14, no. 0475, p. 0546b26.

^{cxxvi}“It is as the layman has said. But the Buddha has appeared in this evil world of five impurities and at present is practising the Law so as to save and liberate living beings”. (Watson 1997, 50–51) 「如居士言。但為佛出五濁惡世,現行斯法,度脫眾生。」《弟子品第三》T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a09.

^{cxxvii}“At that time the bodhisattvas who had come from the Host of Fragrances world held their palms together and addressed the Buddha, ‘World-honoured One, when we first saw this land we generated the concept of its inferiority. Now we are ashamed of ourselves and have abandoned this attitude. Why? The skilful means of the buddhas are inconceivable. In order to save sentient beings, they manifest different *buddha* countries in accordance with the responses of [sentient beings]”. (McRae 2004, 161)

「爾時眾香世界菩薩來者，合掌白佛言：「世尊！我等初見此土，生下劣想，今自悔責，捨離是心。所以者何？諸佛方便，不可思議！為度眾生故，隨其所應，現佛國異。」《菩薩行品第十一》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0554a28-29.

^{cxxviii}“Even were the four seas to dry up, this food would not be exhausted”. (McRae 2004, 152) 「四海有竭，此飯無盡。」《香積佛品第十》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0552c10-11.

^{cxxix}“All living beings are a part of Suchness and all other things as well are a part of Suchness. The sages and worthy ones too are a part of Suchness; even you, Maitreya, are a part of Suchness. So if you have been given a prophecy of enlightenment, then all living beings should likewise be given such a prophecy. Why? Because Suchness knows no dualism or differentiation. If you, Maitreya, are able to attain *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*, then all living beings should likewise be able to attain it. Why? Because all living beings should likewise be able to attain it. Why? Because all living beings in truth bear the marks of *bodhi*”. (Watson 1997, 53) 「一切眾生皆如也，一切法亦如也，眾聖賢亦如也，至於彌勒亦如也。若彌勒得受記者，一切眾生亦應受記。所以者何？夫如者不二不異，若彌勒得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提者，一切眾生皆亦應得。所以者何？一切眾生即菩提相。」《菩薩品第四》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0542a33-35.

^{cxxx}“At that time, the goddess asked Śāriputra, ‘Why would you remove the flowers?’ [Śāriputra] answered, ‘Theses flowers are contrary to the Dharma, so I would remove them.’ The goddess said, ‘Do not say that these flowers are contrary to the Dharma! Why? These flowers are without discrimination. Sir, it is you who are generating discriminative thoughts’”. (McRae 2004, 127) 「爾時天女問舍利弗：何故去華？答曰：此華不如法，是以去之。天曰：勿謂此華為不如法。所以者何？是華無所分別，仁者自生分別想耳！」《觀眾生品第七》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c24-28.

^{cxxxi}“At this point Vimalakīrti was silent, saying nothing. Mañjuśrī exclaimed, ‘Excellent, excellent! Not to even have words or speech is the true entrance into the Dharma gate of nonduality’”. (McRae 2004, 148) 「時維摩詰默然無言。文殊師利歎曰：善哉！善哉！乃至無有文字、語言，是真入不二法門。」《入不二法門品第九》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0551c22-23.

^{cxxxii}“The inexhaustible lamp is like a lamp that ignites a hundred thousand lamps, illuminating all darkness with an illumination that is never exhausted. Thus, sisters, if a single bodhisattva guides a hundred thousand sentient beings, causing them to generate the intention to achieve *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*, that bodhisattva’s intention to achieve enlightenment will also never be extinguished. With each teaching of the Dharma all the good dharmas are naturally increased. This is what is called the ‘inexhaustible lamp’. Although you reside in Māra’s palace, with this inexhaustible lamp you can cause innumerable gods and goddesses to generate the intention to achieve *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*. Thereby you will repay the Buddha’s kindness and also greatly benefit all sentient beings”. (McRae 2004, 103) 「無盡燈者，譬如一燈，燃百千燈，冥者皆明，明終不盡。如是，諸姊！夫一菩薩開導百千眾生，令發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心，於其道意亦不滅盡，隨所說法，而自增益一切善法，是名無盡燈也。汝等雖住魔宮，以是無盡

燈,令無數天子天女,發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心者,為報佛恩,亦大饒益一切眾生。」
《菩薩品第四》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0543b15-17.

^{xxxiii}“At the time, there was a goddess in Vimalakirti’s room who, upon seeing the great men listening to the Dharma being explained, made herself visible and scattered heavenly flowers over the bodhisattvas and great disciples. When the flowers reached the bodhisattvas they all immediately fell off, but when they reached the great disciples they adhered and did not fall off”. (McRae 2004, 127) 「時維摩詰室有一天女,見諸大人聞所說法,便現其身,即以天華,散諸菩薩、大弟子上。華至諸菩薩,即皆墮落,至大弟子,便著不墮。」《觀眾生品第七》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0547c23-24.

^{xxxiv}“Vimalakirti used to occasion of his illness to make extensive explanations of the Dharma”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「維摩詰因以身疾,廣為說法。」《方便品第二》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b11.

^{xxxv}“Using skilful means he manifested becoming ill himself”. (McRae 2004, 83) 「其以方便,現身有疾。」《方便品第二》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0539b10.

^{xxxvi}“If he went to gambling houses or theatres it was only to save people. ... In entering the brothels, he revealed the transgressions [that arise from] desire. In entering the wine shops, he was able to maintain his [good] intention”. (McRae 2004, 82) 「若至博奕戲處,輒以度人;…入諸口舍,示欲之過;入諸酒肆,能立其志。」《方便品第二》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0539a14-15.

^{xxxvii}“When he was among the common people as the most honoured among the common people he had them generate the power of blessings”. (McRae 2004, 82) 「若在庶民,庶民中尊,令興福力。」《方便品第二》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0539a18.

^{xxxviii}“With the sword of wisdom one will destroy the ‘bandits’ of the afflictions”. (McRae 2004, 162) 「以智慧劍,破煩惱賊。」《菩薩行品第十一》 T14, no. 0475, p. 0554b12.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors’ contributions

FKC collected and analysed the data, wrote the first draft of this manuscript, responded to the reviewers’ comments, and approved the production proofs. ST supervised the development of this study, and evaluated the drafts of this manuscript. All authors read and approved the finalised manuscript.

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