

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Reflective Practice* on 4 July 2013, available

online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/14623943.2013.810618>

# **The eye of the storm: A mindful inquiry into reflective practices in higher education**

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## **Abstract**

Time for reflective thought is constricted in busy academic lives, with available thinking time focused on urgent, analytical inquiry. Paradoxically, time spent in contemplative mindfulness, stepping back from insistent probing into a still, calm space, may allow increased clarity and focus on problems worthy of inquiry, once re-engaged. This essay highlights the dual dimension of reflection captured in the concept of ‘mindful inquiry,’ as a dialectic interchange between active critical inquiry and receptive open mindfulness. In the focus on robust critique in contemporary higher education, the value of contemplation is lost. Insights from Western and Eastern philosophy, as well as evidence from empirical research, suggest an integrated approach may allow alternative, creative and intuitive ways of approaching problems to supplement rational, problem solving strategies. The practice of ‘mindful inquiry’ also offers a practical tool, to enhance academic wellbeing as well as help prepare students for participation in life beyond university.

**Keywords:** Reflection, Mindfulness, Critical Inquiry, Buddhism, Existentialism, Creativity

## **Introduction**

I’m sheltering in the corner of a vestibule half way across the university campus; my dash between meetings halted by the tropical downpour. I’ll drown if I venture out and my laptop isn’t guaranteed under water. Good time to rehearse my argument for the next stoush, I think, but irritation from the previous meeting lingers, clouding my thoughts. I look up to find the source of water dribbling down my neck and words etched into the sandstone lintel capture my attention. I’ve been at this university for a decade, so why haven’t I seen them before? *All our knowledge is ourselves to know.*

My iPhone tells me these words are from Alexander Pope’s eighteenth century epistle, exhorting the value of self-awareness. Now there’s a long-lost idea. Despite being carved into stone at the entrance to the university, I can’t recall self-awareness on recent

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meeting agendas or academic appraisals. Awareness implies insightful thought and despite time spent analysing facts, forming logical arguments, and critiquing other people's research, there's precious little time for reflective thinking at most universities these days – except perhaps when caught in a storm.

Reflection is hardly new. Socrates' affirmation of the value of 'the examined life' traces reflective practice to antiquity. In the modern era, philosophers from Heidegger to Dewey have theorised reflection, with more recent scholars such as Schön (1983), Mezirow (2000) and Brookfield (1995) highlighting that reflection is integral to higher education and professional practice. Despite agreement that reflection is the crux of learning and transformation, multiple interpretations and adaptations have left the idea confused, either too ephemeral to grasp or too reduced to matter. An ability to reflect is embedded in graduate attributes and learning outcomes across most disciplines in higher education. In response to the amorphous, undefined or, more often, over-defined and instrumental nature of reflection in teaching, there has been increasing emphasis on critical inquiry. Students are encouraged to probe assumptions, challenge arguments, critique certainties and analyse choices. Although this move is vital in developing students' critical judgement, one aspect of reflection has been neglected in this focus on robust inquiry – the notion of mindful contemplation.

At first glance, contemplative mindfulness and critical inquiry seem at opposite poles of a reflective spectrum, yet Eastern and Western philosophers have described a dual dimension to reflective thought that incorporates both. 'Mindful inquiry'<sup>1</sup> offers an holistic re-conceptualisation of reflective thinking, that holds mindfulness and inquiry in a dialectic inter-relationship. 'Mindful inquiry' incorporates active inquiry to probe problems, while holding open a receptive space for contemplation. Both practices may influence and strengthen the other.

Contemplative practices, such as mindfulness meditation, open a broad perspective on a problem and lead to clarity of intent that may be clouded by incessant probing. Critical inquiry, that is active, social and dialogical, may productively seed the field of thought, providing fertile ground for innovative ideas to contemplate. Together, mindfulness and inquiry may nurture the creative potential of reflective thought as well as focus subsequent action. Creative but focused ideas are necessary in dealing with problems facing, what sociologist Anthony Giddens (2002) calls, our 'runaway world'. Mindfulness also provides a practical tool for supporting the wellbeing of academics and working graduates. Sounds

idealistic? Maybe it is. But as an idea, 'mindful inquiry' is deeply rooted in philosophical traditions, with green shoots of promising research emerging from its ponderous trunk.

