Beyond the Precepts: The Relevance of Ethics to Mindfulness Based Interventions

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Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are derived from Buddhism and have proliferated in modern society to enhance the psychological well-being of individuals. However, there has been concerns about the omission of ethical training, which is foundational to Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness. The reinstatement of ethics has the potential to enhance MBIs and mitigate these concerns but may not be relevant to a modern audience and a scientific epistemology. Western monastics whose lives traverse both traditional Buddhist practices and western frames of reference are uniquely positioned to explore Buddhist ethics and add insight to this dialogue. Prospective participants (*n*=7) were purposively selected from Buddhist monasteries in Aotearoa/New Zealand and participated in a semi-structured interview that elucidated the lived experience of Buddhist ethics and monastics' perspectives on the relevance of Buddhist ethics for western people and MBIs. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) resulted in six group experiential themes: Ethical training as a determinant of transformation; The psychospiritual benefits of ethical maturation; Barriers to ethical engagement; Where psychology diverges; Ethics meets the deeper needs of modern people and MBIs; Proposed adaptations to the presentation of Buddhist ethics. These were encapsulated in the overarching theme: An orientation towards flourishing and fulfilment. The participants' narratives functioned to demystify ethics and outlined conceptualizations of ethics beyond the precepts, where ethics as an orientation towards collective flourishing through self-enquiry could support MBIs as a prophylaxis against the multitudinous psychological, relational, and societal harms that are the consequences of unethical behaviours to meet the deeper transformational needs of society.

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The Buddha once said, “admirable friendships are the whole of the holy life” (SN 45.2). In parallel, the centrality of relationships is the prerequisite of accomplishing any endeavor. I am very grateful for the advice and patience of my supervisor Heather Kempton; the monastics who provided the narrative and meaning; the reviewers: Alison and Hugo Hoffmann, Sayadaw U Jāgara, Venerable Adhimutti; and the support of dear friends, family, and neighbors. This writing journey has been situated in a time of interruptions, with challenges in my own life and that in the world – the moment my child’s vision was significantly impaired, and the counter moment well over a year later her independence (partly) intact when she went off alone with her friends to the park, marking a milestone of recovery and the understanding of the meaning and value of a new normal. For me, these two journeys were interwoven threads of the vicissitudes of life. It is my hope that the reader may find something of benefit in their additional hermeneutic turning of the wheel.

Glossary

Anattā: Non-self, all phenomena as void of any permanent essence.

Anicca: Impermanence.

Ahimsa: Non-harming.

Bodhicitta: The enlightenment mind.

Bojjhaṅgās: Seven factors of awakening/enlightenment: Mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, equanimity.

Brahmavihārās: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic-joy, equanimity.

Dependent Origination: The principle that all phenomena is dependent on specific causes and conditions to arise.

Dhamma: The Buddhist teachings; the law of nature; an event or phenomena; mental quality.

Dukkha: Unsatisfactoriness, suffering.

Eudaemonia: An aspect of wellbeing that is fulfilled by a lived life that has meaning and purpose.

Hedonia: An aspect of wellbeing where positive affect is present and negative affect is absent.

Karunā: Compassion.

Mahāyāna: One of the main extant groups in Buddhism that encompasses various traditions (e.g., Zen, Tibetan Buddhism). Their teachings are not derived exclusively from early Buddhist texts but include Mahāyāna texts where the origins are unclear and contributed to by other teachers.

Mettā: Loving kindness.

Nibbāna: Beyond conditioned reality, the final goal.

Paññā: Wisdom, discernment.

Pāramīs: Wholesome spiritual qualities e.g., generosity, wisdom, ethical conduct.

Samādhi: Concentrated state in meditation, stillness, jhāna (deep meditative states of profound absorption of the mind).

Sati: Mindfulness, quality of presence.

Sīla: Ethical conduct of body, speech and mind.

Theravāda: One of the main branches of Buddhism that adheres to the early Buddhist texts originally derived from the Buddha.

Vinaya: The monastic code of discipline.

Abbreviations

Dhp Dhammapada

DN Dīgha Nikāya

MĀ Madhyama Āgama

MN Majjhima Nikāya

SN Saṃyutta Nikāya

Vish Vishudimagga

Table of Contents

Buddhist Origins of Mindfulness

More than two millennia before contemporary psychological therapies were conceptualized, Siddhattha Gotama (i.e., the Buddha) had explicated practices that would lead to the release from suffering and the foremost ease (*nibbāna*; Dhp 203). His teachings extended beyond theoretical understandings and the clinical aims of relief, towards a lifetime cultivation of mental faculties and qualities that are conducive to awakening to the deeper realities of our subjective experience, our self, and the processes that underlie these (e.g., dependent origination). These faculties were attained through the practice of ethical behaviours (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and the development of experiential discernment and insight (*paññā*). Cultivated together, these practices lead to profound levels of realization, wellbeing, and relational harmony.

Although Wilhelm Wundt is considered the founder of modern psychology (Asthana, 2015), the endeavor to illuminate and understand the mind is not new. Arguably the Buddha's contribution to psychological thought over 2,500 years ago is unrivaled in both the breadth of knowledge and penetration of the nature of the mind (Gaur, 2019). He taught for over 45 years (circa. 445-500 BCE; Norman, 1997) through relatable similes that reveal layered understanding of the mind-body phenomena along with how to lead a wise and compassionate life conducive to happiness. More than 10,000 of his teachings were orally transmitted and later inputted into the *Sutta Piṭaka* - one part of the tripartite Pāli Canon (Sarao, 2017). The early discourses of the Sutta Piṭaka are conceived as being canonical authentic teachings, from which all the schools of Buddhism are derived (Sujato, 2021). The second part of the canonical text is the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which covers the rules of ethical conduct for monastics. The third component, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is a later scholastic reworking

of the suttas, that categorizes and details the processes of mind and matter, which constitute one's world or lived experience (Ronkin, 2015).

Overview of the Four Noble Truths

The Buddha's analysis and insight into the nature of human existence was derived from self-observance of phenomenological experience within the framework of the body and mind, which was explicated by the four noble truths. His central insights were the result of a spiritual journey that culminated in personal awakening and transformation (Gaur, 2019). This journey was precipitated by contact with the realities of suffering associated with old age, sickness, and death, which led to an existential dilemma, where he left the comforts of the material world to seek deeper meanings of life. Whilst in deep states of meditation (*jhānas*), he penetrated and analyzed the unfolding reality of his experience, the features and landscape – the processes of his mind. His insights were summarized as the Four Noble Truths (MN 141):

1. *Dukkha* "dissatisfaction" is an intrinsic characteristic of human experience,

2. The cause of the dissatisfaction is craving,

3. Letting go of craving results in the cessation of suffering,

4. The development and realization of the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering where right mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is but one component of the path (Amaro, 2015; Anālayo, 2011).

By elaboration, (1) dukkha encompasses all the varied forms of psychological stress and unsatisfactoriness that is an innate part of the shared human experience (Sumedho, 2020). For example, the difficulties of birth, old age, and death; loss resulting in grief, despair, and anguish; either not having what one wants or having what one dislikes (Sucitto, 2013; SN 56.11). Even the

things that result in pleasure do not last indefinitely, and when they cease, we may suffer. Further, the clinging of the five aggregates (e.g., form, consciousness, feelings, perception, mental formations) – the "physical and mental continuum" (Thanissaro, 2010) that comes together in response to sensory data to constitute our individual experience, leads to dukkha (SN 22:48; Ricketts, 2022; Ronkin, 2015). That is, where we engage in the flow of experience accompanied with clinging, it causes further mental fermentations and does not bring lasting satisfaction (Sucitto, 2013).

(2) The origin of dukkha is craving, which is the way we unwittingly react to life's inner and outer worlds. There are three main aspects of craving: Craving for becoming (*bhava-tanhā*), to get rid of (*vibhava-tanhā*), and for sensory stimulation (*kāma-tanhā*; Sucitto, 2013; Sumedho, 2020). These cravings are portrayed as the three poisons (*kilesas*), where greed is synonymous with bhava-tanhā and kāma-tanhā; hatred with vibhava-tanhā; delusion comes from the lack of a clear view of the nature of our mind and experience. Whatever we do from a mind infused with greed, hatred, or delusion will lead to dukkha [AN 3.69].

The root of craving is ignorance of the three characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) that relate to one's own experience: Impermanence (*anicca*), non-self (*anattā*), and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). This brings in two more central insights, that all conditioned phenomena arise and pass due to specific causes and conditions; and because of this, all phenomena are without an enduring essence or self. In this way, the Buddhist view shifts away from the reified view of 'I am' to a process and causal orientated view. Further, the processes of craving and causation of dukkha operate mostly outside of our conscious awareness (Anālayo, 2018). Thus, we are stuck inadvertently perpetuating them.

(3) Although dukkha may permeate experience, it is not conceptualized in absolutist terms. There are specific causes and conditions that bring dukkha into existence (i.e., the process of dependent arising; SN12.2). Since ignorance is an indispensable component of that process, illumination of our deeper experiences will lead to their unravelling (Sucitto, 2013). To develop the reflective awareness and meditative insight to counter our experiential blindness, the Buddha outlined the noble eightfold path.

(4) The noble eightfold path outlines the spiritual life (SN 45.6), which is the redirection of the entirety of lived experience towards the cultivation of happiness and the cessation of suffering. Towards these aims, the development of ethics and mental faculties predominates, which leads to the direct experience of and insight into the three characteristics of existence and the four noble truths. This encompasses the full comprehension of dukkha, abandonment of the causes of dukkha - the renouncing of craving and extinction of greed, hatred, and delusion (Jayāsaro, 2022; Sucitto, 2013). This leads to the highest happiness (nibbāna) and the fulfilment of the noble eightfold path (Jayāsaro, 2022; SN 56.31).

The Noble Eightfold Path

The noble eightfold path (n8fp) is enlivened through the sequential development of eight factors that are mutually supportive (Brahmali, 2021). These factors encompass the development of wisdom (right view, right intention), engaged ethics (right speech, right action, right livelihood), and mental development (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration). They begin with right view, which is living in accord with reality from the perspective of the four noble truths, dependent origination, and the three marks of existence. This view is foundational to both orient the practice and inform values, which impacts the next factor, right intention. This is where the goal or

motivation is to enact kindness, non-harm, and renunciation, which informs aspects of ethical conduct: Right speech, where one speaks kindly and refrains from harsh speech; right action is to refrain from harmful actions; right livelihood to choose employment that uplifts the mind and does not lead to harm; right effort is the endeavor to restrain from unwholesome, afflictive mental states, to abandon harm, and to develop and maintain wholesome mental states, which requires ethical discernment and leads to right mindfulness, which initially functions as an overseer of the path factors. With a grounding in the prerequisites of the previous factors, right concentration (*samādhi*) arises (MN 117) as absorptive meditative states (*jhānas*), and from this the fruit of the path - realization and emancipation. Thus, the n8fp is the development of causal conditions for wellbeing.

The right (*sammā*) affixed to the beginning of each of the factors, refers to harmony or music at the right pitch or balance (Sumedho, 2014, p. 101). The factor is right where it leads to the realization of and alleviation of suffering of oneself and others (Monteiro et al., 2015) and wrong if it leads towards harm (AN 10.103). Likewise, behaviours (which encompasses mental activities, intentions, and attitudes) that lessen suffering are wholesome or skillful (e.g., generosity, loving kindness, discernment) and those which lead to harm are unwholesome or unskillful and are driven by "greed, hatred, and delusion" (Monteiro, et al., 2015, p. 2). Thus, *sammā* is related and intrinsic to the soteriological aim of Buddhism, not the polemic moral judgements of right (good) and wrong (bad), as seen from the historical influence of Judeo-Christianity on the western lens (Amaro, 2015).

The ethical factors (*sīla*) of the n8fp are encompassed by the five precepts for lay practitioners: To refrain from intentional killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, harmful speech, and intoxicants. These precepts comprise the concept of intrinsic ethics (*pakati*-sīla), which when transgressed results in psychological suffering for oneself and others, irrespective of sociocultural

context or temporality (Amaro, 2015). Thus, to commit to these precepts has a pragmatic basis to reduce suffering. They are known as a method of training, where adherence to ethics is derived from the individual's own development of ethical discernment through the application of mindfulness and enquiry (Amaro, 2015). Furthermore, ethical application is necessary to reduce afflictive disturbances in the mind, which facilitates right mindfulness and supports the development of the healthy states of mind (Thanissaro, 2011).

The Buddha called his teachings the *dhamma-vinaya* (Thanissaro, 2022), which emphasizes the importance of the dual development of insight into the nature of reality (i.e., dhamma) alongside ethical practice (i.e., vinaya). In practice, these qualities are not separate and merge together in the mind and character of the practitioner as they develop on the path. Originally the Buddha did not have rules for monastics, but as the community grew, so too did the number of monastics who were not established in their practices and behaved unethically. Therefore, the Buddha devised the Pātimokkha, which outlined 227 rules for *bhikkhus* [ordained male] and 311 for *bhikkhunīs* [ordained female]. These standards of behaviour were allied to the development of the stability of the mind conducive to awakening, and to maintain peace and wellbeing of the community of monastics and lay supporters.

Right Mindfulness and its Establishment

Mindfulness has been cultivated for centuries as part of a holistic framework of teachings, indispensably intertwined with other faculties to have beneficial results. Mindfulness is the first of seven enlightenment factors (*bojjhangas*) where each factor can be acquired through the development of the preceding factors (Anālayo, 2009). Hence, mindfulness is a precursory and necessary condition of awakening. Furthermore, mindfulness must be integrated with other factors

of the n8fp for right mindfulness to arise (Bodhi, 2018). Mindfulness alone is not sufficient. For right mindfulness to arise, or if present to grow and be a factor of awakening, good ethical conduct is imperative (SN 46.51). Also, this necessitates the inclusion of right view and right effort as mindful self-enquiry into whether psychological motivations or conduct are skillful or not skillful and lead to either beneficial outcomes or suffering (Monteiro et. al., 2015; Thanissaro, 2020). This develops ethical discernment or wisdom, which leads to right intentions and further adherence to ethical aspects of the path – only then does right mindfulness arise (Bodhi, 2018). Hence, the development of mindfulness in the context of Buddhism and the n8fp is contingent on the development of ethics.

The Establishing of Mindfulness discourse (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and variations: DN 22; MN 10; MN 141; SN 47) explicates the necessary meditative and experiential awareness practices to establish mindfulness as the mode of contemplation that leads to nibbāna. This mode involves observations of phenomena from a frame of mind that consists of a combination of three qualities: Alertness (*ātāpa*), mindfulness (*sati*), and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). Mindfulness in this context is recollection of the present experience of what is happening both within us and to us. Consistent application of attending to the phenomena of interest prevents the mind from drifting off, forgetting, and wandering off into mental proliferations (Dhammadharo, 1948/2011).

The four areas of practice to establish mindfulness is the body, feelings, mind, and dhammas (MN 10). (1) The practitioner may contemplate the body as mindfulness of the breath, situational awareness, evaluation of body parts, elements, and the impermanence of the body through death (Anālayo, 2013). (2) Feelings are hedonic tones that are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, that are discerned early in the process of perception, prior to reactions and mental proliferations. (3) The

mind is contemplated as to whether unwholesome states (e.g., greed, hatred, delusion) or wholesome states (e.g., generosity, loving-kindness, wisdom, right mindfulness, concentration) are present or absent. The purpose, to clearly distinguish the states that underlie our thoughts, to uncover our motivational forces without getting caught up by the thoughts. (4) The *dhammas* are the Buddhist teachings and principles of the nature of phenomena that relate to sentient experience. Mental states known as the five hindrances (e.g., sensual desire, ill will, sloth/torpor, restlessness/anxiety, and uncertainty), which hamper meditation practice are to be discerned, then eradicated through right effort. This is a precondition for the arising of enlightenment factors, which are to be discerned thus, "I have the awakening factor of mindfulness in me" (MN 10). Further, the four noble truths may be observed, understanding "this is suffering, this the origin of suffering, this the cessation of suffering, this is the path to the cessation of suffering" (MN 10). These facets are to be known through the consistent engagement and development of mindfulness, both in meditation and daily life, where the mind connects with the phenomenon of interest and becomes focused. At this point the investigative mind is engaged to discern the phenomena, its existential qualities, and causes of arising and ceasing, to see the nature of reality as it is (Anālayo, 2013; Dhammadharo, 1948/2011).

Mindfulness in Psychological Treatment

More recently, mindfulness derived from these teachings was reconstituted within the framework of science as a psychological intervention - Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1982). MBSR is currently structured as a participant-centered 8-week, 10 session, group intervention that includes components of mindfulness meditation, yoga, psychoeducation on stressors and resilience, and a one-day retreat (Kabat-Zinn, 2017). This

intervention was originally developed in the 1970s for patients suffering from intractable illnesses, to reduce their chronic pain and stress (Kabat-Zinn, 1979; Kabat-Zinn, 2000). MBSR has broadened from its original application to support people with challenges from an array of medical and psychological conditions, as well as to meet the demands of everyday life in non-clinical settings, to enhance psychological resilience and wellbeing across the adult lifespan (Kabat-Zinn, 2017*).

MBSR has been efficacious in the treatment of a range of conditions and settings. Metanalyses that include randomized control trials (RCTs) and a Cochrane review show MBSR to be moderately effective at reducing anxiety and depression in clinical populations (Hofmann, et al., 2010) and healthy participants (Khoury, et al., 2015), to enhance coping (Grossman, et al., 2005), and to significantly improve participants' sleep quality (Chen, et al., 2020). Also, a metanalysis on controlled studies that investigated the effects of MBSR on cognition showed small effect sizes for improved executive function (Im, et al., 2021). Recent RCTs demonstrate the effectiveness of MBSR to reduce the symptoms of menopause (Wong, et al., 2018) and PTSD (Davis, et al., 2019), and to improve the mental wellbeing of COVID19 patients (Sadooghiasl, et al., 2022). Thus, MBSR is a versatile intervention for an array of issues.

