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**Buddhism and Conflict Transformation:
Philosophical and Conceptual Expansion of the Nature of Human Mind
for Conflict Transformation**

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Abstract

Since 1990's peace research has witnessed the rise of conflict transformation as one of its key ideas. This paper examines how Buddhism can contribute to conflict transformation. In Particular, it analyses how Buddhist ideas of the human mind can complement contributions from Western peace/conflict analysis. One of the limitations facing contemporary conflict transformation is the underdevelopment of qualitative arguments of the potential of the individual mind to critique and transform socially/culturally constructed discourses and knowledge causing or protracting conflict, which, this paper suggests, can be complemented by Buddhist analysis of the mind. This papers proposition is that three concepts human mind – the conditioned mind, the unconditioned mind, and holistic mind – realizes an exploration of how an expanded view of mind can contribute to qualitatively enriching the discourse on peace for future conflict transformation enterprise.

Key words: *Conflict transformation, Buddhism, The conditioned mind, The unconditioned mind, Holistic mind.*

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Buddhism and Conflict Transformation: Philosophical and Conceptual Expansion of the Nature of Human Mind for Conflict Transformation

Introduction

Since the 1990's peace research has witnessed the rise of conflict transformation as one of its key ideas. This paper explores how Buddhism can contribute to conflict transformation by examining how Buddhist ideas of the human mind can complement contributions from Western peace/conflict analysis. It might be odd to examine a complementary relationship between conflict transformation and Buddhist ideas of human mind. However, there is a small but growing body of academic literature on non-Western contributions to the conceptualization of peace and conflict.¹ Further, as Ramsbotham et al argue, in contemporary peace research, various values and wisdom from around the globe should be appreciated and, if necessary, a complementary relationship between them needs to be explored to promote shared understanding of the virtue to address unjust social/global structures and achieve harmonious human relationships.²

Therefore, the main goal of this paper is neither to show superiority of Buddhist ideas of human mind for peace and conflict analysis nor to replace basic ideas of conflict transformation with Buddhist ones. Rather, by proposing new ideas of human mind, it seeks to expand the purview of conflict transformation itself, which would enable us to build new theoretical perspective and even practical methods in the long run.

To this end, three sections form this paper. The first part critically examines the basic features of conflict transformation and uncovers problems facing contemporary conflict transformation enterprise. The paper especially critiques and problematizes the underdevelopment of qualitative arguments of the potential of the individual mind for conflict transformation. The second section expounds the Buddhist analysis of human mind and delves into its understanding of the dynamics of peace/conflict. Finally, the third section explores how an expanded view of human mind can contribute to qualitatively enriching the discourse on peace for future conflict transformation enterprise.

Methodology

The central aim of Buddhism founded by Gautama, the Buddha, who "was led to philosophizing by an intense longing for the eradication of suffering"³ is to examine and

1. For instance, Hershock *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence* and Loy *Awareness Bound and Unbound* are good examples.
2. Ramsbotham et al *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (2nd edition).
3. Bhatt and Mehrotra, *Buddhist Epistemology*, 2.

address the problem of suffering. Especially, it analyses and overcomes psychologically-oriented suffering by means of the eradication of its cause based on the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths⁴.

Furthermore, there are three schools of Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana – and each of them further has sub-schools that have respectively developed distinct teachings and cultures along with the shared objective, that is, the eradication of suffering. As it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse all of those schools in detail and to take up all their teachings to examine their contributions to conflict transformation, the paper employs the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism for the discussion. However, though it embraces Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, this paper recognizes and appreciates other schools' rich teachings and cultures.

1. Critical analysis of contemporary conflict transformation

Basic ideas of conflict transformation

Though it is almost impossible to have single definition of conflict transformation, Mitchell argues there is one key idea about which most would agree: conflict transformation copes with destructive conflicts beyond the cessation of violence, the attainment of compromised settlement or even the joint creation of an acceptable solution to the issue in conflict between adversaries, in other words, “beyond resolution”.⁵ It is not just the short-term business of getting people to the negotiating table nor of accomplishing a cease-fire, but encompasses tasks such as broader transformation, reconciliation and social transformation.⁶ In short, conflict transformation is “a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict.”⁷

The underlying assumption of conflict transformation is there is nothing sacrosanct about the status quo; rather, it starts with critiquing the existing system and assuming that it is crucial to construct new systems, structures, and relationships.⁸ It seeks to problematise the

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4. Yun explains the Four Noble Truths are a fundamental element of all Buddhist teachings and the core doctrinal framework of every school of Buddhism. According to Pereira and Tiso, the Four Noble Truths are “truths of pain, origin of pain, suppression of pain and the way to suppress pain” (1988: 172). The first noble truths states that from Buddhist perspectives, life is nothing but suffering and pain (Rahula). The second noble truth presents the cause of suffering (Rubin). Burton explains suffering is caused by craving, that is, a mental state that leads to attachment, which can be characterized as the tendency of mind to cling or stick to some specific objects or views (Rubin). The third noble truth states suffering caused by craving can be eliminated (Rubin) as it is a psychological and subjective phenomenon. In other words, since it is our responsibility, we can address it by ourselves. The fourth noble truth shows the way to overcome suffering and achieve serenity, which is called the noble eightfold path. It is: right view or understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (Rahula). Regarding the detailed analysis of the Four Noble Truths, Rahula *What the Buddha Taught* and Yun *From the Four Noble Truths to the Four Universal Vows* would be helpful.
 5. Mitchell “Conflict, Social Change and Conflict Resolution. An Enquiry”, 2005. http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/mitchell_handbook.pdf (Accessed 12 March 2011).
 6. Lederach “Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework”.
 7. Miall “Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task”, 2004 http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/miall_handbook.pdf (Accessed 10 April 2011).
 8. Mitchell “Conflict, Social Change and Conflict Resolution. An Enquiry”, 2005 http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/mitchell_handbook.pdf (Accessed 12 March 2011).