## **Contemporary context**

Even if contemplation was returned to its theoretical place in the pantheon of reflection, is there any hope for occasional stillness in the turbulence of contemporary working life?

Researchers argue that the pace and pressure of most workplaces, including academia, do not nurture and may impede any form of reflective practice (Davies, 2005; Fairweather, 2009; Morley, 2007). My own experience reflects this research: decades spent as a professional in the 'real world,' rushing between client crises and report deadlines, quality assurance and service agreements. In their recent book, *Time Bomb*, Barbara Pocock and colleagues continue their decades-long research into the dilemmas of working life (Pocock, Williams, & Skinner, 2012). Pocock's team question the social sustainability of this acceleration of time and compression of tasks at work, citing negative impacts on physical and mental health, social and family connections, as well as productivity and staff retention. In particular, they note there is limited time and energy available for people to stop and reflect on the situation, a necessary step towards changing it.

Reflection is certainly valued more in universities than in some other workplaces. Here in the ivory tower, we push the mantra of reflection as the cornerstone of professional practice – for our doctors, engineers, journalists and social workers – both while they're studying and once they're working. Unfortunately, despite touting the value of reflection, we often fail to practice reflective thinking as academics. Yet thinking is central to the purposes of a university. Jane Dawson (2003)<sup>2</sup> raised this issue a decade ago in the early days of this journal. If anything, the situation has become more frenetic since then, and reflection become more instrumental, focused on short-term problem solving and productivity.

Academics face time pressures to meet spurious yet measurable outcomes of teaching and research performance, under threats of job insecurity, in an increasingly casualised and contract driven sector (Davies, 2003; Rhoades, 2007). In this climate, it can be difficult for academics to find ways to sustain the energy, creativity and passion required for undertaking engaging teaching and original research (Marginson, 2008; Sparkes, 2007). Academics are not necessarily busier than other professionals. As a colleague who'd worked outside academia quipped: 'It's not as if we go down the mine pits every day'. As we had both worked in the 'caring' sector of social services, we understood what working 'at the coalface' meant. However, the frustration of being sidetracked by urgent, seemingly inconsequential

demands, that steal precious thinking time, seems particularly ironic in institutions that aim to nurture the minds of the next generation and develop creative research solutions to meet complex global needs. A dearth of quiet contemplative thinking in universities is problematic.

‘Mindful inquiry’ is needed to question and challenge the momentum of contemporary working life. It’s as if the technological head of steam emerging from the factories of the industrial revolution has careered out of control towards the information revolution, gathering speed over time. As coal and water become scarce commodities in our lives, so do time and attention become vital resources to treasure. The tumult of competing demands and constant electronic connection clutters our minds, making mobile electronic lists and calendars a Godsend to categorise the chaos. But such devices don’t download clarity. We just push more into our days and our minds. Will we download our minds in the future, or is there another way to clear them? A young academic I interviewed, as part of research into academic identities, found switching off his iPhone or email for short periods too painful to tolerate. He squirmed at the incongruence of this confession against his previous comment. He’d been bemoaning the lack of time to think clearly. In academia and beyond, the busyness of daily working life is reflected in what Buddhists call our frenetic ‘monkey minds’ – minds that could be tamed through contemplative practices. One such practice is mindfulness.

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, but it is not necessary to engage with Buddhism to harness the benefits. It is a specific, skilled practice that anyone can learn in ten minutes a day, but it can also become a deeply inured way of being and of approaching situations in the world. Mindfulness is essentially about attention; bringing our attention to the present moment in a non-judgemental way. In doing so, we become aware of what is happening, right here and now, in our body, mind and wider world; accepting feelings, thoughts and situations for what they are without minimising or exaggerating features of our present experience.