MBIs have proliferated since the development of MBSR, drawing on Buddhist concepts tied to emergent third wave cognitive therapies for therapeutic purposes (Monteiro, 2012). Third wave therapies represent a shift from a focus on the content of thoughts and emotions to a process orientation, where a person's relationship with their thoughts, and emotions, and environment are highlighted along with the development of self-regulatory inner resources (Ryan, 2021). MBIs integrate three Buddhist facets: Meditative practices, Buddhist philosophy, and psychological processes (Monteiro, 2012). Firstly, they make use of meditative practices: Mindful walking and

sitting, which help to stabilize the mind and connect the individual to their embodied experience. Secondly, MBIs draw from the Buddhist philosophy, where experience is viewed as an emergent property that arises from varied conditions where the root of suffering is obscured. Through the cultivation of experiential awareness, participants gain insight into their experience, which leads to an enhanced capacity to make decisions and enact actions that benefit oneself and others. Thirdly, the psychological process is a shift from experiential avoidance towards experiential engagement. In order to reduce emotional and physiological dysregulation from habituated behavioral responses, people make use of avoidance strategies (e.g., safety behaviours), which reduces their discomfort, but both reinforces the avoidant behaviours and limits the development of coping skills. Conversely, mindfulness practices support the development of skills to engage directly in life's experiences, which increases the accuracy of perceptions (i.e., reduces cognitive distortions), reduces negative affect, brings peace, and reduces stress (Kellis, 2016).

Extending on MBIs benefits, the therapist can adopt mindfulness practices to contribute to their personal development and skillset to enhance their therapeutic relationship with clients (Brito, 2014). These practices provide a form of attitudinal training to elicit compassion and acceptance, to enhance the therapeutic presence of the therapist (Brito, 2014), which alone is curative (Perls, 1969). Furthermore, the therapist can use mindfulness as a self-care strategy to reduce burn-out, stress, and compassion fatigue (Shapiro et al., 2006). All these factors contribute to the cultivation of a beneficial therapeutic relationship and as a corollary, the likelihood for a successful outcome in therapy (Lambert & Simon, 2008)

The most established of the third wave therapies are Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2018), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT; Linehan, et al.,

1991), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, (ACT; Hayes et al., 2011). MBCT was developed for relapse prevention in depression. It was effective at supporting clients to disengage with self-perpetuating ruminative thought patterns due to the decentering results of mindfulness, noting that thoughts are neither your reality nor self (Ryan, 2021). Further, mindfulness training may serve as a prophylaxis against future mental health disturbances and functional impairments in high demand contexts (Jha et al., 2010).

The results of MBIs have been inconsistent (effect sizes .11-1.65 vs standard care; Klainin-Yobas, et al., 2012). Khoury and colleagues (2013) aimed to elucidate these inconsistencies with a comprehensive meta-analysis that compared MBIs to waitlist and active treatments (*n*=209 studies). They demonstrated MBIs to be moderately effective pre-post studies and waitlist (*Hedge's g*= .55, .53). However, MBI outcomes did not differ from CBT, behavioural therapy, or pharmacological treatment. Thus, MBIs as more recently developed therapies, do not extend upon traditional therapies in terms of their outcomes.

Few studies have considered the potential adverse effects of MBIs. However, there is an increasing amount of empirical and anecdotal evidence of adverse effects following MBIs such as psychosis, depersonalization, and executive memory impairments (Van Gordon, Shonin, & Garcia-Campayo, 2017). A recent study (Aizik-Reebs, Shoham, & Bernstein, 2021) demonstrated that mindfulness practices were transiently anxiogenic for 87% of mindfulness naïve participants, with 25% experiencing adverse effects in daily life following a brief intervention. The prolonged adverse effects were considered due to the participants increased awareness of their internal states. Furthermore, mindfulness practices may enhance our capacity for empathy, but not for participants with high levels of narcissistic traits where the converse was found (Ridderinkhof, et al., 2017).

However, due to the limited number of small studies, further investigation is required to clarify these issues.

The Mindfulness and Ethics Debate

The extraction of mindfulness from the holistic Buddhist teachings as a few meditation techniques recontextualized into the psychological paradigm as an intervention, has led to debate between religious scholars and psychological researchers. The Buddhist community's primary concerns were the impacts of the lack of explicit ethics training in MBIs and the conflation of mindfulness with attention, which narrows mindfulness from its classical conceptualizations (Monteiro, et al., 2015). As a result, mindfulness may be misunderstood and misused, and limit the potential benefits of MBIs. Furthermore, mindfulness in the absence of ethics has led to misappropriation of mindfulness for unethical purposes that diverges from Buddhism's original intentions. Conversely, reinstatement of ethical practices could potentially lead to further psychological benefits and counter the adverse effects of MBIs.

Kabat-Zinn (2011) justifies the omission of explicit ethics that mindfulness is contingent on, in preference for the implicit ethics that are embedded in the context and teachings of MBSR and embodied in the instructor's behaviour and professional code of conduct. Kabat-Zinn (2011) considered that the clinical work environment encourages open communication to keep individual and collective honesty, and believed the onus was on the individual to attend to their own ethical conduct. His perspective was aligned to concerns of clinicians about imposing an ethical agenda onto others (McCown, 2013), but conflicted with Brown's (2018) view that because the implicit ethics are Buddhist, they may constitute a threat to people from other religions. Also, Kabat-Zinn (2011) stated that culturally, westerners outwardly profess a moral stance that we do not internally

uphold and thus ethics training would not be appropriate. However, the dissociation between the value for social desirability and actions may be a source of cognitive dissonance that an ethical focus could ameliorate. Furthermore, Amaro (2015) considered the disparity between people's ideals and actions a "dubious principle upon which to structure a pedagogical approach" (p. 67). Hence, Kabat Zinn's (2011) rationale to exclude explicit ethics was based on his subjective opinions rather than a critical analysis of the potential benefits of ethics cojoined with mindfulness practices.

Kabat-Zinn (2011) considered MBSR a skillful means to bring the dhamma and its benefits into the mainstream. That is the universal dhamma qualities of wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom, minus the trappings of Buddhism's explicit ethical trainings and concepts, values, and practices derived from historicity, religion, and the Asian culture. Kabat-Zinn (2011) removed any reference to Buddhism and adopted scientific terminology so that the intervention would not be at risk as being seen as "flakey" or "new age" (p. 282). The rationale was to present MBSR as a legitimate evidence-based intervention for mainstream medicine to be accessible to a mindfulness naïve western audience.

Problematic Conceptualization of Mindfulness

The conceptualization of contemporary mindfulness in psychology was considered problematic due to a lack of understanding of the nuances of traditional constructs (Anālayo, 2019a), where the central features of mindfulness are missed (Dreyfus, 2011). Kabat-Zinn's (1994) definition of mindfulness was to pay attention: "on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). Bishop and colleagues (2004) further operationalized mindfulness as a psychological process – a mode of awareness developed through attentional regulation. They proposed a two-component model of mindfulness. The first aspect was the application of sustained

attention, which increases recognition of mental activities in the present moment. The second aspect was an orientation towards the present moment with curiosity, openness, and acceptance.

Kabat-Zinn (2011) referred to mindfulness in broad terms as an umbrella concept that was informed by many strands of dhamma: *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, *Zen*, along with concepts from the yogic tradition. This included the four establishments of mindfulness, nonduality, bearing witness, and innate wisdom. Some of these practices were derived from incompatible paradigms that are based on divergent understandings (Bodhi, 2011a). Also, the diverse approaches in Buddhism make it challenging to clarify the conceptualization of mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective to allow for transmigration into the secular domain (Dreyfus, 2011). Further, the various critics in extant literature likewise may be established in different paradigms (Monteiro, et al., 2015), which adds to the confusion. However, Kabat-Zinn (2011) asserted that mindfulness was not meant to be in accord with traditional Buddhist conceptualizations and his operationalization of mindfulness was not meant to be used as a definitive statement.

In contrast, mindfulness (*sati*) in Buddhism is a multivalenced and contextually dependent construct, a mental quality that may be cojoined with other faculties (e.g., discernment) in a supportive role in the development of insight (Anālayo, 2006) and ethics. Furthermore, sati has transformed throughout the ages and varies across the different schools of Buddhism (Anālayo, 2020a; Dunne, 2011). Buddhists conceptualize sati as a more expansive quality than is understood in psychology, which reduces it to an attentional technique (Brito, 2014). Anālayo (2020a, p. 243), offers a provisional definition of sati based on the early Buddhist texts that includes an orientation of sati towards causality as the ramification of one's experience, which encompasses ethical concerns.

> An openly receptive presence that enables a full taking in of information, resulting in an awake quality of the mind that facilitates clarity and recollection by monitoring, in the present moment without interfering, the internal and external repercussion of whatever is taking place.

The original conceptualization of sati was derived from the verb *sarati* "to remember" (Bodhi, 2011b, p. 23). Whilst mindfulness offers utility, it does not include the element of memory that is needed to elucidate sati. Thus, Dreyfus (2011) posited that mindfulness is a retentive process that has a role alongside many cognitive processes, where the central purpose of mindfulness is to hold an object with sustained attention, regardless of whether the object is present or not. He considered that in classical renderings, mindfulness is seen as a top-down active component of working memory, with the capacity to keep information active for goal directed activity (Jha et al., 2010), rather than a bottom-up passive process where the mind is open to whatever happens. However, the memory component of mindfulness is a quality of mindfulness as opposed to the function of mindfulness and aspects of semantic, working, and episodic memory can be present whilst mindfulness is absent (Anālayo, 2019a). Thus, mindfulness does not equate entirely with memory, and both Dreyfus's (2011) and the psychological view does not account for the nuances of mindfulness, attention, and memory in Buddhist understanding.

Anālayo (2020b) posits that although mindfulness and attention (*manasikāra*) correspond in some ways, there are also differences. He relates Lindsay and Creswell's (2017) example, that where attention to pain can result in increased affective reactivity, mindfulness lessens this. In early Buddhist conceptualizations, attention is an ever-present and active quality of the mind, whereas mindfulness is an intermittent receptive quality of being, rather than doing, that needs aroused.

Attention covers a range of tasks such as storing memories of teachings to recall them later to apply them to pertinent experiential situations. In meditation, attention is a precondition of the development of mindfulness. The task of mindfulness is to become established, whereas attention is already present and implemented in various ways. In Buddhism, attention is directed in a penetrative or wise way (e.g., *yoniso manasikāra*), to guard the mind and keep it wholesome conducive to awakening the mind. In some later traditions (e.g., insight meditation), attention and mindfulness have in part merged and become more active due to a misinterpretation or reinterpretation (Anālayo, 2019b) and in psychological renderings, mindfulness is conflated with attention, which does not fully capture mindfulness.

Memory and remembering in mindfulness are explicated by the doctrine of momentariness, where phenomena are seen to disappear as soon as they appear (Anālayo, 2020b). In the later Theravāda tradition (e.g., Mahasi), mindfulness is conceptualized as a wholesome factor and cannot coexist with unwholesome factors in the mind, which differs from earlier conceptualizations. In meditation, the unwholesome states or thoughts that are witnessed in the present, are considered a memory or echo of the thoughts, or states a fraction of a second past, where the knowing of mindfulness cannot coexist in the mental experience. Once they are known they become mental objects and are no longer the motivational force of the mind. Attention, which is both ever present and ethically neutral can notice the unwholesome state to arouse mindfulness, which only occurs once the unwholesome quality disappears or transmutes into the object of mindfulness. In practice, mindfulness and recognition of unwholesome states rapidly alternates between brief unwholesome mental moments where mindfulness is absent, and moments when mindfulness is present, knowing retrospectively that a defilement was present. Thus, the inability of mindfulness to exist whilst

unwholesome factors are present, compels an ethical orientation if one wishes to establish mindfulness, where the impetus is the application of techniques to reduce and eradicate unwholesome factors and develop wholesome factors (i.e., one applies right effort). The explicit knowledge of this may expedite the development of mindfulness and lead one away from pitfalls of practice.

Amaro and Singh (2020) considered that sati encapsulated a range of meanings from rudimentary aspects of mindfulness as recollection and attention to the emancipatory nature of mindfulness when cojoined with other faculties. Amaro (2015) outlined three psychological qualities of mindfulness. (1) Mechanistic mindfulness is the morally neutral, rudimentary conceptualization of sati, which functions to pay attention to experiential phenomena. This is akin to the operationalization of mindfulness in psychology where the object is the present moment. (2) Informed mindfulness is mindfulness along with clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) of the object or action, situated in the context of place and time. This included the broader understandings of precursors to the experience, one's own attitude, and consequences to oneself and others. Thus, informed mindfulness includes an orientation towards ethical concerns contingent on awareness of one's unfolding experience. Further, the more informed mindfulness is developed, the more kindness is evoked, and self-interest is seen as obstructive, which leads to ethical action towards the wellbeing of self and others. (3) Holistic mindfulness is mindfulness conjoined with wisdom (*sati-paññā*), which leads to spiritual emancipation. This is developed through insight into the three characteristics of existence (anicca, anattā, and dukkha) in meditation, which leads to the emergent understanding that the world as an external reality out there is instead a representation of the mind. This is conducive to the arising of equanimity towards the inevitable vicissitudes of life. The more

this type of holistic mindfulness is developed, the more the practitioner adjusts their behaviours to act in a non-harming way. Thus, mindfulness is developed in combination with other faculties that facilitates ethical awareness and conduct, which differs from psychological conceptualizations.

As outlined, mindfulness in Buddhism and psychology encompasses multiple notions that are not easily defined and can lead to confusion for the practitioner. Anālayo (2020b) considered that to resolve the conundrum was to make explicit what type of mindfulness the researcher is talking about. Alternatively, Nilsson and Kazemi (2016) sought to redefine mindfulness through a thematic analysis of 33 psychological definitions of mindfulness within extant research literature. This resulted in five themes: Awareness and attention, present-centeredness, cultivation of character, and the influence of external events. The fifth theme – ethical mindedness, although absent from psychological definitions themselves was revealed through analysis. This supported the formulation of a new definition that they considered may bridge Buddhist and Western conceptualizations of mindfulness as "a particular type of social practice that leads the practitioner to an ethically minded awareness, intentionally situated in the here and now (p. 190)". This definition may better capture the ethical intentionality of sati.

Nonjudgement and Equanimity

The emphasis on a non-judgmental attitude in psychological definitions was perceived as not aligned with the Buddhist conceptualization of mindfulness by some commentators (Amaro, 2015; Dreyfus, 2011; Monteiro, et al., 2015). However, non-judgmentalism is a component of Buddhist practice alongside mindfulness but could be problematic if not taught within the broader context of teachings. Kabat-Zinn (2011) outlined that western people tend to live from a cognitive frame, thus the emphasis on a non-judgmental attitude was to shift to an agendaless embodied approach without

the lens of likes and dislikes that filter our reality. Non-judgmental awareness was "not meant to imply to the novice that there was some non-judgmental state to attain and abide in" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p291). He pointed out that although we may have many judgments and opinions that may arise, we neither need to judge or evaluate or react to them, instead the practice is to recognize what arises as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. This may lead to the capacity to recognize and choose whether or not to cling to or identify with our thoughts. This process is derived from the Satipatthana Sutta and is a form of discernment that reduces habitual reactivity and leads to non-clinging (Anālayo, 2021), thus is synonymous with Buddhist conceptualizations and aims for wellbeing.

Dreyfus (2011) considered a nonjudgmental attitude antithetical to the establishing of mindfulness – where there is an emphasis on ethical evaluation, to discriminate between what leads to our and other's benefits or harm (i.e., he conflates non-judging with non-discerning). However, non-judgmentalism and acceptance if seen not to preclude evaluation or discernment, captures one of the various constructs of equanimity that supports the development of mindfulness (Anālayo, 2019a). In the context of Buddhist cultivation of mindfulness, equanimity is cojoined with mindfulness to overcome mental defilements by not compulsively reacting to liking and disliking as part of the second establishment of mindfulness (Anālayo, 2021). Furthermore, equanimity holds a quality of objectiveness that enhances the capacity for ethical discernment. Thus, nonjudging need not preclude an ethical orientation.

Within the Buddhist framework, equanimity itself may be an object of ethical evaluation. The practice of equanimity as nonreacting is not appropriate across all situations where compassion and wisdom compel ethical action. Without which, a tendency towards self-centeredness can result

in the near enemy of equanimity - apathy and indifference (Vish.), which reinforces passivity and oppression. In parallel, equanimity as nonjudging in MBIs is subject to the same potential shortcomings in the absence of an ethical or compassionate lens.

Implications of a Mindfulness Without an Ethical Lens

The capacity for the establishment of mindfulness in the present moment in a non-judgmental manner is questionable without a system of ethical conduct (Shonin et al., 2014). Enacting ethical actions facilitates our contiguous awareness as it counters latent cognitive and behavioural inclinations that distract us from our present awareness, where the mind quickly craves something other than the present reality and easily becomes ensnared by thoughts of the past or future. Further, when we engage in ethical conduct wholesome states of mind ensue, which facilitates mindfulness. However, once the mind is highly agitated or lethargic, mindfulness is absent. In meditation, mindfulness can be highly investigative (e.g., *vipassana*), highly concentrated (e.g., *samatha*), or of a general form when carefully guarding the senses and discerning their content (Jāgara, 2022). Mindfulness has a weak quality when one is aware of the content of the senses but lacks clear discernment. This type of mindfulness may rapidly degenerate into pseudo-mindfulness, where the mind is present-centered, but subtle desires and clinging may be present but unable to be elucidated. In other words, with pseudo-mindfulness the faculty of discernment (paññā) is absent. In the context of MBIs, where participants are likely to be novice meditators with limited time to develop mindfulness in deep states of meditation, the focus of mindfulness will be in everyday life. Hence, the type of mindfulness that can be accessed may be limited, where moments of insight may be entirely contingent on ethical conduct. Whilst people may consider their physical actions to be ethical, and thus have no need for ethics training, Buddhism also considers action at the level of the

mind where there are myriad subtle ways mental actions may result in disturbance and mindfulness is lost. Hence, mindfulness without ethical engagement as conceptualized by Buddhists appears tenuous. Indeed, Choi and colleagues (2020) considered that the psychological assessment of mindfulness may unwittingly capture confounds antithetical to traditional conceptualizations such as suppression, avoidance, and disengagement.