dominant social frameworks and aims to create alternatives that could transform the predominant social institutions and social meanings that are regarded as taken-for-granted 'conflict transformation' aims to transform the basis on which everyday life and meaning are constructed and practiced.⁹

Critique of social structure

Jabri insists human conflict is "a social continuity sustained by deeply embedded discursive and institutional structures existent in patterned social systems."¹⁰ The existing social structure is not something neutral or objective: rather it is framed by asymmetric power relations between the component actors in the social systems. Asymmetric power relations are embedded in a complex web of structural and material elements, which constructs the fabric of everyday life itself and causes conflict.¹¹ As the deformed social structure derived from the asymmetric power relations between different groups is considered as a source of conflict, serious conflict must be recognized as being embedded in an unequal social, political and economic system that reflects prolonged exploitation backed by coercion.¹²

Therefore, approaches that ignore structural transformation would result in perpetuating the unequal status quo and prolonging and worsening the conflict.¹³ Structural transformation is a process of transforming relatively enduring asymmetric relationships between/among collectivities in a social structure to new sets of intergroup relations where all groups can enjoy more equal control over political-economic resources within the society.¹⁴ It promotes formal means of securing inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the political systems, institutions and the law.¹⁵ Thus, transformation of the asymmetric power relations in which some groups enjoy social and cultural privilege, greater access to political power, and economic privilege into more civic polity wherein diversity and equality can be guaranteed, is essential for sustainable peace and social stability.¹⁶

Critique of social identity and discourses

Another central feature of conflict transformation is a critical examination of the relationship between social identity and discourses framing social reality. Since identity is "the medium which bridges the self-society nexus"¹⁷, through the construction of social identity, social reality is also formed.¹⁸ The construction of social identity encompasses the construction of shared memories, myths, symbolic orders and self-imagery that shape a constitutive part of the practical consciousness of situated individuals and they provide knowledgeable human agents with meaning in the daily encounters.¹⁹ Narratives and symbols function as frameworks of belief that legitimize and structure social institutions and practices by

9. Fetherston *From Conflict Resolution to Transformative Peacebuilding: Reflections from Croatia Working Paper 4*.

10. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*, 146.

11. Jeong "Structure"

12. Ibid.

13. Botes "Structural Transformation".

14. Montiel "Toward a Psychology of Structural Peacebuilding"

15. Nathan "The four horsemen of the apocalypse: the structural causes of crisis and violence in Africa"

16. Wilmer *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in Former Yugoslavia*.

17. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*, 125.

18. Rogers *Social Psychology: Experimental and Critical Approaches*

19. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*

formulating the rules of interaction, setting the criteria for judgments that enable us to lead a collectively constructed life.²⁰

However, the construction of identity generally accompanies active selection of particular modes of representation, whereby certain dominant social norms and symbolic orders influence the production of social identity.²¹ The construction of discourses of reality involves the exercise of power, that is, the domination by certain social groups.²² The emergence of certain dominant patterns of discourses comes to form asymmetric structures, wherein some particular interests of hegemonic groups are legitimized.²³ Consequently, some social groups are privileged to make definitions or constructions of social meanings and the nature of social structures and institutions, which frame unequal social structures.²⁴ In conflict, the formation of dominant patterns of discourse of social reality and identity causes unequal intergroup power relations, in which some particular interests of dominant groups are prioritized over the others and those that do not accord with the prevalent ones are marginalized as deviation from society.²⁵

Furthermore, through the establishment of certain dominant discourses of reality, narrow and exclusionist social identities come to be formed.²⁶ The networks of signs, symbols, or images embedded in social structures and institutions build a system of inclusion and exclusion,²⁷ implicit in establishing a strict boundary between out-groups and in-groups.²⁸ In a social world, particular ways are used to perceive and interpret others, as well as to present the self to others, and the multiple identities that individuals are supposed to possess come to be expressed in terms of one dominant identity in the process.²⁹ The production of an exclusive modality of representation precludes other possibilities in discourses on reality and identity, which fixates the intergroup division and provides the in-groups with self-serving justification for violence and discrimination towards out-groups.³⁰

Thus, it becomes imperative to challenge the dominant discourses and power relations associated with them. The prevalent cultures defining conflictual and asymmetric intergroup relationships need to be critiqued and consciously revised by those who live in the social/cultural settings.³¹ The transformation of a singular dominant social identity into diverse and multiple identities, which requires adversarial groups to perceive in-group and out-group in an interdependent and self-constituting relationships,³² must entail breaking the dominant discourses and asymmetric relations supporting strongly bounded dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion. Stated otherwise, critical thinking that understands reality as process

20. Baronov *Conceptual Foundations of Social Research Methods*.

21. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*.

22. Fetherson and Parkin "Transforming Violent Conflict: Contributions from Social Theory".

23. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*.