Mindfulness offers a tool for developing mental resilience and equanimity. Research in psychology, neuroscience, education and other social sciences confirms that the practice of mindfulness supports subjective wellbeing and enhances objective health indicators (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Hyland, 2009). People report improved ability to deal with stress and ill health (Klatt, Buckworth, & Malarkey, 2009). Changes, both transient and long-term, have been identified in heart rates, muscle tension, gastro-intestinal reactions and brain scans (Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007). Reports are emerging that participation

can improve sleep patterns, as well as the ability to concentrate and make effective choices (Allen & Kiburz, 2012; Altobello, 2007). All are important for surviving and thriving in modern life. Research into mindfulness in education has led to academic journals focused on the topic and the development of an association for ‘contemplative pedagogy’ in higher education.<sup>3</sup>

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk, is credited with introducing mindfulness to Western culture. At 85 years of age, he is still active as the spiritual leader of Plum Village, the Buddhist centre he founded in France in 1969, where ‘Mindful Living’ is taught. In his multiple books, Thich Nhat Hanh focuses on engaged Buddhism for peaceful social change. He emphasises that mindfulness, wellbeing and responsibility are connected, so that caring for our minds enhances our ability to work, as well as create change in the world (Hanh, 2008). Drawing on Hanh’s interpretation, psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn has integrated Buddhist teachings with western medicine, developing an approach to deal with stress, depression, disease and pain. With a team of colleagues, over the past two decades, he has brought the concept of mindfulness into the laser-like glare of the research arena. His particular skill lies in his use of familiar, yet vivid, metaphors to simplify an ancient and complex philosophy into a practice for the contemporary world. As Kabat-Zinn (2005, p.72) describes mindfulness meditation, it is about ‘nothing at all,’ yet everything that matters.

It is time for a disclaimer. My perspective on this topic may be biased, as I am an academic who is a mindfulness practitioner. I have taught reflection, both the philosophical underpinnings as an academic and the daily practice as a workplace educator. I’ve written about reflection in the arcane language of academia as well as the pragmatic step-by-step outlines of workplace learning guides. Secular Buddhist philosophy initially appealed to me because of resonances I could see with Existential philosophy, which informed my research into the lives of academics and working professionals. I have intermittently practiced meditation and yoga since my teens, with varying degrees of interest and commitment. In mindfulness, I found an approach which is well-grounded philosophically, yet beguilingly simple to undertake. Progress requires regular practice, but it cannot be forced. Like the tension of a guitar string, the right level of effort is required; not too forced or you feel more overwhelmed, but not so relaxed that the mind wanders into reveries. In recognising its benefits, I’ve come together with a small group of colleagues, in a large research-intensive university, to support each others’ mindful practices as a way of dealing with a hectic working life. As well as seeing its potential as an area for research, a contemplative perspective to reflection matters to me in everyday working life.

## **Philosophical precedents**

Despite highlighting the value of mindfulness in academic working lives, this essay's major focus is on the potential inter-relationship between mindfulness and inquiry through a re-conceptualisation of the reflective practice spectrum. Both Existentialist and Buddhist philosophy can shed light on the dialectic nature of 'mindful inquiry'.

Existentialism emerged from phenomenology, the study of consciousness. Buddhism can be viewed as the study of the mind. Both claim to study reality, seeking to understand human 'being'. The former focuses on our Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927/1962), the later, on our InterBeing (Hanh, 2007). Both stress our inter-relationship with each other in the world. Buddhism does not require belief in a God but in personal responsibility for one's own thoughts, actions and choices – for one's own life. We have no control over other peoples' actions and attitudes; we can only control our own mind. Existentialist philosophy also considers we are responsible for our choices in life. Although we cannot choose our genetic and cultural inheritance, within our birth circumstances and the lottery that life deals us, we have freedom of choice – especially over our own attitude. Existentialism describes our essential human dilemma as facing the fact that our lives are finite. Within the time available to us, our everyday choices, habits and practices determine who we become.

The consideration of Existentialism and Buddhism, below, is necessarily brief, its aim being to identify well-founded precedents for an holistic conceptualisation of reflection that incorporates both critique and contemplation. Buddhism is a profound and ancient spiritual practice; Existentialism can be considered a radical cultural extension of twentieth century phenomenology. Consideration of these philosophies in more depth can be found elsewhere (Guignon, 2004; Rinpoche, Gaffney, & Harvey, 1992).