Likewise, Monteiro and colleagues (2015) suggested errors of interpretation of psychology's mindfulness as nonjudgmental awareness without ethics may lead the practitioner to inadvertently cultivate the extremes of passivity or self-indulgence. These extremes Buddhism asserts are to be avoided as they lead to harm (Amaro, 2015). The error of passivity occurs when the practitioner shifts from a self-immersed perspective to an abstract self-distanced perspective as the observer, which leads to psychological distancing or numbing (Kross, et al., 2005). This entails a concomitant shift towards abstract representations of mental or external objects, where the "fly on the wall" view may result in reduced emotional reactivity due to the experience being interpreted in a non-arousing way (Moran & Eyal, 2022). This can facilitate moving beyond direct experience to consider alternative perspectives and courses of action (Trope & Liberman, 2010). However, lower emotional arousal can also lead to passivity, especially without an emphasis on the broader concern for others and a failure to consider the complex ethical reality we live in (Titmuss, 2013). With lower emotional arousal, there is less impetus for self-transformation, or to oppose structural forces of oppression such as racism, either as a form of resistance, or as an ally for others. Also, an emphasis on nonjudgmental awareness may make our reality more palatable, which leads to passivity (Wallace & Bodhi, 2006). Conversely, psychological distancing can result in heightened afflictive emotions in some cases (Watkins, et al., 2008). This may occur with social anxiety or

depression because it elicits global negative self-evaluations that further perpetuates negative mind states. Furthermore, psychological distancing may come at the cost of suppressing beneficial emotions or psychological constructs such as empathy (Grušovnik, & Blaznik, 2022), which would otherwise compel prosocial behaviors compounding the issue of passivity. Finally, psychological distancing or numbing leads the practitioner to bypass experience rather than connect to it (Monteiro et al., 2015), which lessens their ability to be with and learn from difficult experiences. Thus, when practitioners bypass their experiences, they limit their capacity for growth.

The second error is that without consideration of harms beyond oneself with the emphasis on nonjudging, the practitioner may erroneously consider anything can be done, so long as it is done mindfully (Amaro, 2015). The commonly used example is where mindfulness is co-opted for unethical concerns, enhances sniper's capacity to kill (Monteiro et al., 2015). This is antithetical to the Buddhist value of non-harm (*ahimsa*) and the principles of establishing mindfulness, where coarse unethical actions will result in a disturbed mind with multitudinous ramifications e.g., PTSD, consequences for the soldier's family, further perpetuation of hatred, division, and suffering in the world. However, as an example of contextual ethics in Buddhism, from a Mahayana perspective, if done for the benefit of others, it may not be considered something to condemn (Harvey, 2000). Also, in consideration of the alleged epidemic of narcissism in western societies (Foster et al., 2003), mindfulness with a focus on self in psychology may further entrench maladaptive self-absorption with adverse social outcomes (Barnett & Sharp, 2017) and may justify hedonic self-indulgence, which reinforces addictions and leads to adverse consequences for oneself and others. Furthermore, without an explicit investigation into ethics, we may be unaware of subtle unethical actions and their effects.

Although various authors see these errors as a unique problem of misunderstanding mindfulness, it is simply reification of the minds natural tendencies to avoid the unpleasant and hold on to the pleasant from a self-oriented focus that the n8fp grounded in ethics counters. Misunderstanding mindfulness through a lack of understanding of both the meaning of mindfulness and the broader framework of teachings leads to further perpetuation of passivity and indulgence. These are simply the mind's natural tendencies to have a self-oriented focus and to bypass uncomfortable feelings and experiences in daily life. As such, they are not a problem unique to psychological mindfulness misapplication and the Buddhist framework leads one to have insight from the establishment of mindfulness to counter these tendencies. They are the very things that lead to suffering that the n8fp overcomes. Because MBIs offer brief courses without broader understandings of ethical discernment or near enemies, the naïve practitioner is likely to be hindered by these obstacles and unable to establish mindfulness. Further, the explicit purpose to transform greed, hatred, and delusion into beneficial qualities that is mediated by wisdom and ethics is lost. As Anālayo (2013) asserted, to not apply these transformative efforts in meditation is mis-meditation.

MBIs and Ethics Fusion?

The perspective of Theravāda Buddhism was that the establishment of ethical ways of living are central to mindfulness practice and the development of psychological wellbeing (Amaro, 2015). Due to the complexities involved in Buddhist teachings, the varied approaches in Buddhism, the lack of precision and reductionist understandings in extant psychological literature, misunderstandings are likely to arise in mindfulness naive clients, students, and therapists. Hence, some proponents (e.g., Monteiro et al., 2015; Amaro, 2015; McCown 2013) asserted that explicit ethical training could be reinstated with mindfulness as an exploration of ethical engagement in life,

to potentially clarify the purpose of mindfulness, facilitate the development of mindfulness, counter adverse effects of MBIs, and extend on MBIs benefits. However, other proponents query this proposal.

Lindahl (2015) investigated the paradigmatic divergence between Buddhism and psychology and considered whether right mindfulness with its associated normative ethical framework was applicable to psychological mindfulness. He considered that Buddhist conceptualizations are incompatible with psychology due to divergent understandings and values. Buddhism's liberative aims, conceptualizations of suffering, *kamma*, and reincarnation may be at odds with western ideals and understandings of wellbeing and suffering (McKown, 2013). In psychology, suffering is operationalized as components of suffering such as stress, depression, and anxiety (Lindahl, 2015), where nonspecific symptoms may be classified as psychological distress (Viertiö, et al., 2021). In Buddhism, suffering is an inadequate and contested translation that does not encompass the fullness of dukkha, which encompasses psychological conceptualizations but extends to where all phenomena being subject to change are ultimately dissatisfying. In psychological models, psychological distress has different etiologies than the Buddhist root of craving, thus require different treatments. Therefore, translatory models are problematic and require more work to situate Buddhist concepts into psychological frameworks. Also, Lindahl (2015) asserted that whilst the Asian culture values the development of equanimity as an ideal affect and attenuation of desire, modern western societies value high arousal positive states. These cross-cultural differences may have an adverse effect on treatment efficacy and patient fidelity when mismatched to the participants values. Furthermore, whilst Buddhism seeks liberation over lifetimes of cultivation,

psychology's aim is to relieve symptoms in an expedient manner and thus are incompatible due to disparate world views and time frames.

Monteiro and colleagues (2015) identified three issues with the inclusion of explicit ethics in MBIs. (1) The assumption is that psychological treatment is value-free as an artefact of psychology being derived from positivistic ontology and therefore Buddhist values cannot be brought into MBIs. (2) The benefits of MBSR are attributed to psychology. Therefore, people miss out on Buddhism's rich tradition and trainings. (3) Obscuring the connection with Buddhism, takes away the autonomy of individuals who may have conflicting beliefs and ignores the pre-existing values and ethics of the individual.

Brown (2017) argued that the issue with mindfulness is less about whether ethics should be included but whether they are implicit or explicit. Despite the secular framing of mindfulness, she considered that Buddhist ethics are imbued in MBSR as assumptions on how to live the best life. She noted that every aspect of MBSR included Buddhist psychology and yet the connection with Buddhism has been obscured by design as a form of "stealth Buddhism" (Brown, 2016, p. 78). She advocated full disclosure of the link to Buddhism on the grounds of ethical transparency and psychological principles of informed consent and cultural diversity, even if MBIs no longer reap benefits of being secular. Further, she disputed claims about the universality of MBSR where mindfulness differs in its application dependent on the soteriological aims of the religion. For example, mindfulness in Christianity is focused on God and God's word (Hills, 2019). Thus, while Buddhists may perceive that psychology's mindfulness does not fully capture the practice, Christians consider MBIs inculcate Buddhist world views and religious values. As such, this has been particularly contentious when mindfulness has been applied in school settings and has led to

litigation (Brown, 2019). The implication is that the connection of mindfulness with Buddhism needs clarified so that the conditions for informed consent are met.

Whether or not ethics training is considered necessary in MBIs is informed by the contextual frame used in Buddhism. Lavelle (2016) delineated two views of human nature in Buddhism: Innativist and constructivist. That is that the awakened qualities of the mind and ethical dispositions are either innate (i.e., the non-dual view) or need to be cultivated through the development of insight and other supportive qualities (i.e., the Abhidhamma view). It follows that the constructivist perspective supports the inclusion of explicit ethics in MBIs whilst the innativist perspective does not, because the practice of mindfulness will elicit the innate ethical tendencies and naturally induce qualities like compassion. Some studies have shown preliminary support for the development of an ethical ethos from MBSR without explicit ethical engagement e.g., MBSR resulted in an increase in moral reasoning and decision-making (Shapiro et al, 2012) and a reduction in implicit group, racial, age prejudice (Lueke & Gibson, 2015). However, an implicit pedagogy of development of ethics may be risky due to the variables involved in real-world MBIs e.g., skill level of teachers, psychological issues that are being treated, and the concepts in the programme that are emphasized (Monteiro et al 2015).

Baer (2015) argued ethics training in MBIs should be grounded in theoretically sound psychological science for a contemporary secular audience. She noted that some MBIs already include Buddhist-based ethics, but there is not enough evidence that supports their efficacy e.g., self-schema therapy, which incorporates the n8fp (Avants &Margolin, 2004). Also, that well-developed ethical alternatives are available, methods that are based on values and qualities that are applicable across cultures, and these may be more suitable for non-Buddhists. She surmised that the

efficacy of current MBIs is likely due to adaptations that move them away from Buddhist trainings. However, some interpretative phenomenological research suggested the importance to participants of more traditional congruent design of MBIs e.g., meditation awareness training (Shonin et al, 2014) and mindfulness-based symptom management (Monteiro et al., 2019). Baer (2015) considered MBIs should seek to cultivate clear comprehension of the motivations for inclusion of ethics. Therefore, unpacking Buddhist ethics, its potential contribution to MBIs, and challenges to westerners may be pertinent.

Rationale for Research

Psychology has inclined towards the mental training aspects of the n8fp as applied in MBIs, repackaged in western normative terms and concepts. The rationale for the exclusion of ethical practices was situated in the earlier context of development of MBSR in the 1970s, where mindfulness was unknown to westerners and was based on considerations by Kabat-Zinn (2011), rather than scientific enquiry. Thus, now when mindfulness has both scientific support and acceptance in secular society, it may be timely and amenable to reconsider the integration of ethical practices with MBIs. Also, justifications for the continued omission of ethical practices to uphold participant autonomy are flawed, where implicit ethics are imbued in MBIs but obscured, which violates psychology's ethical obligations for the disclosure of adequate information to support autonomy enacted through informed consent (Code of Ethics; New Zealand Psychological Society, 2013). Pertinently, the concerns raised by the Buddhist community about the incomplete understanding of mindfulness due to a lack of ethics and the adverse effects of MBIs provides further impetus to explore the potential contribution of ethics to MBIs. However, because Buddhist ethics were derived from historicity, an Asian culture and religion, the assumptions about the

tenuous application of Buddhist ethics to western society should be investigated and by extension their applicability to MBIs. Buddhist monastics whose lives traverse both western frames of reference and the immersive lived experiences and understandings of Buddhism are uniquely situated to elucidate and unpack these issues. Thus, exploratory analysis of Buddhist ethics and MBIs was considered apposite to contribute to both the development of MBIs and dialogue at the intersection of Buddhism and psychology.

This research aimed to explore the psychospiritual aspects of Buddhist ethics and their relevance to contemporary society and MBIs from western monastics' perspectives in Aotearoa Me Te Waipounamu/New Zealand. An interpretative phenomenological approach was used to elicit the monastics' lived experiences and embodied knowledge. The intention to enhance perspective taking of the recipient psychological researcher so they may access deeper understandings of the phenomena of interest. Further, my situatedness as both a psychology student and Buddhist practitioner with decades of meditation experience across the varied schools of Buddhism, would facilitate hermeneutic understandings, drawing on both paradigms to contribute towards a translatory analysis.

This study aimed to investigate whether Buddhist ethics are applicable to modern western people in the context of psychological interventions through enquiry into: 1) firsthand accounts of monastics' lived experience of Buddhist ethics, along with the benefits and challenges of enacting them as a western practitioner; 2) the monastics' perspectives on the relevance Buddhist ethics to contemporary western society, situated in western and Buddhist preunderstandings and experiences; 3) the monastics perspectives on the applicability of ethics to mindfulness and MBIs, drawing on

their lived experiences of mindfulness and ethics. In more concise terms, the primary research questions are:

- What are the lived experiences of Buddhist ethics?
- What are the benefits of ethics practice and barriers to engagement?
- Are Buddhist ethics relevant to contemporary society?
- Are Buddhist ethics applicable to mindfulness and MBIs?

Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach that is used in psychology to examine the experience "from a first-person perspective (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 193)." IPA is informed by concepts from three theoretical approaches: Phenomenology, the idiographic perspective, and hermeneutics (Smith, et al. 2009). Phenomenology studies aspects of conscious experience that includes mental, bodily, and linguistic activity, where through iterative reductions the particular (both personal and contextual) is stripped away to reveal the essence of the phenomena beyond biases and preconceptions (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith, 2018). However, IPA shifts back towards the particular and "seeks to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 16)." Thus, IPA is interested in the contribution of the person's situatedness in shaping their meanings or significance of their experience. IPA involves a process of multiple hermeneutics with varied layers of interpretation where the researcher attempts to understand and make meaning of the participants' meaning making, to engender "rich experiential descriptions" (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 189). To produce a complete understanding of the participant's account, critical inquiry adds another interpretative layer to uncover aspects that may not be apparent (Shinebourne, 2011). These aims of IPA are pertinent to the aspirations of this

research where through analysis and interpretation, the understanding of both the phenomena (e.g., lived experience of ethics) and the participants' perspectives of the phenomena are to be elucidated.

The existential-phenomenological ontology posits that knowledge is known through experience (Osborne, 1990). Whilst this is a truism in that whether we are reflecting, learning through reading, or enacting varied behaviours, we are knowing through experience. However, not all knowing is the same. Theoretical knowledge of driving a car in the absence of embodied experience does not place us in touch with the reality of driving, nor does it give one expertise. Instead, we are subject to our thoughts about what we think that experience is, based on past experiences and pre-conceptions. Akin to this, the psychological researcher who writes about Buddhist ethics and mindfulness in extant literature and yet has not touched on the lived experience of the phenomena, lacks the embodied knowledge and deeper understandings that entails. IPA bridges the gap between the theoretical and the embodied and gives access to the monastics' rich textured lifeworld, centered on their lived experiences, and interpretations of phenomena. Thus, this research endeavors to allow the Buddhist naïve researcher on reading this, to transcend the theoretical and touch on the monastics' experiences, to obtain an insider perspective of these phenomena.

The positioning of the participant in IPA as an "experiential expert" reflects reality as the monastics' situatedness in both Buddhist and western contexts, which means they are holders of unique experiential knowledge that may be of benefit to psychology (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 9). Their experience as a Buddhist monastic embodying practices of ethics and mindfulness, along with being carriers of Buddhist understandings contributes to direct experiential knowledge of the phenomena of interest. Situated in the western world view, they have experiential knowledge into

the adoption of eastern Buddhist ethics, and how these may or may not have relevance to westerners. Situated in their Buddhist lifeworld, they can offer perspective-taking that is based on their experiential knowledge that is outside of the western psychological view and offer alternative perspectives for psychology and MBIs. Further, to locate their narratives in IPA, makes explicit who the knowledge holders are and counters historical power imbalances in research where the researcher as 'objective' expert has taken knowledge and claimed it as their own, which aligns to my critical psychology leanings.

Although IPA has no requirement as to the type of data collection used, typically semi-structured interviews are implemented as they provide the flexibility of real-world interaction where researchers may facilitate the participants' exploration of their experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Smith (2005) encouraged the use of other forms of data collection such as diaries or personal accounts. Morrell and Scott (2018) suggested that diary entries allow for intimate descriptions of everyday life that are not influenced by the relationship with the researcher. Therefore, I considered a multi-modal approach where a semi-structured interview would be the focus of data collection, but diary entries prior to the interviews perhaps would allow the participant to have time for reflection and encourage richer accounts of the phenomena. In order not to burden the monastic and to enhance recruitment, this was left as an optional component of the study.

Methods

Ethics

The research proposal and ethical considerations were informed by the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching & Evaluations Involving Human Participants (2017), the New Zealand Psychological Society Ethics Code (2012), *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, my supervisor and an

ethics advisor (Appendix 1). This was peer-reviewed and notified as being low risk by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. IPA is a participant-oriented approach that demonstrates respect and autonomy, where the participant is seen as the expert, and can express themselves as they wish. Additionally, the participants were informed of the research process, voluntary nature of participation, and their rights to withdraw from research at any time. To ensure responsible caring of the vulnerable, the participants were 18 years or older and were to be excluded if in psychological treatment to protect them from additional stress. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to protect the monastics' anonymity. Furthermore, my role as a chairperson of the NZ Bhikkhuni Sangha (Charitable) Trust was not deemed a conflict of interest because there was no benefit of the research to the trust, nor was I in any position of authority over monastics.