24. Crossley *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory*.

25. Ibid.

26. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*

27. Jeong and Vayrynen "Identity Formation and Transformation"

28. Neuman "Identity and the Outbreak of War"

29. Jabri *Discourses on violence: Conflict analysis reconsidered*.

30. Ibid.

31. Nordstrom "Contested Identities/Essentially Contested Powers".

32. Jeong and Vayrynen "Identity Formation and Transformation".



not as static entity needs to be developed.³³ Such thinking should conscientize us leading to an understanding that the boundaries of identity, framed by certain discourses, are never fixed and can be reorganized with the construction of new meanings and perspectives.³⁴

Problems with contemporary conflict transformation: deterministic nature of individual actors

This paper argues that conflict transformation calls for the praxis of critical consciousness that challenges the existing social structures and discourses on reality framing social identity and intergroup relationships.³⁵ However, Spears has found that in contemporary conflict transformation, there seems to be little work devoted to arguments on the potential of individual agent. Rather, much time has been spent in examining the power of social structures, languages and discourses.³⁶ Consequently, individual agents have come to be considered easily as passive bearers of social structures and discourses.³⁷ Contemporary conflict transformation, while emphasizing the importance and necessity of transforming socially constructed knowledge or discourse, has underdeveloped arguments of the potential of individual subjects. Since contemporary conflict transformation lacks an adequate theory or concept of individual agency as active and creative self, how the individual can critically challenge and eventually transform the existing conceptual thoughts or symbolic knowledge has been obscured.³⁸

By leaving the analysis of the potential of individual agency underdeveloped and maintaining the binary relationship between structure/agency with the former prioritized over the latter, a deterministic nature of human agency remains un-addressed in conflict transformation enterprise. However, if conflict transformation seeks the critique and transformation of socially constructed knowledge or discourses, qualitative exploration of human agency needs to be made.³⁹ How individual can be conceived as an active agent and direct of critique and transformation of knowledge must be analyzed.⁴⁰

Since its beginning Buddhism has laid major emphasis on subjectivity and developed a critical analysis of human thoughts that build a meaningful reality.⁴¹ Our understanding of reality in terms of its contents is invariably mediated by the knowing mind and its perceptual and conceptual apparatus.⁴² In a Buddhist view, the object of investigation is consistently human beings, the aim of which is the realization of the mind-base for knowledge and the construction of knowledge.⁴³ The purpose of Buddhist philosophy is “to know thyself in terms of understanding the structure of one’s own thinking process.”⁴⁴ Critically examining the

33. Crotty *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*.

34. Jeong and Vayrynen “Identity Formation and Transformation”.

35. Dant *Critical Social Theory: Culture, Society and Critique*.

36. Spears “Introduction”.

37. Ibid.

38. Best and Kellner *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*.

39. Burr *Social constructionism*.

40. Ibid.

41. Sharma *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy (Vijnanavada and Madhyamika)*.

42. Burton “Is Madhyamaka Buddhism Really the Middle Way?”, 2001 <http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol3/madhyamaka.html> (Accessed 15 April 2011).

43. Matsuo *Ichi-no-ronri (The Logic of Unity: The Discovery of Zero and Emptiness in Prajnaparamita Thought)*.

44. Ibid.

nature of one's mind or the principles of epistemic function is a central theme of Buddhism: knowing, first of all, reality as a construct of the mind-base or mind-structure; secondly, reflecting its potential danger as the root cause of human suffering including conflict; and finally exploring how it can be addressed constitute the essence of Buddhist philosophy.⁴⁵

The world is not a set of facts to be discovered, but a set of experiences to be interpreted and our interpretation relies on what perspectives and inner powers we bring to our experience.⁴⁶ Accordingly, to make a constructive transformation of the world around us, first of all, we must make a constructive and positive transformation of our ways of knowing and thinking.⁴⁷ Transformation is a process involving a change in our conscious beliefs and in the structure of underlying unconscious symbols that hold our world in place.⁴⁸ Therefore, if we want to make a constructive critique and transformation of socially constructed discourses or symbolic knowledge, our socially/culturally-oriented ways of knowing and thinking need to be broken through. This is not the dismissal of socially or culturally-conditioned way of knowing and thinking; it should be acknowledged that a more expanded way of knowing and thinking needs to be explored and embodied somehow. As will be expounded later, Buddhism has developed critical analysis of the human mind in line with how conceptual thought construction affects us both negatively and positively and this systematic analysis can contribute to expanding the psychological dynamics of conflict transformation.

2. Buddhist analysis of the human mind

Critique of conceptual thought construction

From time immemorial, human beings have developed conceptual thought as the primary tool to make sense of the world of experiences in abstraction and to communicate them with fellow human beings.⁴⁹ While acknowledging this, Buddhism also critiques the potential danger of conceptual thought as the root cause of trouble.

Arguably, the root of trouble lies in our propensity to absolutise any particular viewpoint as the universal and independent truth.⁵⁰ When we indulge in a certain viewpoint or pattern of thought, we are disposed to project some fixed nature or attribute upon phenomena and objects.⁵¹ The mind "freezes or makes static the object of perception"⁵² with fixed qualities and accordingly objects, and reality in general, come to be tied up with definitive views and treated as a fixed entity or substance.⁵³

Once we have constructed our world with fixed attributes, we keep strong hold of those qualities as absolute or complete, over which we come to have greed, anger, or obsession.⁵⁴ Though we tend to believe by projecting certain views upon the real, and thereby gain a sense of stability, actual conditions in the real world do not always accord with our projected

45. Ibid.

46. Said et al "For the need for new thinking".

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ichimura "Contemporary Significance of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy".