### ***Existentialism***

Busyness blurs our existential angst. Australian philosopher, Damon Young, describes this dilemma cogently in his book *Distraction* (2008). Stopping and becoming aware of our habitual thoughts, distractions or obsessions can be uncomfortable, so we may reach for the wine or the remote control to calm the unsettled feeling. No wonder our attention is stretched and torn. There are multiple opportunities to fritter it away, all vying for our favour. We can drift through life, choosing not to choose (Sartre's Bad Faith), or we can take an authentic stand on who we are becoming through living life consciously. Existentialists generally argue against living automatically or inauthentically. Martin Heidegger's (1927/1962) philosophical argument in *Being and Time* about the relationship between inauthenticity and authenticity

was more nuanced. We need to operate habitually just to get everyday things done. If we had to stop and make thoughtful choices every few minutes it would be impossible to get through the day. Yet by standing back from daily habits to develop clarity, as we do consciously in mindfulness, we can be aware of an inner call to authenticity and stand up for what matters in life. Our everyday choices and actions form the contours of the ground on which we take such a stand in our lives.

Heidegger profoundly influenced existentialism although he did not use that term to describe himself. Despite being a deeply flawed individual with notoriously opaque writing, his examination of what it means to be human offers starkly original insights. Half a century ago, Heidegger (1959/1966, p.44) questioned the lack of time for reflective thinking in the busyness of everyday professional life. He states:

Let us not fool ourselves. All of us, including those who think professionally ... are often enough thought-poor; we are all far too easily thought-less. Thoughtlessness is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today's world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly.

Reflective thinking was a path, for Heidegger, a direction rather than a destination. He distinguished between calculative thinking, as deliberation on situations to solve problems, and meditative thinking, as reaching a calmness that allowed access to 'a distant view that opens' (1954/1977, p.181). The similarities of his calm awareness to mindfulness meditation is one reason scholars have probed for signs of Eastern philosophical roots in Heidegger's originality. In analyzing the 'Task of Thinking,' Heidegger (1966/1993, pp. 442-444) stresses the importance of finding an open space or 'clearing' within thought, where apparent paradoxes may be held, unresolved, in uncertainty, as a 'letting be'. He explains that, 'the clearing in its openness is thus free for interplay of "brightness and darkness" and "resonance and echo"... There is no light and no brightness without the clearing. Even darkness needs it'. Heidegger describes 'the place of stillness' at 'the quiet heart of the clearing,' and urges the need for moving beyond 'the light of reason' towards the 'clearing of Being' in our thinking.

### ***Buddhism***

There is a similar complexity in Buddhist mindfulness, although practitioners may not progress past the first level of calm awareness. There are two aspects to mindfulness: stabilising, contemplative meditation, and investigative, inquiring meditation (Amaro, 2010a). Contemplative mindfulness needs to be developed before we can calmly and

effectively investigate our mind. To calm the mind initially, meditation requires an anchor, focusing attention on the breath, body, a word or object. Stabilising meditation can be described as ‘calm abiding’, an apt portrayal of the experience of coming home to our bodies. Investigative meditation inquires into taken-for-granted assumptions and delusions, but not by using our usual critical tools.

Buddhist scholar, Ajahn Amaro (2010b), explained that the aim of meditation is not to empty the mind of thought. We aim to develop an awareness, or familiarity, with our thought patterns: our incessant internal chatter, obsessions and desires we cling to, repetitive retracing of the same mental ground in rehearsing and planning. Mindfulness involves a particular quality of defocused attention, as qualitatively different from total absorption on a task as it is from daydreaming. Clarity comes when the mind settles through stabilising meditation. With time and practice, once calm, non-judgemental clarity is possible, we can look at thoughts dispassionately, observing them in an open space rather than rushing in to rationally analyse. Holding thoughts gently in awareness, but not holding onto or clinging to possible resolutions, is a way of sitting with paradox or uncertainty, as described in Heidegger’s still centre of the ‘clearing’. Buddhists call this process wise reflection (Amaro, 2010a). Amaro described how mindfulness, as a way of being attentive, can eventually extend beyond formal meditation to be incorporated into life as we approach everyday tasks, relationships and work.