Recruitment

Initially, the participants were selected purposively from Buddhist monasteries in Aotearoa and later by snowballing. First, the monasteries were contacted by phone to outline the study and to ascertain the availability of individuals that fulfilled the selection criteria of being a western monastic (robed or disrobed), with at least five years living in Aotearoa (or other western country) prior to ordination. The broad specifications, which included monastics who may have disrobed or come from another western country, was to expand the limited potential pool of participants without losing the research aims. Following engagement with the monasteries, documents were distributed to the prospective monastics. This included an information sheet with an invitation to participate, instructions for the optional diary entry, participant consent form, confidentiality agreement, and a transcript release authority (Appendix 2). Later, recruitment by snowballing was achieved when an

interviewee offered details of three other western monastics – two of which responded to be interviewed.

The main goal in ascertaining an appropriate sample size was the necessity to have a small enough sample size to manage the large amount of data that is accrued through IPA, but also needed to be large enough to provide a rich understanding of the research and reach data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Sandelowski, 1995). This is a matter of subjective judgement of the researcher in relation to the goals of the research (Fugard & Potts, 2015), because there are no power analyses to determine the a priori minimum sample size, and methods to achieve data saturation are either lacking or outdated (Fusch, & Ness, 2015; Sandelowski, 1995).

Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) suggested that there is pressure on students to acquire too many participants for IPA to placate research boards more familiar with quantitative research, which de-emphasizes the idiographic approach. Various authors suggested 3-6 participants for master's level studies (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2022) and my supervisor suggested 10 was acceptable. Bernard (2012) asserted that because the number of interviews required to reach data saturation cannot be quantified, researchers should have a pragmatic approach and take what you can get. Furthermore, I considered whether data saturation was an applicable aim. The uniqueness of each person's context and experience may mean each consecutive participant has more to contribute although with reducing returns, whereas time and effort factors would be earlier limitations to reach. In consideration, I decided on a pragmatic approach where less-depth may be considered more for a master's level study with an aspiration towards data saturation, hence opted to seek six to ten participants.

Data Collection

Diary

An optional diary exercise (Appendix 2) on ethical practice was included that was to be completed prior to the interview. The diary exercise included the instructions to "reflect on your day and write about any experience where you engaged in ethical behaviour and note how you felt afterwards." The instructions were derived from consultation with IPA literature that suggested them to be loose and allied to the general aims of the research (Morrell-Scott, 2018).

Interview

A semi-structured interview format was used to investigate the monastics' lived experiences and perspectives of Buddhist ethics. The format followed Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) guidelines, which included the suggestion to have about 6-10 open questions with possible prompts aligned to the goals of the study, which was suggestive rather than prescriptive. They outlined the types of questions to construct (e.g., open, descriptive, evaluative) and avoid (e.g., over-empathic, closed) and the use of methods such as funneling, where you begin with broader questions then narrow it down. With those considerations, eleven questions were constructed that were descriptive and evaluative (Appendix 3). These traversed enquiry into the participants' lived experiences of Buddhist ethics, their perspectives on the relevance of Buddhist ethics to people today and MBIs.

The participants were given the interview questions and details about the interview structure prior to the interview. This was to ensure they were familiar with the areas of interest and to provide some time for reflection. Any of the materials provided were able to be brought to the interview to support the discussion. As per Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) suggestions on how to facilitate the most experiential information in interviews, I reiterated to the participants that the interview

could be considered a one-sided conversation where I was interested in them and their experiences and what they had to say in as much detail as they wanted to give. Also, they were welcome to diverge from the questions if that suited them.

The option of being interviewed by phone, zoom, or in person was offered and dictated by the participants' preferences and considerations of covid. The interviews were recorded by audio software on the computer or via zoom, along with a backup recording on my phone. Audio recording was used rather than video recording, which was considered superfluous because IPA transcription did not include non-verbal cues. Once the interview was transcribed, the participant was invited to check the transcript and to amend any details.

Analysis

After the interview, I wrote initial reflective notes of general impressions, cognitions, and feelings. Following this, I engaged in a full verbatim transcription of the participants' narratives, where all utterances were included. However, a query from an interviewee that included self-evaluative content upon reading their transcript, brought in an ethical awareness of how oral translation to written form can be negatively perceived, may detract from its message, and impact the participant adversely. This led to further enquiry into my uncritical assumptions that the full verbatim transcription was a taken for granted method of transcription creation. Although a full verbatim transcription is considered more accurate, intelligent verbatim transcription adapts the dialogue to written norms, which may be closer to what was intended (Bucholtz, 2000). To ensure that the transcript neither distracted from the narrative, nor caused consternation for the participants, I shifted to an intelligent verbatim transcription process whereby fillers (e.g., um), mistakes, and other utterances were only included where it would add meaning. This approach was considered to

adhere to the IPA epistemology, that allows flexibility but ensures researcher subjectivity is made explicit (McMullin, 2021).

Aligned to hermeneutic theory, I actively engaged with the data iteratively and nonlinearly (Smith & Osborn, 2003). My intention was to use an embodied, present-centered, and self-reflective approach for the process of analysis to maximize techniques to enhance enquiry and analysis. Instead, I found myself absorbed in the process, noting that absorption into the data facilitated the creative process and gave into this orientation. Exploratory noting began with descriptive summaries and commentaries on what the participant was attempting to achieve, looking at conceptual understandings of phenomena, repeated threads, contradictions, development and conclusion of the narrative, and the noting of potential personal experiential themes (PETs). First, I did this as a written exercise working with each individual case, then across cases noting where meanings converged and diverged across the cases. During the process of clustering PETs across the cases, I shifted to working online, which was amenable to maneuvering, chunking, and tracking the data. I worked to further cluster and integrate PETs and develop group experiential themes (GETs) across the cases and attempted to maintain both the shared and unique features of the monastics' experiences. I considered various alternative groupings of GETs and tried to maintain connection with both the purpose of the study and what was meaningful to the participant in the process of developing a narrative. Initially, I linked potential extracts with their experiential statements and tracked participants with i1-7 (e.g., interview 1 to 7) and included extracts that were emotionally evocative, metaphoric, or captured the imagination as well as the range of ways the participants elicited their PET. Then began further iterations of integration and writing up of data, drafting, editing, thinning down the narrative, revisiting PETs, transcripts, considering alternatives, re-adding

data. I got to a point where with better understanding I would liked to have restarted the analysis again.

I reread the transcripts from four hermeneutic turnings: The Buddhist framework, the western perspective, the psychological framework, and the IPA approach of open curiosity. Firstly, I found myself predominantly pre-understanding the information from a Buddhist view that the monastics subscribed to. In essence, I entered the hermeneutic stance of empathy where entering into the monastic's narratives, I stepped into their world and saw things from their view. Initially, I was challenged by having immersion in Buddhist understanding to shift to the other paradigms, perhaps due to an affiliation with the Buddhist paradigm as well as being deeply immersed in Buddhist literature alongside the analysis and felt a tendency to eschew western psychological formulations even though psychological theories would arise in my mind. To alternate with empathy and suspicion and find what was concealed as outlined by Eatough and Smith (2017), initially I had to apply with intention different orientations or approaches and remind myself that I was primarily acting as a psychological researcher. A part of me did not really want to and when I reflected on this, in stepping more fully into the Buddhist world, with an orientation on ethics, the limitations and potential harms of uncritical western psychology became tangible. Also, I noted when I stepped into the psychological paradigm there was a tendency to shift from the bottom-up qualitative approach to the top-down approach and I would apply theory to the narrative. The felt sense of staying with the data was very different to applying any preunderstandings or theories to the narratives, and I realized this was the space to navigate the data from initially, which would maintain the commitment to studying phenomena in their own terms (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

From here, I attempted to maintain curiosity and openness to understand the monastics' meanings and the importance they ascribed to the phenomena.

Initially, I felt uncertain about how to do a deeper analysis rather than a descriptive one where you take meanings at face value. Thus, I re-sought more information and read more broadly on IPA research but noted even within the extant literature, the analyses on offer tended to be quite descriptive and interpreted through the lens of mainstream psychology. I also felt a certain reticence to take someone's narrative and turn it into my own. To analyze another's narrative is to potentially overstep boundaries, to shift the participant away from being expert, or misapply meaning through one's own pre-understandings, or be done in such a way that exposes another's blind spots. Doing research with individuals close-up, I wanted to take care and chose not to add layers of interpretation that would do this.

The process of analysis began with uncertainty but through interpretative enquiry both the data and my lived world opened up to different layers of interpretation. Even the process of writing this sentence my mind takes it and labels it transition and further - unknown to embodied, incompetency to competency and by extension wellbeing. It became less about wondering about interpretations and descriptions but more about choice and problem solving. My considerations of levels of interpretation driven by adherence to my research aims and the participants meanings and less about the need to demonstrate my ability to access layers of interpretation. Where I wanted to explicate multiple perspectives at face value, I considered to have a descriptive approach a rational aim. Where the narrative was based on lived experiences or whether I was seeking conceptual understandings dictated the layers of interpretation chosen and where skillful, to have some deeper critical penetration of the data. Furthermore, I found myself as a translator of the narrative into the

known psychological realm for the psychological reader from my pre-understanding of the Buddhist view and framework rooted in my own experience. Thus, IPA draws on the data and the doer in context and transforms them both through the hermeneutic process.

Results

Seven participants were interviewed who consisted of four women and three men, with two from the Theravāda tradition, four Tibetan Buddhists, and one from the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT). They varied in their time as a monastic from two years to thirty-two years. Most of the participants had an interest or background in psychology. Four of them had a religious background: Three Christians, one Buddhist. At the interviewees request, five of the interviews were via Zoom, one by phone, and one in person. These interviews took from one to three hours and resulted in 723 minutes of enriched fluent narratives that traversed the monastics' experiences, quotes, poetry, Buddhist teachings, constructs of mindfulness and ethics, anecdotes, the history of humanity, global issues, religion, along with scientific studies in psychology and neuroscience. None of the participants chose to do the diary exercise.

Impressions

When I reflect on the interviews I am reminded of the concepts of right speech and how when this is enacted one feels nourished, stimulated, and enriched from it. Right speech is ethics in verbal action, where the interviewees elucidated what was meaningful to them, for the benefit this study. The topic material and the IPA style of enquiry encouraged reflection and focus on the narrated concepts of compassion. The sharing of facets of their lives elicited feelings of connection, humility, and clarity. I reflected on how the monastics' commentaries have reverberated through my study, etched into my mind, retrievable, the sense of the person, the sound of their voice, memory

the vessel of their narratives. The interviewee's words "bring your mind home" echo in my mind facilitating mindfulness. I reflect on how this action of interviewing monastics has further reverberations on what I do that continues flowing into perpetuity.

A Delve into Life Stories and Identity

Karunā

Karunā was grounded and down to earth, which made for a comfortable first interview. Karunā's interest in Buddhism began in her early 20s where she did vipassana for a decade. She had a strong urge to become a Tibetan Buddhist nun and after seeking a tradition for three years where "I was just looking for my spiritual guide really" came across the NKT. She ordained immediately and has continued in her vocation for 16 years.

She differentiated her contextual identity away from Theravāda, where she was "not so much sīla, samādhi, paññā," because in general terms Theravāda leans towards a structured, conservative approach than Mahāyāna. Yet she saw ethics as "the foundation of spiritual life." When I listened to Karunā speak, the predominant thread both interwoven throughout the interview and reiterated at her conclusion, was that ethics was enacted from the heart of *bodhicitta*, which is the intention to strive with compassion and wisdom to benefit sentient beings. This for her was central to her life and identity as a Buddhist. The sense of compassion was aroused in myself from listening to her speak and stayed with me for days as I reflected on and immersed myself in her talk.

Avisaggatā

Avisaggatā mentioned a lack of familiarity with psychological terminology and mindfulness interventions and had less to contribute about that component of the interview. In juxtaposition, he defined mindfulness in psychological terms along with a well-practiced mindful resonance in his

voice. He differed from the other monastics by having the intersectional context of being "Thai-kiwi", having been brought up in Aotearoa, as well as having engagement in Buddhist temples from childhood. His identity situated as a Thai-kiwi informed much of the interview as he negotiated both western and Asian views in his responses, especially focused on barriers for westerners to ethics and Buddhism in general. He delineated his time in school as having a western mindset and time at home of being given the option of doing things the Thai or western way and found it "a tough spot" to navigate from in terms of his identity. Work stressors were a precipitant to a mental breakdown, where he spent time at Buddhist temples to find peace and solitude, and he contemplated the rationale and meaning of worldly success and attainment in the light of the Buddhist view of dukkha. His challenging life stressor, a desire for spiritual development, and his collective values to support the community, led him to ordain as a novice monk "in about 2015". I felt humbled by the offering of his personal narrative.

Ānandin

The interview with Ānandin was like chatting to a friend, although he was previously unknown to me and being an IPA interview, was more one sided. He had an easy-going disposition and laughed readily at the foibles of his own mind and was reflective in speech. He considered the questions with integrative complexity – that is from varied perspectives perhaps due to his varied background. Ānandin was an Australian and had been brought up in a traditional Christian environment but ended up engaged in "much partying". He had previously worked disparate jobs both as a fashion designer and a "psych nurse in drug and alcohol rehab," having practical experience with mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy. His interest in Buddhism was piqued in the 1990s and was solidified with the Dalai Lama's visits in the early 2000s, where he

spent 10 days with him "then I retired from work at the ripe old age of 49. I chucked work in and started doing Buddhism full time." Hence, this meeting had a profound influence in shifting his life's path and later in the interview he reflects that without Buddhism "I'd probably be dead by now (Laughter)." Like interview two, he spoke about the western and eastern divide and diverged from the earlier interviews by talking about aspects of how Buddhism and ethics were not relevant nor pragmatic in today's world. His view was informed by his identity having ordained later in life after having a long immersion in the western world.

Nibbedhaka

Nibbedhaka came into Buddhism serendipitously. She was a theologian, doing her masters in comparative religion, when through a friend she had the opportunity to interview a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, she "jumped" at it. "I went to see Rinpoche, and basically life changed from the moment I made contact with him, so that's how I came to Buddhism." Again, like Ānandin a pivotal meeting takes place, the meaning of which reorientated the direction of her life.

Nibbedhaka was of Māori/Samoan descent and came across as sharp and articulate with a rich narrative. The overall orientation of the interview highlighted the Buddhist view (*sammā diṭṭhi*) of the nature of our mind and reality. She mentioned that her perspective was based in the Buddhist teachings and as such was not unique, and some of her narrative was derived almost verbatim from her late teacher's teachings, perhaps because in her lineage teachings are comprised of direct transmissions. What she offered uniquely in her narrative was reflection on the implications of differing paradigmatic views of psychology and Buddhism.

Dhammavicaya

Dhammavicaya has an MA in Classics, a longstanding interest and ongoing education in psychology and comes across in an offbeat erudite manner. Dhammavicaya grew up as a Christian and valued the inherent qualities of love and patience found in the teachings but not some other aspects. She travelled to India and found Buddhism, which offered her a structured pathway and practices to uphold her values, where Christianity had not. "If you want to be more loving you practice mettā, if you want to be more patient learn mindfulness…" Therefore, Buddhism fulfilled her desire for moral agency, to develop integrity, and value-congruent transformation.

After a long retreat, she ordained in 2005 as a "container" to meet the needs for connection and support to practice intensively. She talked about her "incredible experiences" where "you start to understand a lot about life, your own mind, and other people's that you'd never understood before" and "a whole world opens up". Hers was a journey that came up against the patriarchal world in which Buddhism was embedded, where "attitudes to women were like stepping back in time". Hence, her situatedness as a western feminist bhikkhunī informed her conversation along with broader global and social issues that we face.

Appamāṇā

Appamāṇā had been practicing Buddhism for 20 years, was ordained for six, and had recently disrobed to pursue his altruistic purpose to bring holistic Buddhist teachings into the secular world. He had corporate and Catholic background, was interested in positive psychology, neuroscience, and the crossover between Buddhist psychology and western psychology. He came across as having a lot of energy and motivation towards helping others and this turn towards "other" informed much of his dialogue. The "lack" that he saw in extant, secular mindfulness courses and

practices, impelled him on his current path. He saw there were components missing "a big gap and I really wanted to – I felt this draw and this need, you know desire to be able to offer something in that space." He also recognized the challenge of Buddhism to westerners. Thus, he offers decontextualized Buddhist teachings that elaborate on contemporary mindfulness. His secular framework adds some missing facets along with components that were not focused on in Buddhism but that he thought was relevant for people e.g., leadership. The expansion of his mindfulness training with added Buddhist elements lends some "authenticity" and feeds into his altruistic purpose to have "huge benefits for people", which he can fulfil as a lay teacher, more so than a monastic.

Adhiṭṭhāna

Adhiṭṭhāna was a layperson for a decade and ordained 32 years ago. She had five children and was a teacher in various capacities. She was an early pioneer of Buddhism, involved in bringing Buddhist teachers into Aotearoa/NZ where she met a Tibetan lama who she came to reside with. She wanted to be deeply involved in Buddhism and studied for about a year before becoming ordained. Then she spent years engaged in the creation and development of Buddhist centres around New Zealand. Now she teaches mindfulness meditation but incorporates other Buddhist principles like investigative enquiry with questions, "What is happening here and how am I relating?"

She came across as vital, intelligent, and full of courage, contingent on her unwavering commitment to Buddhism and decades of mental training. She had a structured response to her questions, many which were written out for the interview. She contextualized her answers with the history of humanity, human experience, and added critical elements to her narrative. She had a

tangible quality of strong determination associated with her purpose to help others and immersive identification with being Buddhist, which was reflected in her resolve.

> Nothing is going to make me to disrobe, because being an ordained person is the best possible vehicle for me to be able to help others, and in the long run that's what I want to do in this life and in future lives… All these tragedies of life still occur but the fact that you are holding onto an iron rod, you know is so strong. You know that you're a part of this. You're one of Buddha's children, you know and that nothing is higher than that among human beings. Nothing is more powerful.