50. Gomez "Proto-Madhyamika in the Pali Canon".

51. Murt *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Madhyamika System*

52. Inada *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika with an Introductory Essay*, 24.

53. Chang *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*

54. Suzuki *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*.



views and with our intentions, which results in anger, hatred, or bewilderment.⁵⁵ Furthermore, when we choose some particular thoughts, we tend to “claim completeness for the aspects that we have selected”⁵⁶, which causes us to be dogmatic, exclusive of other views or thoughts. By indulging in a particular conceptual thought, we are imprisoned in our own world and unable to liberate ourselves from extremely narrow-minded viewpoint.⁵⁷ Building a particular pattern of thought is essential in leading daily lives and engaging in intellectual enterprise. Nevertheless, such a selection, once fixed and absolutized, which manifests our deep clinging and attachment, becomes the very root cause of trouble.⁵⁸

However, the upshot of the critique of conceptual thought is not rejection of the conceptual thought or certain pattern of thought itself.⁵⁹ Rather, the main target is our tendency to become enmeshed in a specific conceptual position or particular pattern of thought and cling to it as absolute or complete.⁶⁰ When we gain an insight into the nature of conceptual thought that constricts the purview of our thought, we can overcome the extreme adherence to any particular pattern of thought or view.

Dialectical contemplation on an insight into conceptual thought

In a Buddhist view, dialectic is a self-conscious spiritual movement that entails a critique of conceptual thought.⁶¹ It is the consciousness of the total and interminable conflict in conceptual thought-construction of any kind that tries to absolutise itself and the consequent attempt to resolve the conflict by rising to a higher standpoint.⁶²

The core of dialectical contemplation is the realization of the interdependent nature of conceptual thought of any kind framing our reality. Waldo claims that in a Buddhist view, “no concepts are immune from the dynamics process of interdependence in the sense that they refer to an absolute stratum of reality presupposed by all other concepts.”⁶³ Further, Kakol argues that “all views, when analyzed, imply their own negation, which means that they are logically dependent on opposing views that contradict them.”⁶⁴

The inherent contradictory and interdependent nature of conceptual thought is expounded by Buddhist masters. For instance, Nagarjuna,⁶⁵ states, “Without one there cannot be many and without many it is not possible to refer to one. Therefore, one and many arise dependently and such phenomena do not have sign of inherent existence.”⁶⁶ Further, he argues, “Unity and multiplicity and past and future, etc., defilement and purification, correct

55. Murti *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Madhyamika System*.

56. Ramanan *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*.

57. Suzuki *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*.

58. Chang *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*

59. Loy “Indra’s Postmodern Net”.

60. Muller *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen*

61. Murti *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Madhyamika System*.

62. Ibid.

63. Waldo “Nagarjuna and Analytic Philosophy (1)”, 288.

64. Kakol “A general theory of worldviews based on Madhyamika and process philosophies”, 212.

65. Nagarjuna is one of the most important Buddhist philosophers, who lived between the second and third century. According to Williams, he is called “the second Buddha” for his huge contribution to the development of Mahayana Buddhism. Regarding the details of Nagarjuna’s works and Madhyamaka philosophy, Williams’ *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation* (1989, 55-76) would be helpful.

66. Komito *Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas": A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness*, 80.

and false – how can they exist per se?”⁶⁷ These statements demonstrate the inherent interdependent nature of opposing concepts to make sense and unreality of their independent existence.

The central approach of the Buddhist dialectic is to expose all views to “bi-negation.”⁶⁸ Views are negated by the function of “reduction ad absurdum” and then opposing views that have arisen by the negation are also nullified in the same way.⁶⁹ This bi-negation approach implies the fundamental contradiction and inconsistency of any form of conceptual thought: while one concept needs the other that opposes it, the latter needs the former to make sense. However, the former itself needs the latter, and eventually infinite regress continues without end, which leads us to realize the ultimate unreality to absolutize any form of conceptual thought as the independent truth.

Some might think Buddhist dialectical contemplation seeks to abandon or cease thinking. However, Buddhism explicitly denies this. For instance, Asvagosha’s *Awakening of Faith*⁷⁰ states, “We understand by the annihilation (of mind), not that of the mind itself, but its modes (only).”⁷¹ The *Lankavatara-sutra*⁷² states, “The goal of tranquilization (of mind) is to be reached not by suppressing all mind activity but getting rid of discrimination and attachments.”⁷³ These show that Buddhist contemplative dialectic aims to achieve the condition of not being trapped in thoughts and not adhering to a certain habit or pattern of thought as the absolute truth or knowledge.⁷⁴ The ultimate purpose is to achieve the function of our mind free from attachment to any form of thought even when we are engaged in it.⁷⁵ By being transcendent of an attachment to any particular view or pattern of thought while perceiving its practical value in certain situation, our conceptualizing faculty, rather than being wiped out, functions well or even better than before as it no longer has to operate in a rigid, constricted and clinging mode in approaching our reality including peace and conflict.⁷⁶

Although a Buddhist critique of mind has been examined, the upshot is that we tend to be tied down or confined to certain social or cultural thought that conditions us that can cause suffering, and which in some cases, we can resolve through our own self-effort. The next

67. Tola and Dragonetti *On Voidness: A Study on Buddhist Nihilism*, 128.

68. Kakol “A general theory of worldviews based on Madhyamika and process philosophies”, 212.

69. Ibid.

70. Asvagosha is the philosopher of Buddhism. Suzuki assesses that Asvagosha is the first expounder of the Mahayana Buddhism and one of the deepest thinkers among the Buddhist patriarchs who engaged in a thorough and comprehensive analysis of human mind both as the root cause of suffering and as the source to overcome it. Regarding the details of the life and works of Asvaghosa, Suzuki *Asvaghosa’s Discourse On the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* would be very helpful.