## **Creativity**

Both these western and eastern philosophical examples of the dualistic nature of ‘mindful inquiry’ highlight the value of leaving rational analysis periodically, to progress through stillness to a place that allows uncertainty to linger. In this outcome-driven, fast-paced era, such a concept of stillness seems to be anathema. Although an ability to rationally problem solve and critically analyse is crucial, could there be value for academics in finding places for stillness in academic life, where paradoxes, doubts, uncertainties and mysteries can be held without an immediate search for solutions? In asking this question, I’ve paraphrased poet John Keats’ concept of ‘negative capability’. Educational philosopher, John Dewey referred to Keats’ idea of negative capability with reference to the creative possibilities found in uncertainty. Dewey’s (1916/1966) writings on the dualistic nature of reflective thought have also informed this conceptualisation of ‘mindful inquiry’. Although Dewey stresses the value of active experiential inquiry, he speaks of doing so with a wide-awake awareness developed

through a deepening of conscious life (Lyons, 2010, p.41). This state of still and mindful openness may be crucial for developing fresh insights and creative sparks.

When we allow the mind to settle, unusual and creative thoughts can arise to surprise us. Although the extrapolation of neuroscientific findings about creativity is still contentious, it appears that defocused attention, such as occurs in the quiet, meditative mind, may provide a fertile space for creativity. Creativity is not dependant on any particular area of the brain, but the pre-frontal cortex, an area of ‘executive’ control, plays a significant role. During purposeful problem solving, electro-encephalographic (EEG) pre-frontal activity is heightened (Srinivasan, 2006). The prefrontal cortex exerts an inhibitory control that blocks out ‘noise’ from extraneous brain activity. In contrast, EEG studies have demonstrated a quietening of the prefrontal cortex associated with the development of creative insights, especially in response to ambiguous problems (Martindale, 1999). Although cognitive control is important in directing creative use, paradoxically, when the self-regulating control of the prefrontal cortex is inhibited, flashes of inspiration may emerge.

Sudden serendipitous flashes, of innovative ‘ahah’ ideas, are associated with such a quiescent ‘incubation’ period immediately prior to the insight (Kounios & Beeman, 2009; Sawyer, 2011). Neuroscientific studies of mindfulness meditation demonstrate similar patterns of defocused attention (Raffone & Srinivasan, 2010). Lulling the mind, through activities such as in walking, getting lost in the flow of a physical activity, or even – as Archimedes found – relaxing in the bath may also result in creative insights. These activities may be more difficult to access in an academic day than ten minutes of quiet breathing. Creative insights need to be channelled into thoughtful use. In other words, both cognitive focus and defocused attention may have a part to play in productive creative output.

Following a similar argument, both critical inquiry and contemplative mindfulness have a valuable role in reflective practices. I’ve focused on mindfulness as it’s rudely neglected in contemporary education and work, but argue there is a productive dialectic relationship between critique and contemplation, conceptualised as ‘mindful inquiry’, that may offer creative possibilities (See Figure 1). Just as a period of calm stillness may refocus the mind for rational decision making, focused critical inquiry can prepare the mind for possible insights encountered in mindfulness.

In summarising the dialectic nature of ‘mindful inquiry’, it is useful to think of mindful contemplation and critical inquiry as variations of the one, rather than different forms of thinking. Each of the two apparent opposites can strengthen the other, and within this synergistic relationship, a fertile space for fresh insights may emerge. In the heart of