Hence, both her and Appamāṇā driven by the same altruism to benefit others, chose different vehicles based on how they best thought they could achieve those ends.

Demystifying Ethics: An Orientation Towards Flourishing and Fulfilment

The Buddhist teachings being vast, and the monastics lived experience of these teachings resulted in rich flowing narratives. The monastics spoke about how Buddhist ethics were enacted in their personal context and enriched their lives, which informed their rationale in support of Buddhist ethics. There was a consideration that both ethics and mindfulness was misperceived. Therefore, some of the conversations functioned to clarify these issues or to overcome the assumptions made by westerners about these concepts. Also, the monastics illuminated the tensions between Buddhist ethics and western inclinations and considered how Buddhism may itself need to change to fit the current secular or diverse-peopled context in psychology. They highlighted the importance of ethical practice to meet every day and deeper transformative needs and proposed adaptations of ethics to enhance their applicability to MBIs.

The emergent Group Experiential Statement comes back unsurprisingly to the soteriological goal of Buddhism "to flourish", which encompasses plural transformative aims - to eradicate suffering and maximize psychosocial-spiritual wellbeing through illumination of lived experience. Lived ethics are actions of body, speech, and mind that are incremental steppingstones to actualize those aims. Ethics enquires "What makes us flourish and what doesn't?" The question not only refers to "us" on the individual and psychological level but encompasses a broad ecological view that includes all living beings. In this context, mindfulness is inextricable from ethics and is used as a lens to aid observation, analysis, and enquiry to discern the specific conditionality that leads to suffering and flourishing. Ethical discernment motivates further ethical adherence, which brings a stability of mind that is a necessary condition to penetrate and accurately understand the metaphysical nature of human experience, which transforms us and the way we experience the world. As such ethics, mindfulness, and wisdom are cojoined in an orientation to outcomes of wellbeing through observation and familiarization of the landscape of the unfolding nature of experiential phenomena.

From this frame of reference "to flourish", MBIs sit within the therapeutic aim of stress reduction and thus is an ethical endeavour that benefits many. However, the benefits of MBIs were limited in contrast with the potential benefits derived from ethics situated within the holistic teaching of the n8fp. Also, where the psychological and societal paradigm diverges from Buddhism's ontological understandings or phenomenological descriptions of the nature of reality can lead to misperceptions and harm. Conversely, intentional ethical training congruent with Buddhist ontologies, counters harm to oneself and others and leads to fulfilment of psychological

and relational needs. Thus, an orientation towards collective flourishing through ethical enquiry could provide a solution to maximise wellbeing in MBIs.

Ethical Training as a Determinant of Self-Transformation

Easing into One's Own Humanity: Transformation Through Self-Education in Ethics.

In the following excerpt, Nibbedhaka highlighted the importance of ethics to Buddhism's transformative aims. Her narrative was in part transmission from her late teacher Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche.

> We have this enormous capacity to grow within ourselves, so we can either go onto a path of self-destruction or we can embark on the path that will lead to self-fulfillment and meaning and life, and that is why in Buddhism we have to take the notion of ethics very seriously because that is how we will become transformed. Ethics is central to Buddhism because that leads to our transformation. Since Buddhists do not believe in a core fixed self, self-transformation is possible. This happens through changing our thoughts, how we feel, dream, what we try to attain and realize from an ethical orientation. Through this process we become a different person, and once transformed, one becomes an *arhat* [enlightened person]. Thus, ethics is not black and white, but simply a construct of how to go beyond suffering.

She outlined how adherence to ethics is a causal factor in the process to become a "different person", a fully realized "arhat". Although this may seem like a lofty spiritual potential irrelevant to a secular individual's needs, she later clarifies "It's really about easing into one's own humanity". Thus, ethical engagement is about the movement towards authenticity or the process of fulfillment of one's potential. Authenticity encompasses autonomy, which is concordant with her statement

about self-agency in that we have the capacity for transformation and can make the choice whether or not to enact profound change, where she offers comparative extremes "self-destruction" or "self-fulfillment" as rationale to engage in ethics. Further, she asserted that ethics is a causal construct of transformation as opposed to being "black and white" to counter the western tendency to conflate ethics with moralizing (i.e., equated with judgements of right or wrong).

In contrast to the potential for transformation, Nibbedhaka frames the nature of the mind without ethical training as problematic.

> We unwittingly tend to engage in various activities physically, verbally, mentally in a willy-nilly fashion, without reflection, instinctively, and even without spontaneity. In Buddhism, spontaneity is encouraged because it's the opposite of instinct. With instinct, our mind, body, and speech does not actually belong to us. We have a tendency to think things we do not want to think, should not be thinking, and we say things that we regret afterwards. Just for a moment there is a tendency to lose control, lose ourselves, and we make a mess, and we need to make amends, to correct or remedy a situation, but quite often it's too late. The damage is done, and that damage has a long-lasting influence on what kind of person we are to become. So, we unthinkingly do all these kinds of things.

Here she captured the nature of the mind by evocative terms "that our body and mind do not belong to us". Thus, we are not authentic and instead we are owned by our instinctive patterns where we are not free to fully engage in our contextual experience in congruence with the way that we would choose. She makes the distinction between spontaneity and instinct, because even though we may think of instinct as being spontaneous, it emerges as predictable patterns of reactivity, which works against our authenticity where we lack autonomy to live in accordance with our values.

Further, she outlined the causal sequence where she links unethical behaviour to suffering and further ramifications in relatable terms.

The other participants echoed her attribution of suffering as originating from our problematic minds. Adhiṭṭhāna reflected that "all thoughts, emotions, issues, ethical and unethical actions were rooted in the mind"; Dhammavicaya that "our mind seeds our actions whether ethical or unethical"; Ānandin in the following quote begins with the totality of the problem being attributed to the mind but expanded the conceptualization to include the influence of external environmental conditions "It's all coming from your own mind. There's not anything outside that's going to fix it. It's how you perceive things and how you react to things, which then comes back to how you were brought up". Appamāṇā added further, "you really become self-responsible for, as you realize your own happiness is your own. It's created by yourself. It's an inside job". Thus, he highlighted the self-agency and responsibility to effect change when you realize the onus is yourself to get the outcomes you desire.

In the following excerpt, Adhiṭṭhāna attributed the causal agent of the problem of our minds to our ignorance where we lack knowledge of the relationship between unethical behaviours that results in harm to others and ourselves. Thus, the solution is the development of ethical knowledge of these causal links. She uses the words "starts with ethical behaviour" because ethical practices in Buddhism are precursors to meditative practices that overcome deeper levels of ignorance through transformative insight.

> Buddha taught we harm others, and thus we harm ourselves out of belligerence. The root cause of this is ignorance of our own truth as well as the other. Then we create an unruly un-disciplined mind. The antidote to which starts with ethical behaviour.

Nibbedhaka resolves the problem of the nature of the mind through transformation, as a result of ethical self-education – what Appamāṇā calls “inside job”. In Nibbedhaka’s excerpt below, she defined Buddhist ethics being “more of” a form of “educating oneself” than a moral education, which emphasized the Buddhist view that ethics involves autonomously motivated training with the normative aims to flourish.

> If you looked at Buddhist ethics, it's helpful to understand it is a system of morality. It's really based on moral education. You could say it would be more of a way of educating oneself and perhaps what is really important is how even the monastic code of ethics are designed for us to educate ourselves in a way that we will flourish as individuals.

Dhammavicaya and Adhiṭṭhāna also emphasized that the precepts are about self-education as training rules but not to emphasize the transformative purpose. Adhiṭṭhāna asserted they were “logical to uphold” like “don’t steal, don’t kill, don’t lie, not because the Buddha said so”. Dhammavicaya noted, “It's about training. It's not you do this and you're evil… People sometimes like a glass of wine to just be a better mum at the end of the day. We’re just humans. These are just guidelines”. Thus, in framing ethics as based on logic rather than dogma, the participants counter western assumptions about ethics being external principles imposed on by an authority. Implicit in the non-dogma argument is the aspect of choice to engage, with the softer wording of “guidelines” that allows for flexibility of engagement. Further, Dhammavicaya differentiates the precepts from the commandments to counter misunderstandings that ethics are adhered to by external motivations of harsh judgements associated with identity e.g., “you’re evil”. Thus, the monastics clarified the concept and purpose of intentional ethical training to provide the transformative means to enhance authenticity and wellbeing outcomes based on logic and non-dogma.

Growing Flowers and Pulling Weeds: The Dual Nature of Lived Ethics.

The nature of lived ethics encompasses but goes beyond the literal wording of the precepts, which are framed in the negative as restraint (i.e., I undertake the precept to refrain from killing living beings) or behaviours to be abandoned or avoided that prevent us from flourishing. The participants say it is not enough to just restrain from doing unethical behaviours, but you must proactively choose to enact beneficial behaviours, and cultivate mental states motivated by compassionate understanding that are both conducive to our wellbeing and the benefit of others. This is the basis of right effort in Buddhism to develop the wholesome and eradicate that which causes harm. Karunā provided examples of two of the precepts in the following excerpt that expanded on their textual translation to outline this dual nature of lived ethics, where she emphasized the importance of proactive behaviours that benefit others.

> It's not only just refraining from killing, but it's actually practicing virtuous behaviours - like saving insects lives. It's not just holding back from killing, but it's actively practicing some virtue, like if you see a little ant in the shower, then you help it out. So, not lying - obviously increasing virtuous speech, and that includes not exaggerating - all those sorts of practices. So, it's refraining but it's also practicing virtue as well.

Dhammavicaya used the metaphor borrowed from Rick Hanson, a Buddhist neuroscientist, "grow flowers, pull weeds" that demonstrated the dual nature of lived ethics, and to encapsulate this, she drew from the suttas (MN 19) to outline two types of thoughts - those to eradicate and those to encourage and included Ajahn Brahm's rendition of right intention that underlie the thoughts.

> The Buddha's sitting and he's putting them into categories of two thoughts: These are thoughts of cruelty, these are thoughts of ill will, these are thoughts of greed, and these thoughts lead to my own harm, to others harm and to the harm of both, and therefore I'll put them away. He reflected instead on thoughts based on the three right intentions: Making peace, being kind, being gentle, which nourishes wisdom and leads to nibbāna.

Karunā drew attention to the importance of monitoring intention when enacting lived ethics in the excerpt below. These encompass the dichotomy of right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa* - the second factor of the n8fp) mentioned in the excerpt above and wrong intention of desire, ill-will, and cruelty. Adherence to seemingly ethical behaviours in the absence of positive intentions will not have the same benefits. In Buddhism, intention is related to kamma where what we do in the now and the state of mind whilst performing the action impacts the consequences in our lives or can be used to either mitigate or perpetuate past actions. Therefore, monitoring intentions means that the monastic can potentially circumvent harmful external actions or mitigate them by abandoning unwholesome intentions or know when to act on wholesome intentions, thus making use of the dual factors for beneficial outcomes.

> You watch your mind and check your intention. A lot of the ethics are about intention. It is very much about what intention you have in your mind and checking your intention.

Ānandin expressed this dual ethical approach in reference to accumulating merit as "Buddha points". The concept of merit (*puñña*) is the sense of wellbeing or protective factors that accumulate from performing beneficial ethical actions, which encompasses restraint from harm and proactive ethical behaviours. He outlined the mutual exclusion where a lack of restraint reduces merit, to demonstrate the necessity of both factors. "So, we're trying to accumulate good and get Buddha

points and all that sort of stuff, but if we don't practice restraint, we're not accumulating merit, so if we're not doing one thing we're detracting from the other". Conversely, restraint facilitates virtuous actions and virtuous actions prohibit harm. Thus, the dual factors are mutually supportive.

The necessity of engagement of dual ethical factors was epitomized in Ānandin's following excerpt, which outlined the challenge to abide by ethical precepts of right speech. In his example, even though he restrained himself from speaking unskilfully and causing harm, it conflicted with his ethical impetus to "say something" and as an extension on the precepts (e.g., AN 4.264) to encourage others to refrain from harmful speech. Hence, restraint alone was a "double-edged sword", which had both positive and negative consequences. He alluded to the necessity to develop effective communication skills so as not to be complicit with others harmful behaviour and resolve his inner conflict. Thus, restraint alone is not enough, and enacting new ethical behaviours such as restraint of harmful speech requires the dual development of skilful speech. Further, his context as a person who ordained later in life meant he had a lifetime of habits to retrain and new skills to learn, which compounded his challenges.

> It's quite hard to be a monastic, I guess because I'm older is to restrain. I see things that are blatantly wrong, and I go "argh". I want to say something, but I can't, and it's good on my part that I can show restraint and do that, but it's also not helping the person doing something that's wrong. You're not highlighting it to them. It's a double-edged sword… Just trying to work out how – and this is my problem – to say it without being offensive.

Adhiṭṭhāna drew attention to ethics being rooted in *ahimsa* [non-violence] and *karunā* [compassion], which informs the precepts, ethical self-education, learning, and action. These were central components the participants' narratives that were referred to implicitly in their extracts

above as the drivers of the dual components of ethics: Restraint from harm to oneself and others and compassionate action towards oneself and others. She contextualized these concepts as derived from "the social mores of the Indus based society that Buddhism arose out of" and asserted that "nonviolence and compassion were the intended behavioural results of meditations – both *shamatha* [calm abiding] and *vipassana* [special insight]". Thus, compassion and nonviolence both inform the ethical practices and are a beneficial outcome from mental development in meditation.

Ānandin referred to morality as restraint of wrongdoing that would otherwise lead to adverse consequences as the all-encompassing "wrong everything". He explained moral behaviours can be guided by one's own personal standard or moral compass, societal norms, and the monastic code. He provided an example of how he still lived by his moral code from his traditional upbringing.

> It's actually quite funny when you see me with some women. I'll stand at the door, and they'll stand at the door, and neither will go in because I'm waiting for them, and they're waiting for me, so I haven't got my head around that one yet.

This demonstrated that abiding by the monastic code does not exclude one from abiding with their own pre-existing moral code, as further support for autonomy in ethics training. He expanded on monastic wrongdoings that "there are three different levels of that and if you do a wrongdoing it leads you onto wrong action, wrong speech, wrong thought, wrong everything…" He added that by acting on a wrongdoing, "you're encouraging others to do something wrong". Thus, it involves a causal pathway that begins with unethical behaviour, which has further effects on yourself and others. The consideration on the impact of others reflects the inclusive orientation within Buddhism that considerations of harm is extended beyond the individual.

Most of the participants outlined or referred to textual ethics as the five precepts in their definitions. Adhiṭṭhāna outlined restraint of 10 non-virtuous actions, which are allied to the five precepts, but are separated into actions of body, speech, and mind. These were outlined in Table 1. Below, along with their counterparts that comprise the dual components of ethics. The non-virtuous mental actions that she described were synonymous with the three poisons: Greed, hatred, delusion. Along with the precepts and vows the participants also referred to ethical teachings that enhanced beneficial qualities of the mind that lead to awakening: The *pāramīs* [perfections] and the *brahma vihārās* [virtues].

Table 1.

10 Non-Virtuous Actions and their Counterparts

	10 Non-Virtues	10 Virtues
Body	Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct	Protect life, generosity, maintain discipline
Speech	Lying, slandering, divisive speech, gossip	Speak what is true, kind, and meaningful; reconcile disputes
Mind	Malice, covetousness, delusion	Generosity, loving-kindness, right view

Avisaggatā broadened the conceptualization of ethics as restraint beyond the precepts. “Basically, any activities done that cause mindlessness such as intoxicants or drugs can cause us to be heedless and destructive, cause harm to self and others”. Whilst he expanded restraint of unethical action to “any activities” that cause harm, this excerpt also equated this with anything that

causes “mindlessness”. Thus, implicitly mindfulness is a beneficial quality that was synonymous with being ethical. His explanation focused on the results of ethics and draws on consequentialism, where the results of one’s actions are the basis of whether that action is considered harmful or not. However, the harm is not limited to harms to oneself but includes the effects on others, as also noted by Appamāṇā, “It’s obvious that restraint of harm - if you don’t have that, creates suffering for others and in turn for ourselves”.

The Supportive Roles of Investigative Enquiry and Discernment in the Natural Unfolding of Ethics.

Whilst we might consider ethical behaviours as overt physical actions or behaviours, the participants emphasized ethical engagement and development at the level of the mind. With the mind as the origin of suffering, and precipitant of behaviour, the mental actions they described as ethics were those that facilitated and supported ethical engagement. These mental actions encompassed investigative enquiry, which comprised of directed observation and analysis of the processes of experiential phenomena (internal and external) that included their motivations, their own and others’ behaviours and consequences. They also engaged in reflection as investigative enquiry of past experiences and compared lived experience with ethical frameworks. Investigative enquiry enhanced ethical sensitivity and discernment of the links between ethics and their beneficial outcomes, which resulted in further adherence to ethics. This ethical knowledge informed ethical behaviours that elicit beneficial mental states that counter the negativity bias and supported understandings of commonalities, compassionate relating, and prosocial action. Thus, the “natural unfolding” of lived ethics was contingent on ethical investigation that combines mindfulness and analysis to develop ethical and compassion-based wisdom.

Dhammavicaya outlined how ethics develops through mutually dependent causes where *"*sīla, samādhi, paññā*"* can be distinguished analytically, yet in practice they are intertwined. She relayed the simile of wisdom and ethics as hands washing each other where the development of one requires the other. In this excerpt, she explicated this simile further and introduced the idea of "the natural unfolding" of ethical conduct, where the more sensitivity to ethics develops the more the precipitants and impacts of motivations, thoughts and behaviours are discerned. This "natural unfolding" draws on investigative causal self-enquiry, which develops ethical knowledge and the recognition of impacts of behaviours, which enhances motivation towards ethical behaviour "because it bothers us more", and they "become more careful". Thus, ethical development encompasses investigative mental engagement and mindful observation that links ethical actions with their outcomes.