71. Suzuki *Asvaghosa’s Discourse on the Awakening of Faith In the Mahayana*, 83.

72. Suzuki states that *Lankavatara Sutra* is one of the main texts of Mahayana Buddhism and central to Zen school that is one of the important wings of Buddhism. He also argues the teachings presented in the text examine the nature or quality of mind, self-realization and the process for its attainment to achieve liberation from suffering. Put differently, it can be understood that *Lankavatara Sutra* engages in critical and constructive analysis of human mind that seeks to break through an erroneous understanding of mind and unveil its true nature so that we can achieve liberation from suffering and serenity that essentially arises from our own minds.

73. Suzuki (2003) *The Lankavatara Sutra: An Epitomized Version*, 73.

74. Muller *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen*

75. Loy “Mu and Its Implications”.

76. Muller *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen*



section examines how the Buddhist critique of the mind can contribute to the study of human mind in peace and conflict analysis.

3. Applying Buddhist analysis of mind to peace/conflict dynamics

The proposition of the conditioned mind and its analysis

Firstly, the idea of “the conditioned mind” is proposed. The conditioned mind is characterized as mind shaped by the belief and forms of truth that are conventionally accepted as valid and effective in the practical matters of social cultural life-world.⁷⁷ It is the mind framed by socially or culturally embedded assumptions, worldviews or habitual ways of interpretation that we hold in response to a given life-world.⁷⁸

Through social and cultural conditionedness, we project certain pattern of conceptual categories upon reality and that make experiences conform to our systems of thought.⁷⁹ Any kind of collective circumstance moulds our minds to conform to certain norms and determines the appropriateness or acceptability of a given state of awareness or communication in the social and cultural settings.⁸⁰ As collective entities, we become inevitably conditioned by socially or culturally constructed views or discourses. However, the conditioned mind itself can turn into a root cause of conflict and hamper harmonious human relationships.

Our conditioned state can become a root cause of conflict when it gets absolutized and clung to as such. Once we cling to conceptual or discursive thoughts socially or culturally conditioning us, this can result in fixating the real – objects, persons, or groups of people, events and so on – with some supposedly fixed attributes or qualities.⁸¹ Sedimented and habitual ways of seeing the real are formed to limit the objects, people, and other phenomena to a static essence with a fixed nature.⁸²

The absolutization of our conditionedness with a fixed view of reality is connected to our eagerness for the establishment of sense of security and stable identity. According to Loy, security refers to “the conditions where we can live without care, where our life is not preoccupied with worrying about our life”⁸³. This involves stabilizing ourselves by fixating the real with putatively immutable attributes: in our anxiety and quest for reassurance and security, we reify situations and things and cling to and manipulate those reified conditions.⁸⁴ Put differently, the fragility of constructed views and identities is seen as a threat to security. As widely acknowledged, basic human needs, especially, socio-psychologically oriented needs such as identity, security, recognition and development⁸⁵ are essential to peace and conflict

77. Wright “Language And Truth In Hua-Yen Buddhism”.

78. Gunnlaugson “Shedding Lights on the Underlying Forms of Transformative Learning Theory: Introducing Three Distinct Categories of Consciousness”.

79. McEvilley “Early Greek philosophy and Madhyamika”.

80. Goleman “Psychology, Reality, and Consciousness”.

81. Chang *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*.

82. Lipman “The cittamatra and its Madhyamaka critique: some phenomenological reflections”.

83. Loy *On the Nonduality of Good and Evil: Buddhist Reflections on the New Holy War*, 8 2002 http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/NonDuality_Good_and_Evil.htm (Accessed 15 April 2011)

84. Mipham *Introduction to the Middle Way*

85. Burton *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*

analysis. And at first glance, fixating objects and entities including us with supposedly permanent attributes is assumed to build stable sense of identity and security.

However, as fixated view of identity become strong and extreme, they tend to be imagined to be absolute and exclusive of other identities or views of identity⁸⁶, driving us toward extreme behaviors against those with different attributes of identity.⁸⁷ An extremely egocentric view emerging from our social or cultural conditionedness is prone to make us easily criticize or attack those with different views of identities.

The extreme attachment to our views can elapse into prejudice and polarity or negation of other views and ways of life and ultimately of people who are different from us.⁸⁸ Once the chosen view conditioning us has come to be seized as absolute, we tend to feel threat, fear, anger or hatred to those with different frames of reference, which can provide us with self-serving justification for violence, injustice or discrimination.⁸⁹ Social or cultural conditionedness, though essential to make our lives meaningful, can cause us to exaggerate differences between peoples, create supposedly firm boundaries between 'in-groups' and 'out-group' and reify those into fixed and independent entities segregating one from another by imputing intrinsic and insurmountable differences.⁹⁰

This critique of our social or cultural conditionedness argues that the upshot should not be to deny our conditioned nature. Rather, what needs to be considered is how we can address the force of mind tied down to specific frameworks of ideology, cultural values, religious dogma, ethnic or racial values.⁹¹

The proposition of the unconditioned mind

Since the propensity of the mind to become socially or culturally conditioned becomes the root cause of conflict and violence, the need of methods to break the attachment must be sought,⁹² and here the concept of the unconditioned mind is proposed.