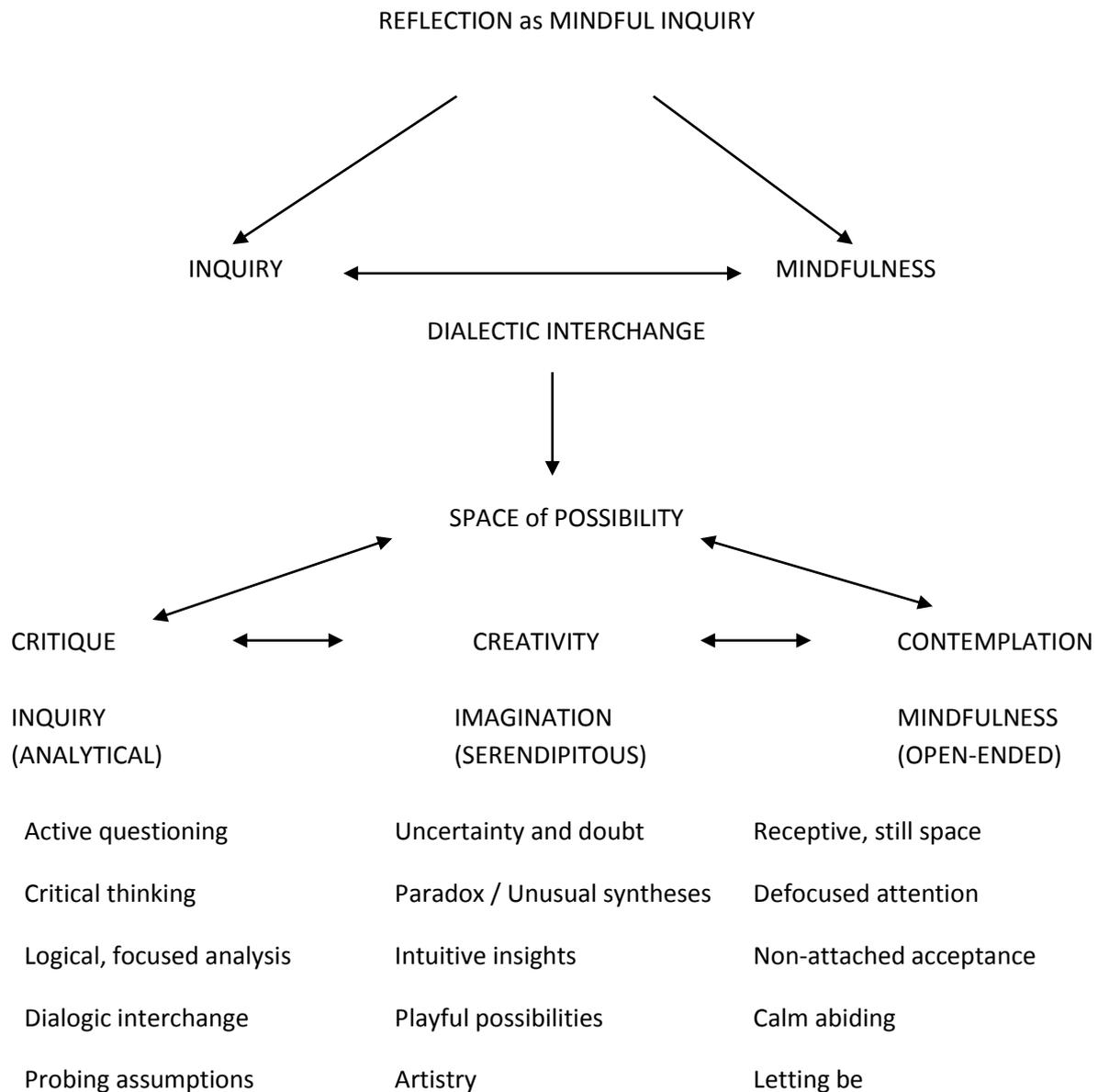


Figure 1: Conceptualisation of Reflective Practices as Mindful Inquiry

contemplative stillness, access to another way of approaching problems may sometimes be found, a way closer to intuition than to rationality.

### Application

Reflection does not happen in a vacuum. Through interaction with people, ideas and activities in the world, who we are, what we think and how we act is shaped and reshaped. Both Buddhist and Existentialist philosophy highlight our social nature. Educational philosopher, Maxine Greene (1988, p.20), notes that individual acts of reflective consciousness are ‘embodied, thrusting into the lived and perceived, open[ing] out to the common’ because they

reflect on shared experiences. In education, the social dimension of learning and reflective thought has been stressed, with an increasing focus on collaboration and discussion. Reflective practices include interactive brain-storming and challenging discussions. Any holistic consideration of reflection must value individual and social aspects. It is through dialogue and interchange that we develop a shared sense of what is important and what is worth pursuing. A community of academics who value mindfulness as well as inquiry in their working lives can support each other to strengthen their practice and resolve. In this respect, academics act as role models for students preparing to face challenges in an uncertain world.

Being mindful does not mean being in a constant Zen state, unable to act decisively. It is possible to practice mindfulness with verve and gusto. Mindfulness may help us cope with the madness of working life, but is not a panacea. Action towards social change is vital. As researchers such as Pocock argue, there is a need to keep questioning the sustainability of life's current pace and its impact on the wellbeing of workers, to consider them as human beings not social capital. Reasoned argument for change is strengthened by clarity of mind, however. As Young (2008, p.226) notes, 'the distracted mind is a clumsy, fumbling guide' to follow in acting towards change. Recharged by opportunities for stillness, we are more able to analyse a situation wisely and choose appropriate action.