> As our wisdom grows our ethical conduct becomes more refined. Sīla is how we use our mind, speech, body. Things like, do we keep our room tidy? Are we on time for meetings? How sensitive are we? We naturally become more careful about our thoughts because we see the impact of what we think. It's about seeing and recognising causality. Frameworks (e.g., from the suttas and precepts) can help us see the impact of what we do, and it bothers us more as you notice it more. It's this natural unfolding.

Ānandin gave an example of how ethical investigation leads to the development of ethical discernment and self-knowledge. First, he mentioned the practice of self-reflection but on further consideration, noticed he looks "more" at other people's behaviour, which helped him to become aware of his blind spots. Through a process of observation and reflection on other people's behaviour he reorients his "spotlight" or focus of attention onto himself to ascertain the roots of the

behaviour and his reactivity. As he noted, it may be difficult to acknowledge our own negative behaviours, but we more readily observe and judge others for perceived wrongdoings or displays of negative emotions that we are uncomfortable with. Hence, he makes use of external observations as a strategy to skilfully work with and know his own mind towards his goal of becoming more ethical.

> The ethical practices make me look at what I'm doing. Actually, it makes me look more at what other people are doing around me, then I see that, and I look back on myself. What I see in people, I see as a reflection of what I'm doing as well. If I'm noticing something in somebody, I've become attuned to it. Then I look at myself and think I must be doing something along those lines for me to become aware of it. Then I just turn that spotlight back onto myself and try to work out where or why it's coming from. So, I think it's quite challenging sometimes because you don't want to admit to yourself, "Oh yeah, I don't like that in somebody", and then if you really look at yourself you think, "Oh yeah, I'm actually like that…"

Adhiṭṭhāna highlighted the necessity of ethical enquiry to cut the root of unethical behaviour through the recognition that holding onto unethical thoughts does not achieve beneficial results. She mentioned "you can't do that by breathing", which refers to mindfulness of the breath and indirectly is a criticism of the limitation of secular mindfulness, where it is not enough to just calm the mind where ethical analysis is required to discern unethical behaviour and their effects. The example she gives, demonstrated the folly and delusion of a person who wants to harm another, which does not achieve that result and through their negative thoughts and mental states disturbs their own mind. Further, she linked "unethical behaviour" with their harmful consequences - "damaging behaviour" and contrasted this with the beneficial results of ethical behaviour to demonstrate the illogic of

acting unethically. Thus, cutting the root of unethical behaviour requires experiential ethical knowledge to dispel the compelling influence of ill-will that would otherwise conflict with aims for wellbeing.

> You think that the person thinks that by going through those things, that they're getting revenge on the other person. "See how much I'm hating you?" It's not what's happening. The other person knows nothing about it and they're getting on with their own life. They're hanging out the washing, talking to their boyfriend, and you are just in misery. So, what is the point of that? You need to cut out the root, and you can't do that by breathing. You have to think about it and examine your mind in terms of ethical behaviour. Is this unethical behaviour? Is it damaging behaviour? Because they're coexistent. Damaging behaviour is unethical and it's damaging to yourself and others. Whereas ethical behaviour is creative, objective, and kind behaviour. What's the choice? There ain't no choice really.

The Buddhist teachings provide an external reference to guide ethical understanding and provide an investigative framework to reflect on. To keep the vows requires mindfulness of the vows in reference to one's own thoughts and behaviours. Karunā talks about her experience of daily investigative reflection on her vows, "I take my vows and go through them, and I check am I keeping them?" This enhances her awareness of transgressions, increases intention and effort to commit to behaviours aligned to Buddhist values. Similarly, Adhiṭṭhāna outlines the thought processes that could enhance ethical adherence in the excerpt below. She takes on the reflective perspective of a layperson to demonstrate the mental processes to develop the ethical awareness of the drawbacks of unethical behaviours to enhance the intention to refrain from the issue in the future.

> In knowing the vows, they [lay people] may recognize their validity, but something may pop up where there would be a tendency to give in to it and hit or smack or get angry or say "I hate you" or all the other things, sleep with the wrong person. They may give in to that, but if they know about the ethical behaviours, they can withdraw and look at it again. They might go, "It's not as good as what I thought it would be; It would have been better if I hadn't done that; It would have been better if I had of checked myself in time; Next time, I will check myself in time". So, that slowly, slowly, it develops like that.

The pātimokkha rules are regularly recited by the monastic community along with confession of vow transgressions. This is a form of communal intention making, truth-telling, and repentance where you disclose the transgression and redirect one's actions in the future. Adhiṭṭhāna outlined the practice of confession, "even if they have only partially broken vows such as by having angry thoughts towards their companions, they will confess them". Dhammavicaya outlined the vow about not eating after noon, which is done to simplify life, reduce burden on laity, and to support meditation. "This ups the ante because you may not want the apple in the evening if you have to confess to everyone, as nothing you do is secret". By sharing the transgression of the vow this counters an unwholesome mental factor in Buddhism of concealment and may result in psychological benefits if done in a supportive compassionate environment. Further, the tendency towards social desirability that Dhammavicaya alluded to, provides motivation to uphold the vows. Adhiṭṭhāna draws a parallel of the practice of reflection being "like a self-confession" that lay people can do, except that one's own mind bears witness to the disclosure. Similarly, to the monastic, the layperson recognizes their unethical behaviour and the adverse outcomes that results in suffering and what follows is the impetus to change their behaviours.

Karunā makes use of ethical knowledge in her example of lived ethics as the restraint of speech. She demonstrated the use of causal understandings of the precursors to harmful speech where she used a strategy that involved intentional redirection of attention to ensure no malice would arise. Thus, she circumvented a potential source of inner conflict that would otherwise lead to an ethical transgression and instead could maintain value-congruent actions. Furthermore, focus on positive qualities of others enhances prosocial construals that fosters connection and reduce stress.

> Not focusing on the apparent bad qualities of someone that would give rise to malice or hurtful speech… making sure in your mind that you don't have any malice – you know bad thoughts about people and thinking how you're going to harm someone.

Ānandin outlined the strategy of reflecting on "virtue" to counter our negativity bias where "our default setting is bad". Ānandin mentioned the ethical practice of reflecting on one's own virtuous behaviours and qualities and the challenge for people to do this, which concords with his assertion that people are habituated to looking at the negative. Through the deliberate reflection and focus on the memory of one's own and others good actions fosters a beneficial frame of mind that come from prosocial and positive self construals. Thus, Ānandin makes use of ethical knowledge of the precursors of beneficial outcomes to reflect on virtue to support ethical development.

> We don't see the good. Our default setting is bad. It's our natural default setting and we go to there. We just home in on that. We don't home into the good things about people and situations. That's a practice in itself, and I try to encourage people to see that as well, because I teach as well. Part of the meditation is to reflect on your own virtues… You see people just struggle with that, trying to find good things that they've done for themselves or 10 good things about themselves and to rejoice in it.

Again, the participants make use of the knowledge of causation to engage reflective processes that elicit wellbeing outcomes. Shirking the tendency to relate to others from superficial characteristics, Karunā speaks in the excerpt below of relating with a focus on commonality. “Like every other living being has a mind, and when you have a mind you have feelings, and every living being wants to be happy and free from suffering so even little insects and that”. Almost verbatim the other participants reference this phrase. The phrases although well known to me, evoked my inner western cynic that sees the childlike idealism. However, Dhammavicaya delineated that the view of commonality that comes from experiential understandings grounded in authentic human qualities. “You don’t like being harmed, and you realise that all other beings are the same. This comes from a deep humanity”. And Ānandin noted, “When you look at it – you realize we’re all the same”.

> You’ve got this basic ethic that every living being has that same wish [to be happy and free from suffering], so we’re relating to people on that level. Usually, we relate to people on how they look and their background or what they’re wearing, what hobbies they’re into, but underneath all that we feel like we don’t have something in common because they look different - people from a different country. We relate to people on that level but underneath all that is just this basic ethic that we have something in common because everyone wants to be happy. That’s what we try and hold onto as our most basic ethic. We’re all the same. We’re not different and I think everyone needs to know that.

Both Karunā and Ānandin mentioned keeping these thoughts in the “back of your mind” as a motivational force for ethical behaviours. This sort of contemplation is derived from and is a causal factor that elicits compassionate or loving-kindness states, which compels both restraint of harm and prosocial action. Critically, it shifts away from the view of the individual and inhabits the space of

"us" and "we" in the most expansive sense where Nibbedhaka draws attention to the inclusivity of caring about species that would often be seen with repulsion "be it a cockroach, maggot, you name it". Ānandin expanded "a lot of people - me included for a long time – just think sentient beings are people, but it's everything". The centrality of compassion as the heart of ethics is demonstrated where Karunā reiterated in the above excerpt and throughout her narrative about this "basic ethic" that she thinks "everyone needs to know". However, the idea that the world would be better from one's own understandings was professed to be associated with spiritual superiority (e.g., Vonk & Visser, 2019), but in Karunā's context of past issues of depression it is derived from the recognition of the difficulty of suffering and the futile but kind wish for wellbeing for others where the adoption of this "basic ethic" of compassion has brought her many benefits. Thus, I consider this based in humility from knowledge of shared understandings.

Becoming Fully Human: The Psychospiritual and Relational Benefits of Ethical Maturation

Ethical training initiated enhanced ethical discernment and self-awareness that motivated transformation of body, speech, and mind that resulted in a maturation of the mind. This encompassed the development of self-regulatory skills that supported goal congruent activity and resulted in beneficial cognitions, positive affectivity, favourable self-appraisals, and reduced negative mental states and reactivity. The reduction of disturbances in the mind led to a stable mind as the foundation of spiritual activities that lead to transformative insight. Adherence to vows provided a "different life basis", connected to the monastics' spiritual purposes and identity, which resulted in a perceived sense of freedom and empowerment. All these benefits have flow on effects to relational contexts, and care of others provided ethical motivations to drive prosocial behaviours that result in relational harmony.

In the following quotes, Nibbedhaka related unethical behaviour to immaturity and comparatively with the goal of ethical development – maturation. This process results in becoming "fully human", which is the capacity to live a fully authored life that encompasses the entirety of our potential including the spiritual domain. She noted, "we as human beings are quite childish in our behavior" where "we aim towards becoming fully human beings, to become mature". The process of ethical maturation was embodied in the following excerpts.

Lessened Reactivity from Practices of Self-Restraint.

The benefits of ethical practice for Ānandin were "patience, maturity, less anger, and being more considerate". He noted that as his sensitivity to ethical transgressions increased, his patterns of reactivity decreased. Whereas earlier in his training, he would restrain himself mid-action, with enhanced sensitivity he could restrain himself pre-action. Thus, restraint comes earlier in the process of an ethical transgression.

> Yeah, I find I catch myself more. I go to do something and go, "I can't do that". It used to be overtly. You could see me stopping, but now it's more subtle in my mind and I actually don't start to engage in that action or say something to begin with. I just don't say it at all. I go there and I stop. They go, "What did you say?" "Nothing, it doesn't matter anymore", but that doesn't happen anymore or as much anyway.

Ānandin referred to the development of patience. Patience is not only forbearance of a difficult circumstance or suffering but also is the way one does not respond in kind to varied forms of harm, which is process supported by self-control and self-regulation. Self-regulation is the modification of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are congruent with a goal and self-control is a type of self-regulation that prioritizes one goal over another e.g., to respond with patience or to

respond reciprocally. In his example below, he recognized the necessity and benefits of engagement in situations that are triggering as an opportunity to train in self-control and develop patience. Hence, he rejoiced in being triggered, which is contrary to the expected reaction of aversion and displeasure. Thus, ethical restraint is an active process that results from engagement, not to be confused with passivity - the near enemy of equanimity.

> Yeah, I'm not as reactionary, and it's funny because you need all those things around you because you can sit and meditate in a cave for 20 years and go, "Yes, I've perfected patience", but if you've had no one to push your buttons, you've actually achieved nothing. So, um I rejoice in the fact that people annoy me.

Character Development and Positive Self-Concepts from Congruency.

Ethical actions indelibly lay the foundation of our character through the cultivation of beneficial habitual ways of responding to our experience. Earlier, Nibbedhaka noted the adverse effects of unethical action on the character. In the excerpt below, Dhammavicaya outlined the beneficial results of ethical decision-making. She pointed to the challenge to adhere to ethical standards, going against underlying tendencies, unethical cultural norms, but that at specific junctures, ethical decisions profoundly shape us for the future. Ethical action as foundational competencies or habits, becomes a resource to draw upon to recall that we can and have done right actions, which consolidates the resolve to choose ethics over other compelling motivations.

> The decisions we make whether we cave, whether we don't. We get a real deep feeling of self-reliance and self-respect, and we know that when things are hard, we will do what is hard, even when there is a lot of pressure, and this gives something very deep to our character. There are moments of great conflict when we do what is right and we do what is

ethical. It lays the foundation for our character that we just can't underestimate and the peace and the ease that we get from it.

Acting with integrity aligned to ethical values resulted in positive self-concepts. Dhammavicaya reflected on recent ethical decision-making and gave an example that involved her damaged computer. The computer had been at her mother's house for years and potentially could have been replaced by her mother's insurance.

> It's a bit muddy, but you really feel in that moment you tell a lie, you get a big payout. I am like, "Who cares. I'd like to have a nice machine", but I would rather do with the old cruddy machine for the fact of my integrity. I think when we do this, we get self-respect and self-confidence, and it's almost a bit like the skeleton in the body our ethical structure in our ethical commitment, and I think, "Wow. These things shape us for a lifetime".

Adherence to her ethical commitments drives self-control to resolve two conflicting goals: A new computer versus integrity. Even though she may have benefited with a new computer, it would have come at a loss of value-congruent behaviour and a cost to the insurance company. The result of her acting aligned to her ethical values resulted in the positive appraisals of "self-respect", "self-confidence" and later in the narrative the mental benefit of "non-remorse", which strengthens her ethical commitment as a "skeleton in the body".

Karunā's example below, outlined that ethics was a causal factor in living her life congruent with her values. She outlined her experience of ethical engagement as reminiscent of an ABAB psychological treatment, which demonstrated the benefit of the treatment B, but that application of ethical practice needed to be ongoing for her to yield its benefits. She outlined the importance of ethics as her identity, with the words it "was my whole foundation", where ethics functioned as an

"anchor" for the mind to lend it stability and to provide direction. Without her anchor, she was subject to various influences and behaved in ways that were matched with earlier patterns of behaviours.

> Before I started practice, I would just sort of say whatever came into my head. Just I didn't have any grounding. There was a stage when I practiced and stopped for a while. I noticed that all of those ethics fell apart, and it felt like I had nothing to hold onto. Like I started drinking again - I stopped drinking in my early 20s, and then when I stopped practicing, I started swearing. I started drinking. I didn't think I had anything to anchor my mind onto. It made such a big difference in my life to have those ethics to really anchor on you know. That was my whole foundation and once I stopped that - I stopped practicing for a few years and just really noticed how my ethics just deteriorated very, very, quickly. It really is the foundation of your whole life having those ethics to anchor your mind to.

Avisaggatā reiterated that the development of ethical knowledge enhanced his capacity to discern ethical courses of action, which enhanced his confidence in himself, "In day-to-day life, you have faith that you are doing the right thing or being able to succeed in your endeavours". Thus, ethical development and adherence increases concepts associated with authenticity, value-congruent behaviours, and a sense of competency, which enhances wellbeing.

Purifying the Mind as the Foundation of Spiritual Development.

Most of the participants alluded to Buddhist ethics as integral to spiritual development along the lines of "it's absolutely essential". Ethics were conceptualized as foundational practices that purify the mind, which functions to stabilize the mind, and enhances clarity for the development of transformative insight. Ethical training was considered sequential where adherence to ethics was

seen as a precondition for the development of concentration for "higher realisations", without which Karunā says, "Your mind is just too wobbly".

Karunā and Adhiṭṭhāna referred to ethical practices as "purifying the mind" and from Dhammavicaya, "Keeping our ethical conduct clean". Adhiṭṭhāna referred to ethical practices as cleansing goal congruent behaviours, "Readings, teachings which cleanse the mind, listening to teachers that cleanse the mind, doing practices which cleanse the mind, meditative practices and so on that cleanse and stabilize the mind, which help you to achieve those goals". These cleanliness metaphors have some connotations in the west of protestant views of sin or Victorian ideas about biology. However, in Buddhism the concept of purity is derived from concepts of *sīla-visuddhi*, which is the purification of conduct with its first goal being the purification of the mind (MN24) through the removal of negative mental qualities. Nibbedhaka outlined purification in reference to the soteriological goal of Buddhism. "The goal is our arahant hood, which means foe destroyer. What is being destroyed is negativities: Our anger, jealousy ignorance, even stupidity". As well as removing negative mental states, purification results in positive mental states, happiness, peace, and joy. Dhammavicaya says "when we really keep our ethical conduct clean and we are aware of it, it brings an inner joy and brings in happiness. It brings peace. It brings these beautiful qualities into our heart".

Karunā outlined ethics as mental actions that purify the mind. In her example, ethical practice is "not only for leading a good life", which many would assume but is an antidote to anxiety and depression through opposing patterns of habitual reactivity. She speaks from her own previous experience of depression and the illusion of being stuck with these sources of

psychological distress, where instead the solution of purification is easy, with "that's all they'll have to do".

> But even for things like anxiety and depression if people just practice good morals that will purify their minds… It's not only for leading a good life. But you see people with deep depression and anxiety, and you think all they need to do is just purify their minds. That's all they'll have to do, and they'll lift out of that, and you think that you're stuck with it, but it doesn't have to be that way. It's actually purifying your mind through opposing those bad habits of the way you react that does actually purify your mind.

A Different Life Basis.