The unconditioned mind is characterized as a mind transcendental of an attachment to a particular conditioned state. And the attitude of the detachment is prescribed.⁹³ To be detached from a given perspective is to refrain from being taken in or possessed by it to suspend the natural tendency to become conditioned by certain perspective position.⁹⁴ In other words, the promotion of reflective self-awareness is at the centre of the proposition of the unconditioned mind. Once we become conditioned by a certain view, we tend to entertain that view and adhere to it as absolutely,⁹⁵ which leads us to fall into dogmatism. Therefore, it is necessary to experience things or phenomena in a way that is free from our habitual grasping at them.⁹⁶

86. Ramanan *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*.

87. Der-lan Yeh "The Way to Peace: A Buddhist perspective"

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Waldron "Common Ground, Common Cause: Buddhism and Science on the Afflictions of Identity".

91. Ichimura "Contemporary Significance of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy".

92. Muller *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen*

93. Laycock "Hui-Neng and the Transcendental Standpoint"

94. Ibid.

95. Murti *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Madhyamika System*.

96. Ames "The Spiritual Significance of Emptiness in Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika".



There might be various approaches to de-condition the mind that becomes absolutized and which causes us indulge in extremely self-absorbed view. Further, it is very difficult to be de-conditioned from social or cultural frameworks. However, once socially/culturally habituated thought becomes the root cause of conflict, we need to sharpen the ability to distance ourselves from such conditioned pattern of thought. Therefore, the skill of promoting reflective self-awareness empowers us to let habituated patterns of thought lay bare to our consciousness.⁹⁷ The enhancement of self-reflection keeps us out of the extreme attachment to a particular conditioned state and serves to loosen the power of habits of thought and makes our mind more hospitable places for openness to differences, peaceful relationships and creativity.⁹⁸

The proposition of holistic mind

Applying the two ideas of human mind have been proposed and examined, it can be argued that human minds have both the conditioned and unconditioned natures and it is crucial to embody their interdependent relationship in our thinking and behaving and the concept of holistic mind is proposed.

A holistic mind is defined as a mind that realizes the interdependent relationship between the conditioned state and the unconditioned state: it is the conditioned mind in the unconditioned or transcendental state in approaching the real.

Though becoming conditioned by conceptual thought is natural to us, Wade insightfully argues that it is fundamentally the dualistic nature of thought (right/wrong, good/bad, black/white, to name a few) that divides the world into 'in-group' and 'out-group'.⁹⁹ Further, those in dualistic thought are informed by the principle of the excluded middle¹⁰⁰ or 'either-or' stance.¹⁰¹ This logical stance prioritizes one over the other by enhancing dichotomous relationships between in-groups and out-groups, whereby an imbalanced attitude invested by extreme in-group ego interest and desire is favoured and promoted.¹⁰² Consequently, the subject, relying on the strong in-group consciousness, becomes the generative factor for creating discriminatory and oppositional relationship.¹⁰³

Once we see the other as something disconnected from us, it becomes easier to propagate violence upon the other outside the boundary.¹⁰⁴ In a dualistic logical and epistemological structure, we are prone to project negative qualities upon the outside groups and see such qualities as objectively belonging to them.¹⁰⁵ This can promote self-righteousness leading to discriminatory attitudes and the perpetration of any kind of violence towards them. Further, the mind in dualistic state "swings from extreme to extreme; in its swinging to extremes, it clings to dead-ends",¹⁰⁶ whereby the values, ideas of one's group are not viewed as one of

97. Claxton "Nirvana and Neuroscience: The self-liberating brain".

98. Ibid.

99. Wade *Changing of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*

100. Fenner "Spiritual Inquiry in Buddhism".

101. Nagatomo "The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A".

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Hart et al "Introduction".

105. Wilber *The Spectrum of Consciousness*

106. Ramanan *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*, 91.



many alternatives, but the only right ones; other possibilities are dimly conceived or denied as wrong.¹⁰⁷

The holistic mind empowers us to engage in sustained contemplation on insight into symbolic knowledge shaping dichotomous intergroup relations. The pinnacle is the realization of the essential dependent-originated nature of any conceptual or linguistic framework: any form of symbolic knowledge cannot be seen as existing outside the purview of interdependency.¹⁰⁸ It does not mean total erasure of difference or demise of all distinctions into an all-frozen sameness, but advocates a reformulation of dualistic thinking. Realization of the interdependent nature of symbolic knowledge building dichotomy empowers us to transcend 'either-or' thought. What needs to be known is that dualistic thought, though important in some circumstances, is "only one product of the total functioning of the mind."¹⁰⁹ The holistic mind enables us to effect a perspectival shift from the dualistic to nondualistic stance,¹¹⁰ wherein prima facie opposing views are not seen as fixed pair of opposites, but as inter-relational constructs. Going beyond dualistic stance calls us to transcend any strongly ingrained habits of our thinking and participate in and play with opposing or even contradictory views.

As Vaughan suggests, when we are liberated from the attachment to particular fixed view, it becomes possible to have multiple perspectives in viewing and approaching the real.¹¹¹ The transcendence of fixed perspectives can enable us to overcome particular limited horizon of attitude and open up the infinite network of meaning that are not tied to any specific egocentric standpoints.¹¹²

Holistic mind and peace

This paper argues that in examining the holistic mind and discourse on peace, what should first be considered is the promotion of contemplative self-introspection as one of the essential tools to achieve lasting peace.