There is a considerable body of ancient and modern philosophical thought, only hinted at here, that describes the dialectic nature of reflective thought, yet this complexity is lost as reflective practices are streamlined for teaching and operationalised as learning outcomes. Perhaps we could take meditation out of the monasteries and into everyday lives, particularly in contexts such as academia, where value is placed on skilled, sharp minds. Stepping back from the turbulence of problem solving into a still space can sharpen focus. Conversely, the thrust and parry of inquiry, interaction, and even existential angst gives purpose to mindfulness. It's one thing to meditate in a cave, quite another to maintain a calm centre when surrounded by clamouring demands for attention. Dilemmas of life supply fodder for rumination during mindful practice. Buddhism notes that difficult people and situations can be our greatest teachers in developing wisdom. To be effective, reflective thought requires a still, stable and spacious centre. It can be argued that the more complex and chaotic the world, the greater the need for T. S. Eliot's<sup>4</sup> 'still point in the turning world'.

## **Conclusion**

'Mindful inquiry' is not a capricious idea, but one worth pursuing, through philosophical consideration, empirical research and practical experience. Finding a calm place in everyday

academic life, clearing a space in your mind, is possible, even if it's only for brief periods, such as sitting in the car on arrival at work or before entering the traffic at the end of the day. Despite years of practice, I am still a novice. I have not encountered enlightenment. I have found increased clarity and energy to focus, been delighted and surprised by serendipitous insights, and developed a more accepting self-awareness that renews my determination to, as Young (2008, p. 226) describes, 'take up the challenge of existence'.

'Mindful inquiry' can be considered as a reflective journey from the chatter of the world, through the heart of stillness, to sit with paradoxes and uncertainties, emerging, refreshed and revived at the very least, and on occasions with a new spark of an idea. Like an odyssey, through the perils of uncovered preconceptions, about the world and ourselves, we may return to where we began, and, like Eliot<sup>5</sup>, 'know it for the first time'. Buddhists describe this awareness as looking with the fresh eyes of a 'beginner's mind'. Somewhat obtusely, Heidegger (1966/1993, p.444) describes a similar idea, noting that 'the meditative man' can experience in the stillness of the clearing, the 'untrembling heart of unconcealment' in a circle 'where beginning and end are everywhere the same'. Maybe the idea of reflection leading us to look afresh at the world, and our place in it, is the essence of the sandstone message above my head about self awareness and knowledge.

A sudden silence calls me back from my inner journey. The rain has stopped. Normally I'd make a run for it, but the eerie stillness sits heavily. Dark clouds still squat over the buildings. The horizon is a slab of slate with that menacing touch of green that signals hail. The brief interval between the next lightning strike and its sound signals that this is only a momentary pause in the storm. Before I can make a decision, the deluge returns. This time I don't fight against it, but sink into it. Sitting with my back to the corner, I settle my breathing, soften my thoughts and find that still space in the turbulence of my analytical mind. Ten minutes later, oblivious to any strange glances I may have collected, I stride off to the next meeting under a clearing sky, feeling reinvigorated and refocused.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'mindful inquiry' has been used before, but not in the way this paper proposes. See <http://www.mindfulinquiry.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Jane Dawson's 2003 article also refers to creativity, Existential and Buddhist philosophy. We have reflected on similar issues but pose different arguments. I hope this article can act as an extension of hers.

<sup>3</sup> The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education <http://www.acmhe.org/>

<sup>4</sup> From T.S. Eliot's 1<sup>st</sup> poem in the Four Quartets, Burnt Norton.

<sup>5</sup> From T.S. Eliot's 4<sup>th</sup> poem in the Four Quartets, Little Gidding.

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## Note on contributor

Ann Webster-Wright, PhD, has researched the lives of working professionals, focusing on learning, wellbeing and authenticity. She draws on existential phenomenological philosophy and narrative research methodology to explore how people make sense of their lived experiences. She is a mindfulness practitioner.

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