All of the participants referred to the monastic code - the central guiding principles that monastics commit to when they become ordained. These rules and vows in essence are an intention to behave aligned to ones aims and values that leads to moral and spiritual development. The meanings of the monastic vows differed amongst the monastics. Adhiṭṭhāna viewed them as the "best vehicle of practice", Karunā as the "foundation of a pure life", and Dhammavicaya considered that the broader monastic structure had utility as a "diamond in an archaic setting", which exemplified that the Buddhist structure was outdated for the times and context we live in but held much of value to her. Ānandin instead highlighted that a "huge chunk of vows was irrelevant" and the challenge to change that, pointing to the rigidity of religious entities. Nibbedhaka asserted that the vows provided the conditions to reach the goal of liberation, "This is pretty much why we take our vows to achieve that goal".

The initial ordination ceremony where the monastic gives up lay life and takes on robes was particularly meaningful for two of the participants. Adhiṭṭhāna noted, "It's a beautiful, holy

experience to be ordained that reorientates one's life to that based on vows". To uphold her vows, she made use of strategies such as phrases, "Turn to a log of wood", to restrain from habitual reactivity. She demonstrated another strategy of restraint, where she clapped her hands "Stop!" to emphasize the interruption of negative thought spirals. Her commitment to uphold her vows to "absolutely not do those things," demonstrated their importance to her, and over the decades of practice had contributed to the formation of her identity, where the sense of her determination was palpable.

Dhammavicaya's experience of ordination was meaningful, not only because of eschewing her privileges of life in modernity but in that her participation contributed to the bhikkhunī revival in Theravāda Buddhism. This was important not only because it provided structure to support her personal development but also to uphold her feminist and modernist values of social justice. Dhammavicaya delineated, "There can be a kind of gluing together of our vinaya rules and our identity and our ethical sensibility, because the pressure of the rules and who we represent are so strong". Her metaphor "gluing together", suggesting a tight interlinking of identity and rules and with her ethical sensibility - the ability to recognize moral issues that arise in practice and respond to them (Tanner & Christan, 2014). Monastics step into a role when they don their robes to represent a long lineage of people who have given up their worldly lives, with that comes the pressure of the rules and accountability to conform to the standards. Hence, she points to external motivations of ethical engagement along with intrinsic motivations connected with her identity and life purpose.

The monastics spoke about the juxtaposition of the restriction or restraint of the vows creating freedom. Whereas Avisaggatā mentioned, "Restriction creates freedom" as "core to how

minds operate". Ānandin explained it further that being ordained was "actually quite freeing", because "we don't get caught up in things, which clears your head for other things". Thus, vows lessen distraction, and they can maintain a focus on spiritual pursuits towards their goals of transcendent wellbeing.

Appamāṇā also outlined that the monastic vows supported spiritual development. In his excerpt below, he clarifies the rationale for celibacy where the benefits are to enhance meditation and deepen one's capacity for concentration or "focus". His pragmatic view counters the common conceptualization in society that religion sees intimacy as "bad" or as base biological behaviours that need to be eradicated, assumptions that may come from restrictive attitudes associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition or residual Victorian influence.

> When you're in a relationship and if you have challenges which everyone has at times you've got arguments, challenges, and then it's not as easy to meditate while your mind is afflicted. Basically, we just remove potential distractions. Makes a very big difference in increasing focus. It's not because intimacy is a bad thing and should be avoided. Intimacy creates life. If there wasn't intimacy, we wouldn't have the wonderful teachers that are around as well in this day and age. So, it's not like a good or bad thing.

Thus, the monastics speak about freedom to counter the assumptions in the west that freedom is the freedom to do what one wants, to have autonomy, and that vows are conceived of as being restrictive or moralizing. Antithetical to this, their lived experience was the opposite. Also noted, were the three males talking about vows and specifically the vow of celibacy where gendered narratives promote the importance of sex to men impelling the need to clarify the rationale of

celibacy. In contrast, rather than emphasizing freedom, Adhiṭṭhāna emphasized how vows empower you but are challenging.

> So, then that's a big strong sort of empowering of yourself. Somebody has empowered you to do that, to have those vows, and so you empower yourself to have those vows and hold them. You know against the odds. Against your own mind.

Cherishing Others Brings Joy, Happiness, and Relational Harmony.

Whilst Ānandin discouraged self-cherishing, he encouraged cherishing yourself from the orientation of caring for others. Self-cherishing is problematic in Buddhism because it encompasses the identity view and attachment to self, which is antithetical to ontological understandings and a cause of dissatisfaction. Thus, his rationale away from self-cherishing hinged on anattā that the psycho-physical spectrum is non-self (e.g., we are not our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and when we identify or cling to them it leads to suffering). Concordant with this view, the ethical impetus is to shift from a self-centered, self-serving orientation to a more inclusive view through a process of maturation, which is supported by insight into anattā. Alternatively, an altruistic focus where "you can have the base where you think of others first", facilitates less self-serving motivations.

> There's self-cherishing and cherishing yourself… You have to look after yourself so you can be of maximum benefit to other people and to yourself, but you have to draw the line when you start to become self-cherishing. Looking after the I that doesn't exist and all that sort of stuff. I think that comes into ethics as well, because in Buddhism we're trying to reduce the attachment to I and self and all that, but then you can see other people, and it's all about me, me, me, and you can have the base where you think of others first.

Similarly, Appamāṇā talks about cherishing others that leads to personal benefits in the excerpt below. He revisited this PET several times, which demonstrated the importance of this reorientation towards care of other for him.

> All of our happiness comes from cherishing others, and you couldn't say truer words and it would be very beneficial for people to wake up to that… You really find the joy in ethics and morality, when you start to see people happy, when you start to practice kindness and generosity, when you start to practice the six perfections: (1) generosity, (2) ethics, which is being kind, being non-harming, (3) being patient, (4) finding joyous effort - being enthusiastic and finding motivation by what you're doing, (5) meditation and concentration, and (6) wisdom. The first four are either directly helping others, from being kind to others, practising being aware of others, or even for ourselves as well as others… Being kind and generous and practising six perfections we bring happiness for ourselves. You can't separate out the benefit of others and the benefit to oneself from performing ethical behaviours. They co-arise out of ethical relational interactions and are mutually reinforcing.

Appamāṇā asserted that "cherishing others" is a precondition for happiness – a benefit of benefiting others. His conviction of the importance of cherishing others is apparent in his blanket statement, "all" of our happiness is derived from cherishing others, which he asserted was reality based with "you couldn't say truer words". Implicit within his statement is the understanding that people are not aware of the processes of causality of arousing joy and happiness. Hence, why it would be "beneficial for people to wake up to that". He outlined that the six perfections (pāramīs) are based on caring for others. The first three perfections are implicit within the five precepts and the fourth is a supportive factor of ethical adherence. He brings in another concept – *mudita*

[empathetic joy] that is one of the brahmavihārās, which is a nuance that neither translates well nor exists in psychological literature. This is the joy that arises when you either witness others' happiness from other causes or contribute to their happiness.

Appamāṇā provided an example of the benefits of helping others when he volunteered in a hospice.

> Helping people you don't know, was a very big eye-opener to the experiences of other people in our community, that we don't even know about, that are really struggling with life and just by spending a few hours a week with them can make a massive difference in their life... We spend hours watching TV, and the amount of benefit we can get for ourselves and the happiness we can bring to others.

This demonstrated how being in connection with and helping others broadened his perspective. It led him to reflect about others in the community who were previously invisible to him e.g., "we don't even know about". Further, as impetus for helping others, he contrasted between less meaningful individualistic pursuits and the substantial benefits we have the potential to bring to another's life with minimal effort. Thus, helping others provided meaning and value for him.

Avisaggatā focused on the benefits of ethics to others in the absence of benefits to himself. He asserted that ethical restraint brings a clarity of mind that means that when people come to the monastics, they can provide "solid advice". Both him and Ānandin mentioned being a "good influence" on others. Hence, their ethical behaviours propelled others to act ethically, which leads to benefits for them. Ānandin referred to relational harmony that comes from prosocial behaviour in the following example where people ask, "What is Buddhism all about?" and I go, "Be nice to yourself and other people and they'll be nice back to you". Adhiṭṭhāna added, "Adhering to these

values, brings peace to the individual and harmonious coexistence to society". Thus, relational ethical behaviours are prosocial behaviours that lead to relational harmony and wellbeing.

It's Not in Our DNA – Barriers to Ethical Engagement

The participants outlined the potential barriers to ethical engagement and drew on the Buddhist view of the nature of the mind being ignorant and lacking awareness of the causes and consequences of unethical behaviour, which meant ethical adherence was not valued. Conjointly, enculturation of western perspectives and values of individualism, vested self-interest, materialism, cynicism, and freedom fed into misperceptions about ethics that resulted in conflicting values. Where Buddhist concepts were largely foreign, or diverged paradigmatically, culturally, and cosmologically led to the mystification and aversion to ethics. Also, the historicity of Buddhism meant some of the monastic vows were not relevant for modern society. Furthermore, Buddhism as a sociohistorical phenomenon was imbued with patriarchal values that are contra modern western values of gender equity and social justice, thus a barrier to Buddhist ethics.

Ignorance and Influence.

Dhammavicaya suggested that western people lack understanding of the "inner dimension", and this forms a barrier to recognizing the value of ethics. In her example below, this lack leads to the consideration that unethical behaviour is desirable where the drawbacks are not scrutinized, and material gains are valued and linked to happiness. Implicit within this statement is the vested self-interest, which is prioritized over considerations of others, where "it's fine if you rip someone off". Hence, values of materialism and self-interest conflict with ethical values.

> I think it's just a lack of sensitivity to their own minds. Not seeing cause and effect. This inner dimension isn't there. Some people think it's fine if you rip off someone a little bit or if

> you get too much change in the shop and you don't give it back to the shopkeeper. Maybe that seems okay, but if you really were more sensitive would that be okay anymore?... I mean if we only of focus on our material welfare and we think that's what brings us happiness, well then, it's kind of logical to do those things.

Likewise, Adhiṭṭhāna implicated both a lack of discernment of ethical causes and effects along with western conditioning as a barrier to ethics. She considered people were ignorant to the harms that ethical behaviours produce and that unethical behaviours are conditioned by society to be of value. She pointed towards modern technology, where there is a "bombardment" of unethical conditioning, which promotes the idea that any behaviour is acceptable and desirable. However, she is adamant that these behaviours are not acceptable and with her admonition, "We can see that it isn't", which either refers to her own perception or that willful self-deception is involved, because valuing unethical behaviours brings some benefit to the self. Hence, vested self-interest may be a barrier to ethical engagement.

> Modern technology is bombarding people with very unethical behaviours and saying that it's cool… I think that's a big barrier to ethics, because you're getting bombarded with that all the time, that it's "anything is okay", and it absolutely isn't. We can see that it isn't.

Nibbedhaka outlined the challenge to engage in ethics because of the nature of the mind. In her excerpt below, sīla as a "cool breeze" provides the resolution to the instability of a mind that lacks ethics. However, the conundrum is that a mind without ethics lacks the stability to engage ethically. She pointed further towards the egoic mind being a barrier to ethical practice, because even if you enact seemingly beneficial practices if they are in reference to the self, they will be less beneficial. Furthermore, this points to the universal nature of ignorance being problematic for all

people who engage ethically until they have fully realized insight into anattā (i.e., the right view that comes from stream entry as the first stage of awakening).

> Sīla is really the connotation of a cool breeze in the middle of a very hot Indian summer, where it is difficult to develop ethical components when the mind is overheating and fractured. If the mind doesn't have some stability, even with practices such as love and compassion, joy, or equanimity, you're practicing from a very egoic aspect of the mind. This is really a barrier to ethical practice and the conundrum is ethical practice at a coarse level helps to stabilize the mind.

Nibbedhaka, Dhammavicaya and Appamāṇā suggested that ethics are misperceived in the west as moralizing, which leads to aversion. Nibbedhaka outlined the Buddhist view below, where ethical discernment involves ethical evaluation but not moralizing. Furthermore, moralizing is contra the Buddhist view where moral amplification as "extreme forms of moralizing" leads to "negative karmic imprints". Thus, is unethical and antithetical to Buddhist ethics.

> There is a tendency to equate framing from making of value, with a judgment of moralizing, and, of course within Buddhism moralizing is one thing, and I mean it's obviously not a good thing, because according to Buddhist thought extreme views are incredibly unhealthy. They're incredibly unconducive, and they're simply just not wholesome, so then in other words you could say extreme forms of moralizing instead would produce negative karmic imprints for that particular instance, so that is very different from putting an evaluative judgment on what is going on.

Dhammavicaya attributed misperceptions of ethics to our Judeo-Christian background, as "thou shalts". This has led to devaluing ethics where "virtue is a dirty word" and "this nasty thing of

being told what to do", which brings to the fore western values of autonomy and the view of ethics as an external imposition. Karunā outlined that westerners "don't like being told what to do". Further, Ānandin pointed towards psychological reactance as a barrier, where a threatened loss of freedom arouses a stronger desire to engage in the prohibited behaviour. "I think I shouldn't do that, which instantly makes you want to go and do something". Thus, misperceptions about the nature of ethics may lead to a perceived conflict with the value of autonomy.

The participants pointed to aspects of two precepts that may be problematic for westerners to adhere to due to value conflicts. Adhiṭṭhāna considered an aspect of restraint of speech "gossiping might be out of it", and Avisaggatā reflected, "I guess for a lot of westerners no intoxicants or things like that". Gossiping can be a process of evaluative sense making or done to enhance affiliation and closeness, which may be valued within today's society. Likewise, consumption of intoxicants (e.g., alcohol) is a social norm and valued in various sociocultural contexts. Therefore, the values of ethics may be less apparent in contrast to the perceived benefits of gossip and alcohol consumption. Thus, people may be less likely to commit to these precepts or find these precepts to be a threat to autonomy.

Avisaggatā and Ānandin contrasted both western and Asian cultures when they considered barriers to ethical practice. Avisaggatā drew on his intersectional standpoint as a Thai/New Zealander and Ānandin knowledge drawn from vicarious experiences from his teacher and immersion in a Tibetan monastery in Aotearoa. They both brought attention to the long association of Buddhism with the Asian culture versus the west (~2,600 years versus 50 years) with implications for the uptake of ethics. Ānandin referred to Buddhist concepts and values being innate within Asian people and culture, and more to the nature side of the debate states, "It's not in our

DNA". Thus, fundamentally is not a part of western people. He believed the immersive societal influence of Buddhism resulted in concordance with ethical values and behaviours as outlined in the excerpt below. Thus, Buddhist concepts and values were normalized in the Asian culture but not in the west.

> It's been with them for thousands of years, so it's innate with them to be compassionate and care and be gentle towards other sentient beings and to other people and to have respect to monastics and spiritual things. Whereas in the west, we've never had that.

Avisaggatā talked about how the context of our upbringings informs whether we value Buddhism or not.

> I think that would come back to cultural values. What I personally see is a lot of Thai women with kiwi husbands. They come to the temple. There is this eastern philosophy and there's western ideals… I think the main thing here is the discomfort or they don't exactly click because that is what I observe and can sense. The difference here is essentially the eastern values, the philosophy, the mindset for those that are Asian or are Buddhist who grow up with it, that is more or less ingrained in the way things are… It's sort of like Buddhist philosophy is for Buddhist people a way of life. From the moment they come into the temple they feel at peace. That kind of feeling there with temples is sacred, in a sense is very special to them. And so, people who are not Buddhist, they can open their eyes and come to a temple but there might not be that same kind of feeling there when you're trying to adapt to something that you're not familiar with.

He noted people who come from Buddhist-based cultures are grounded in Buddhist preunderstandings and interpret Buddhist sociocultural phenomena as valuable. Whereas the

husbands of Thai women interpret their experience from their western lens and being unfamiliar with the practices and way of life are uncomfortable with the experience. He also used the phrase "can open their eyes", which may offer a comparative of someone seeing the benefits of Buddhism as opposed to the husbands, whose motivation to go to a temple is likely to support their partner rather than a compelling interest in Buddhism. "They don't exactly click," also epitomises the mismatch between westerners and Buddhism as the tensions play out in the participant's dialogue.

In the excerpt below, Avisaggatā talked further about the westernized mind being sceptical, which can be a barrier to uptake of Buddhist ethics in combination with how sīla is presented. Dhammavicaya thought that due to our history of adverse effects of institutionalized religions, that people have good reasons to be suspicious and ask questions, "It's a very ethical reservation for people to have." However, Avisaggatā reflected on western skepticism coming from a wariness rather than an investigative stance. Also, in Buddhism skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) is one of the hindrances that prevents people from engaging in beneficial practices.

> The translation of sīla or the way it's presented might not come off as appealing to people from the west where people are going to be questioning and sceptical and then you've already got their defences up.

Ānandin considered our modern lifestyles influenced our expectations that Buddhism may not meet, to provide quick results. With the fast pace of life in the west with the advent of technology, the way information spreads with rapidity, we expect results now rather than gradually. Thus, Buddhism may not be suitable for a modern audience.

> Us in the west, we think "I've been practicing Buddhism. I should be Dalai Lama by now", after six weeks of intensive studying but we're most probably where the Tibetans were two and a half thousand years ago, when it first came to their little realm.

The normative societal worldview informs what we believe and value and Nibbedhaka asserted that "the world is not Buddhist", which she perceived as the main barrier to Buddhist ethics.

> Things do not exist in isolation. They're causal, so I could see why it would be difficult to introduce Buddhist view in terms of ethics and morality, mindfulness awareness practice and things like that because the view is extremely expansive, and we live in a society that is very anti-religion and Buddhism is both religious and philosophical.