Normally, once we become conditioned by certain thoughts, we tend to remain identified with those thoughts, beliefs and are kept imprisoned in the conditioned state,¹¹³ which constricts the purview of our thought. Therefore, the first step is to disidentify ourselves from the conditionedness, to make it conscious and to reflect on it.¹¹⁴ The aim of the contemplative disengagement is to create a space in mind for the development of an enlarged awareness, attentiveness to broader dimensions of how mind can work in the conditioned state.¹¹⁵

Contemplative self-critique cultivates our first-hand experience of the nature of social or cultural conditionedness of our thinking or knowing within a collective context, which helps

107. Wade *Changing of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*

108. Muller *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen*

109. Tart *States of Consciousness*, 28.

110. Nagatomo "The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A".

111. Vaughan "What is Spiritual Intelligence?"

112. Blass "On the Possibility of Self-Transcendence: Philosophical Counseling, Zen, and the Psychological Perspective".

113. Welwood "Reflection and Presence".

114. Ibid.

115. Wright *Philosophical meditations on Zen Buddhism*.



us become less identified with our habits of mind and standpoint.¹¹⁶ Contemplative self-knowledge sharpens our capacity to simultaneously hold multiple perspectives and patterns of thought that depends on an awareness that embraces various perspectives, without adhering to any one of them,¹¹⁷ to approach the real.

The integrative expansion of experiential range as a result of contemplative self-critique allows us to engage the world in a more extensive and inclusive manner.¹¹⁸ A key to conflict transformation is to go beyond ego or identity.¹¹⁹ It does not mean the denial of identity; rather, it refers to a qualitative transformation of viewing the nature of identity. Rather than seeing our identity as an independent and fixed existence, we need to effect a perspectival shift that understands it as the interdependent web of life with no any fixed nature.¹²⁰ Realizing identity as an open and dynamic living system, existing within a larger interdependent ecosystem, can awaken us to an ultimate nondualistic relationship between the in-group and out-group,¹²¹ which enables us to recognize we cannot discriminate ourselves from the interrelational web of life without damaging both others and ourselves.¹²²

Recognizing the interdependent nature of reality including human relations makes us aware that our own well-being and that of others' are inseparable: without considering and acting to promote the peace of others', our own peace is impossible.¹²³ When an all-embracing and non-abiding perspective free from an extreme attachment to every vestige of self-centredness is acknowledged and practiced somehow, the conditions for lasting peace can be built.

Arguably, dialogue, the need for which arises from the emerging acknowledgement that our changing reality requires a new global ethic and a new perception of one another,¹²⁴ is essential to the transformation of violent relationship into harmonious and constructive one. However, the practice of authentic dialogue requires the openness to be challenged and transformed by encountering other viewpoints or values as well as the willingness and ability to engage in active listening to and understanding of them.¹²⁵ So, expanding awareness to include a wider range of possibilities needs to be recognized and practiced. Touching diversity and difference marks "the emergence of complex and coordination-enriching interdependence."¹²⁶

Human relationship entails "continuous, relationally-expanding and interdependent-enhancing improvisation"¹²⁷, which allows us to experience difference as an opportunity for

116.Gunnlaugson "Shedding Lights on the Underlying Forms of Transformative Learning Theory: Introducing Three Distinct Categories of Consciousness".

117.Hart et al "Introduction".

118.Firman and Gila *A Psychology of the Spirit*.

119.Vaughan *The Inward Arc: Healing in Psychotherapy and Spirituality*.

120.Loy "Indra's Postmodern Net".

121.Rothberg "Buddhist responses to violence and war: Resources for a Socially Engaged Spirituality".

122.Loy "Indra's Postmodern Net".

123.Vaughan *The Inward Arc: Healing in Psychotherapy and Spirituality*.

124.Said et al "For the need for new thinking".

125.Ferrer, J. (2002) *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*

126.Though the works by Peter Hershock I used have not yet been published, I have got personal permission to employ Hershock's ideas through communication with him. Here I wish to show my appreciation to his kindness to allow me to use his ideas.

127.Hershock, P. D. (forthcoming) *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflection on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future*, 368.



mutual insight and inspiration and to explore something new to all participants. Improvising, in this context a “lived, enacted performance of being different in the world”¹²⁸ can be understood as the ongoing development of new views and meanings from within things as they have come to be. Improvisation is not the abandonment of values, worldviews or norms socially or culturally conditioning us. It is their meaningful revision and reorientation so that we can add new understandings or views to them according to dynamic and interdependent human interaction.

Social or cultural conditionedness tends to persist without self-awareness and a conscious intention to change.¹²⁹ It is not easy to be aware of conditionedness and to develop contemplative self-awareness to look into our conditioned nature. Nevertheless, practicing a deeper self-introspection and mindfulness over days, months, and even years, can empower us to recognize our conditioned nature and to be detached from it.¹³⁰ Whilst difficult but not as impossible as it may sound, by integrating contemplative self-critique into daily life and raising the conscious awareness present in it for constant critique of conditionedness, the possibility of transcending a particular thought or belief system and approaching our lives from extensive and broader perspectives becomes a reality.¹³¹

Since conflict transformation is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon in line with what it perceives to be complex and multi-dimensional causes of conflict and approaches to transform violent situation into harmonious one, it is absurd to assert the promotion of the power of mind as the only key to conflict transformation. However, at the same time, as Francis claims, “in human societies, minds and hearts are the main arena.”¹³² Even social justice, though it is external social or structural phenomenon, recalls “the power of imagination and the importance of not limiting possibilities by current patterns and relationships.”¹³³ Therefore, at the centre of the process of transformation should lie human agency that can employ various ways of knowing such as rational consideration, reflection, intuitive induction, creative imagination and so on to make a positive change.

Conclusion and research implications

Clearly it is very difficult to employ contemplative self-awareness as a practical method for conflict transformation. Moreover, as Hershock cautiously critiques, the potential of the mind explored in this paper could not be applied by those without appropriate food, clothing and shelter or those without adequate access to political and economic activities and to social services such as basic education and health care.¹³⁴ Satisfying basic human needs and transforming social and even global structures that create asymmetric relationships are essential to peace.

Nevertheless, as Rothberg suggests, the tool of constant mindfulness and self-awareness as a basic means of transformation is important in helping to prevent a separation between the

128.Ibid.

129.Vaughan *The Inward Arc: Healing in Psychotherapy and Spirituality*.

130.Firman and Gila *A Psychology of the Spirit*.

131.Vaughan *Awakening Intuition*.

132.Francis *From Pacification to Peacebuilding: A Call to Global Transformation*.

133.Adarkar and Lee Keiser “The Buddha in the Classroom: Toward a Critical Spiritual Pedagogy”, 248.

134.Hershock “Diversity Matters: Buddhist Reflections on the Meaning of Difference”.



experiences of the participants in social action and the desired changes, and between the process of change and the intended results.¹³⁵ Continuous and sustained engagement in reflective self-awareness will enable us to realise that attention can be redirected by our own will and effort, which can bring about the undoing of old habits of thoughts and patterns of behaviour.¹³⁶ Though social or cultural constraints are always in place, an awakening to the particular forms of the given situation and a heightening of awareness and reflection of our basic situatedness is a big step toward the realisation of the potential and capacity of our own minds.¹³⁷

Further, though contemplative self-reflection tends to be seen as a special activity located outside the domain of ordinary life, it can be more effectively practiced when it is the conscious awareness present in all human activity.¹³⁸ Since every day we are creating our own subjective realities,¹³⁹ every moment of our lives can be an opportunity to know the value of reflective self-awareness and the power of mind. Thus, although more research needs to be done, contemplative self-awareness has the potential to be incorporated into practical methodologies to achieve peace in the long run.

As is widely acknowledged, social psychology has contributed to the development of the psychological dynamics of peace and conflict analysis. The complementary relationship between social psychology and the nature of the mind explored in this paper has interesting research implications for deepening an understanding of the psychological dynamics of peace/conflict. Bar-Tal argues that social psychology needs to learn to cooperate and open itself to knowledge and ideas of other disciplines, which enables us to learn different approaches that employ different concepts, frameworks, and data to examine the same phenomena.¹⁴⁰ His comment also applies to Buddhist psychological discipline. Though some scholars, for example, McConnell have examined Buddhist psychology in peace research¹⁴¹, collaborative research relationships with other psychological disciplines have remained underdeveloped. For instance, social psychology has applied social identity theory, social categorization theory, contact hypothesis, and so on to analyse conflict dynamics and how antagonistic intergroup relationship can be transformed into peaceful and constructive one. Examining how holistic mind and contemplative self-awareness proposed here can complement those theories and methods would be an interesting research subject.

Through establishing a complementary relationship among different psychological disciplines is challenging or might seem too ambitious or idealistic, the foundational ethos of peace research is interdisciplinarity, whereby distinct intellectual enterprises are mutually appreciated for their values and potential contribution to promoting peace research.¹⁴² New perspectives, new theories, and novel empirical information, which are proposed by new philosophical frameworks, can enable us to see and understand how things can be different

135. Rothberg "Buddhist responses to violence and war: Resources for a Socially Engaged Spirituality".

136. Vaughan *The Inward Arc: Healing in Psychotherapy and Spirituality*.

137. Wright *Philosophical meditations on Zen Buddhism*.

138. Ibid.

139. Vaughan *Awakening Intuition*.

140. Bar-Tal "Conclusion: To Open the Closet".

141. For instance, McConnell *Mindful Mediation: A Handbook for Buddhist Peacemakers*

142. Der-Ian Yeh (2006) "The Way to Peace: A Buddhist perspective".



from the ways they first present themselves to us and explore how things could be different from the way they are.¹⁴³ Therefore, even if it is initially on a philosophical and conceptual level, deepening our view of human mind should be an essential work to the development of peace research enterprise.

143.Calhoun (2000) "Social Theory and the Public Sphere".



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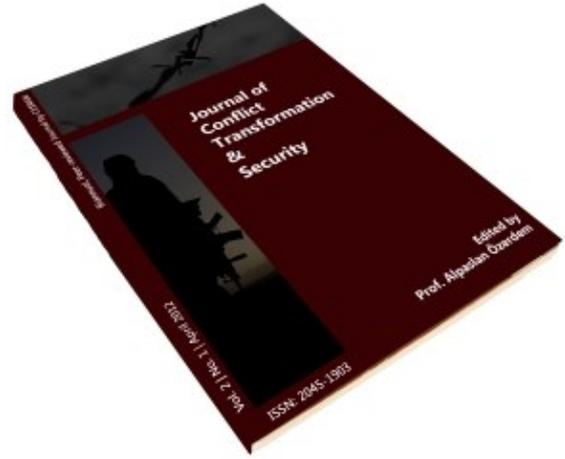
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