In our modern era, the world moves away from religion and philosophy and towards materialist science, where phenomena are reducible to physical processes. Neuroscience informs our understanding of psychology and ethics, which reduces the richness of people's subjective experiences as brain activity informed by the Cartesian ontology of duality of mind and matter. She purported, "Mindfulness co-joined with neuroscience is popularly equated with the idea of change your brain. The unquestioning or even causal acceptance of this idea has ramifications on our understanding of human beings and the ramification on our sense of self". She considered that because of the divergent underlying paradigms and their views, secular and Buddhist approaches to ethics and mindfulness are two "very different aspects of education… and so long as Buddhism is encased in a religious and philosophical view then it becomes separatist", which hinders the uptake of Buddhist ethics. Furthermore, her cultural understandings informed her view that westerners do not understand Buddhism. "Given that I'm from Māori and Samoan background descent, I think the

fragility is actually that people do not understand Buddhism". That is from the Māori philosophical worldview, all phenomena are interconnected and co-constituted, whereas the fragility comes from perceiving phenomena in a discrete and fragmented way rather than relational, which accords with the Buddhist view. Hence, from the western view it becomes easy to extract one component such as mindfulness out of a holistic set of processes with an emergent outcome and not recognize the centrality of ethics.

When talking about bringing ethics into psychological interventions the participants have an understanding that Buddhism is unappealing to westerners. Dhammavicaya noted, "The idea that you want to take away the Buddhist words because it's a dirty word that will block people". Appamāṇā related this to his experience when he teaches mindfulness. With the understanding of aversion against Buddhism, he was "very mindful about talking about Buddhism" when he teaches mindfulness to businesses. Ānandin reflected on his own reactions from his past mindset and related that to the western culture's resistance to Buddhism where people do not understand the value of Buddhist practices because it is both misunderstood as being restrictive "in a cage" and holds values that diverges with the west.

> If someone had said to me, I should practice Buddhist practices, I'd just go, "That's totally not where my heads at", because I'm a western person having a good party time, and you think of Buddhism as something peaceful and something that is in a cage and restraint and all that, which goes against our whole culture. So, in one way they're relevant to me personally, but as a whole society it's irrelevant because they just don't understand, and you just can't make everybody a Buddhist.

Historical Constraints.

Although the original vision of the Buddha was inclusive and progressive for his sociohistorical context, the monastic structure has become rigid and imbued with patriarchal values (e.g., Anālayo's [2009] comparative sutta studies point to textual expansionism that fosters gender inequality) that are antithetical to both modern egalitarian values and the ethical values that Buddhism espouses. In Dhammavicaya's excerpt, she pointed to the influence of the cultural context and institutional rigidity, where the monastic structure and monastics do not adapt to modern concerns. She speaks of a conservative western Abbott that eschews modern values and she takes the interrogative to outline the implications of his passivity to upholding unethical patriarchal values, where sexist attitudes limit women's engagement. Furthermore, she highlighted the contradiction where men normalize interpersonal violence towards women in a nominally Buddhist country. Hence, Buddhism is not being taught according to the original vision of the Buddha and people who purport to be Buddhists do not live in accordance ethical aims. This outlines the divide between Buddhism as a mainstream sociohistorical phenomenon and Buddhism as a practice, where the sociohistorical phenomenon is a barrier to ethical engagement.

> I think no matter what tradition we're in whether it's Christianity or Buddhism or Hinduism, the container, the way the tradition functions somehow puts itself in opposition or at least doesn't integrate a lot of the ethical stance from modernity, so you hear people like Ajahn X who doesn't want to have anything to do with western liberal world values.Well, what does that mean? Do you want Thai traditional values where there's 300,000 prostitutes, 3000 mae chees (8-10 preceptor, as it is illegal for females to be ordained in Thailand), where women believe that it's their bad karma to be born as a woman, like are they the values you want to

> continue with? So, there's a lot of romanticism of traditional values, but I mean Thailand has one of the highest levels of guys who think it's okay to beat their wives. Now I don't know if that's the highest level of domestic violence, and yet Buddhism is 95% there, so then you've got to say that the way that Buddhism has been taught is not according to the original vision of the Buddha because traditions get their own momentum, and in Thailand especially, there's a lot of power and property involved.

Ānandin outlined that monastic vows were not only irrelevant to the west, but also to himself as a modern monastic. He asserted that the majority of vows were irrelevant. His example below epitomized the impracticality of the vows where he was unable to wear white cotton. Whereas in the pre-modern context, white cotton may have been a luxury item, now it is common, and the vow has outlived its purpose. However, there is no facility to challenge and counter the tradition and update the vows, which again points to the lack of adaptability of the tradition to the modern context.

> In our code, we have to do 236 of them (vows). I think 200 of them are so totally not relevant, like I'm not allowed to wear white cotton. I can't find anything without white cotton in it. It's nearly impossible… I don't know how to get around that one. I can't think of anyone to say, "This is Buddhism in the west. These are our new rules…"

Thus, the monastics rules are outdated and do not meet the needs of the current context and lack appeal to a modern audience who values equality and social justice.

Where Psychology Diverges: Secular Mindfulness is Kind of a Dead End

The participants acknowledged the benefits of secular mindfulness in western psychology but by comparison to the Buddhist framework, thus what differs, is missing, or misunderstood. Although they conceded mindfulness calms the mind and reduces negative affect and reactivity,

they do not agree that it deals with the root cause of the psychological suffering or meets the deeper transformative needs of secular society. The fundamental differences between psychology and Buddhism leads to divergent aims and misconceptualizations of mindfulness. Also, the omissions of the broader teachings mean mindfulness can unwittingly lead to harm. Furthermore, the development of mindfulness in Buddhism is inextricable from the other factors of the 8fnp and as such offers more, goes further, and has greater benefits.

Fundamental Differences.

Buddhism and psychology diverge in fundamental ways that are not well understood in psychology that lend towards different aims and interpretations of phenomena. Buddhism has developed levels of understanding to support an escalation of insight into the nature of reality, and development of mental factors that support progressive acquisition of experiential knowledge of the subtleties of mind and body phenomenon. Even the phenomenon of enlightenment is not a one-off event but recognizes four stages that are the result of either insight or jhāna practice. The view of the nature of self diverges from psychology, which results in disparate aims. In this excerpt Nibbedhaka outlines the concept of anattā. She dispels the myth of nihilism that some people mistake anattā to mean and clarifies that various mental processes come together to constitute what we think of as the self. In contrast, the psychological view of self, identity, personality is fixed, which she refers to as the "core self". In Buddhism, anattā is intertwined with anicca, and dependent origination, thus is subject to change through the arising and passing away of specific causes and conditions.

> Even though we will always touch on aspects like selflessness, it does not mean no-self. It just means that human beings are made up of complex things. We have our feelings, our

> aspirations, our desires, dreams and all those things constitute what we call a self. There is no such thing as a core self or the real self, the untainted, untouched self or whatever you want to call it. As Buddhists we don't believe in that period. Therefore, self-transformation is important.

Although psychology and Buddhism share self-transformative aims, it is understood differently due to these divergent self-views. In Buddhism, although it may appear as though the transformative pursuit is towards an ideal self. However, except in conventional terms there is no such thing as a permanent self, but a succession of mental and physical phenomena arising and passing that when fully known transforms our nature of relating to phenomena that is aligned to reality. In psychological therapies, the ideal self and goal of transformation is the healed, fully integrated person, with adaptive sociopsychological functions, who is not consumed by myriad forms of psychological suffering. Nibbedhaka suggested, "From a Buddhist perspective, psychology perhaps lacks a deeper level of coherent self-awareness", and an "endeavor to fix ourselves as an underlying motivation for therapy or to secure our experience in some way. This will be a futile endeavor and the source of more suffering". With the understanding of impermanence, "to secure our experience" or healing is an impossibility that requires a permanent self and innate fixed problems. Further, she disparaged "People pay an exorbitant amount of money for MBSR", which points to divergent implicit motivations and underlying ideologies. These differences along with the extraction of mindfulness from holistic teachings drive the monastic's views on the misunderstandings and limitations of secular mindfulness.

Secular Mindfulness: Valued but Limited.

The participants talked about the benefits of secular mindfulness in the context of its limits. Dhammavicaya considered it beneficial "if mindfulness practices reduce suffering", but still thought it was "very impoverished". Both Appamāṇā and Dhammavicaya agreed that contemporary mindfulness practices may be beneficial "as an introduction to Buddhist practices", which are accessible to people from a non-Buddhist background. Dhammavicaya saw that the greatest value of mindfulness is that it has introduced a practice "that hasn't been a part of our culture". Adhiṭṭhāna suggested mindfulness offers "a respite" from afflictive emotions because it calms the mind, "but does not deal with the causes of disturbances and pain in the mind". Nibbedhaka concurred that when mindfulness is taken out of its Buddhist context, it has benefits but "does not cut the actual root" of the problem.

Mindfulness Misconceptualized.

Nibbedhaka pointed to how conceptualizations of secular mindfulness practices diverged from Buddhist understandings. The idea of mindfulness as non-conceptual was problematic as it misunderstands the practice and purpose from a Buddhist lens, where the emphasis is not to be devoid of thoughts, but to not attach to the various concepts, thoughts, and images that arise in the mind, which can lead to a loss of mindfulness and a reduction of benefits.

> When we practice mindfulness and meditation, we shouldn't be thinking too much but this isn't the same as non-conceptual… when you are practicing mindfulness, so even to pay attention, to take note of things, to recognize that something is going on in the mind or in the body or even in relationship to feelings, certainly involve thoughts, so it can't be non-conceptual. The idea is to not give in to discursive thoughts or conceptual paraphernalia

(*papañca*), which means the proliferation of thoughts in the mind, where a thought arises, we can't let go and develop a story around it that becomes more elaborate.

Ānandin also noted the mischaracterization of mindfulness as non-conceptual where you are "to sit there and think of nothing", which he thought "does a disservice to people". In his experience, when people came to do mindfulness practice at monasteries after being introduced to secular mindfulness, they found that the traditional practice was quite difficult. "I think that they get both turned off it and they get confused" having come in with their expectations that they had understood and were competent practitioners.

Nibbedhaka outlined the concept of being present centered that differs from psychological conceptualizations. Where people lack discernment of the continuity of the unfolding reality, they see things in terms of objects rather than processes and we become a permanent present centered self, thinking that the present is here but it has already passed. To observe the unfolding experiential processes leads one to what she calls the "true source of mindfulness", alluding to the arousing of sati paññā and the development of insight in anicca. This epitomizes the divergent aims where Buddhism seeks insight from meditation, which is not an aim of psychology.

Although we should be more present when practicing mindfulness, being present centered isn't something you can actually capture. To be mindful in the present from a Buddhist perspective is to observe how the present becomes the past and how the future becomes the present and that's the true source of mindfulness.

The Implications of a Decontextualized Mindfulness.

Nibbedhaka mentioned that we are influenced by the broader ideological context with its associated assumptions about the human nature and human condition. Hence, although mindfulness

has originated from Buddhism, sati has been co-opted to fit within a psychological view that limits the purpose to rational science-based aims rather than spiritual aims or potentialities.

> The modern mindfulness movement reflects and promotes the idea that we are primarily psychological beings by eschewing religion and tradition and through the link to that discipline of modern psychology, the shift from if not total rejection of the notion of spiritual transcendence.

Dhammavicaya contrasted secular mindfulness with Buddhist practice. She emphasized the limitation of secular mindfulness by comparing the potentialities of a short meditation in comparison with a monk who was on retreat for four years.

> It's a kind of a dead end and it doesn't go anywhere, so there's a limitation... At most you will get people meditating for 40 minutes a day and that's it and there's nowhere to go with it, but then… with Yongey Rinpoche and then there's a whole world that's possible right. Just this incredible level of development that is possible and there doesn't seem to be any pathway or any connection between this, which is where all these practices came from. It's just very impoverished, but it's better to have rather than nothing, but if you look at what's possible it just seems a shame. It just seems we're really robbing ourselves.

Her metaphors highlighted her concerns that we are "robbing ourselves" of possibilities of development, which she emphasizes with the "whole world" of possibilities. Her phrase that it is better "than nothing", really exemplifies the impoverishment of mindfulness practices in her view. The richness of the Buddhist teachings is reduced, and there is a lack of an orientation towards ethics and wisdom that requires concurrent development. This limits the benefits of mindfulness and does not meet the deeper needs of modern people.

The participants drew attention to the narrow focus of secular mindfulness without ethics, which misses its transformative purpose. Mindfulness is cojoined with ethics in the purposeful cultivation of positive qualities and reduction of the negative. “There’s not really much benefit in being aware of even neutral things… if that’s just the spiritual practice, you’re not really increasing the good qualities…We need to be aware of negative qualities and try to oppose them”. Furthermore, awareness of afflictive emotions and harmful behaviours without an aim or methods to resolve them may lead to further suffering. Adhiṭṭhāna asserted “People who are not well, or they’re depressed, they’re frightened to look at their mind because what they see there is dark and unhappy... because they don’t know how to change it.” Karunā’s excerpt below demonstrated the drawbacks of mindfulness without an ethically transformative orientation, which potentially could result in being more self-absorbed and distressed. Hence, the necessity of the ethical purpose of right effort and cultivation of the specific causes of beneficial mental states.

> If you haven’t got good ethics, then you’re just remembering how you’re a bad person. Yeah, that’s all you’re really focusing on. That you haven’t got good ethics to focus on. I could see that could be quite a problem actually. Then you’re just aware, “Oh, there I was wanting to harm someone again, and there I was wanting to say something to someone that wasn’t very nice”, and then you’d just get discouraged. I don’t think that would work very well. Imagine if you had a really unruly mind and you were taught to be more aware you know of the present moment what you’re thinking, what you’re doing then it might just drive you crazy because you’re actually just more aware of your delusions without any methods to actually overcome them.

Ānandin pointed out the necessity of ethical discernment and the utilitarian purpose to achieve for the greater good. He outlined there are benefits from mindfulness alone but that mindfulness can be misappropriated towards harmful ends without ethical discernment and is potentially a futile endeavour.

> You could be mindful all your life, but if you haven't got the good understanding of what you're being mindful about you'd be just wasting your time in theory. You would just be sitting in there thinking this is really good about what I'm achieving, but you'd actually achieve nothing for the greater good. In one way you're making yourself more calm and more peaceful and single-pointed and all that, but if you're not, if you haven't got an ethical or a correct base, it's going to be skewed and you pass that wrong thought pattern, wrong mind stream onto other people as well. You could be saying, I just spent six hours being mindful about sharpening my ax, so I can go and chop someone up. If you pass that on, then someone else might think that's a good idea and it can snowball. I think being aware is good, but you need to be aware of what you're being aware of.

Ānandin outlined that because mindfulness has been decontextualized from the broader teachings it can be misused. The predominant narrative in the public arena is the perception that mindfulness "must be good". However, in the psychological arena, where mindfulness is used as a neutral lens without discernment or compassion may lead to harm.

> When I was doing it, mindfulness was just the big new catchphrase that was starting to come in and mindfulness had been taken out of context. At the drug and alcohol rehab I was working in, mindfulness was just used so wrongly against those people who were recovering from their addictions. I had one psychologist, I can remember she said, "Why did you start

> using again? Perhaps we should do a meditation on that…" I thought, "Wow! That's so totally wrong". She used the words mindfulness and meditation and all of a sudden everyone thinks, "oh, it must be good". I don't think it addresses the problems that they're facing in an addiction setting… They don't take you to the next bit …anyone can be an expert on mindfulness. You can get a license off the back of a cornflake packet.

His polemic against the psychologist's use of mindfulness in the context of drug and alcohol rehabilitation was the lack of compassion. Also, although there was an exploratory aspect to her question, it appeared condescending where in the power dynamic the client lacked self-agency because the therapist lacked the humility that comes from understanding the universal nature of our minds. Furthermore, in Buddhism expertise comes in terms of development of insight, and penetration of the dhammas, which comes from decades (if not lifetimes in the Buddhist view) of deeper meditative practice. Thus, he makes the scathing admonition about the lack of expertise. This would be a problem for Buddhism because if the mindfulness "expert" lacks understanding they may inadvertently end up causing harm.

Appamāṇā also found it problematic that secular mindfulness courses were missing key components. Secular mindfulness is not situated within the ontological understandings of Buddhism and without the drive to comprehend the realities of anattā that he refers to in the Mahāyāna term as "emptiness", because the concept of non-self extends to all phenomena, and without the inclusive compassionate frame, the aims are narrowed, which limits the benefits of mindfulness. Therefore, Appamāṇā thinks the lack of understanding compounds ego issues, which runs counter to Buddhism's purpose to come out of the delusion of self-view, where if we are not thinking of others we tend towards incessant self-thinking and self-obsessing that can contribute to psychological

distress. In essence, secular mindfulness becomes a more self-centred practice that can lead to suffering.

> If mindfulness is just about my stress, my anxiety, helping myself, you can see obviously from a dhamma perspective there is just me, me, me the whole time and if we don't start to broaden our horizons and our awareness to think that also there are others - that was a key component, obviously from a dhamma perspective. We need our self-practice to transcend the ego and to understand the emptiness, really understand the lack of this inherently existing I, but also, we need the compassionate thinking of others and that's the other part – our bodhicitta, which comes from being of service to others and thinking of others.

Ethics Meets the Deeper Needs of Modern People and MBIs

Ethics Fulfils Universal Human Value Based Needs.

"Many, many people need psychology, but everyone needs Buddhism."

Nibbhedhaka's quote from her teacher, asserted the greater comparative need of Buddhism. It pointed towards the similarity between psychology and Buddhism in meeting people's needs to reduce suffering, but also to the divergence where Buddhism is expansive and works with and resolves the universal challenges of the human condition and as such is necessary for all. Whereas psychology emphasizes individualized formulations that reduce distress or mitigate psychopathologies, resolve our relational challenges, and provides critical analysis on issues in the world, it does not provide a means to penetrate reality at deeper levels of the mind, to transform suffering at the root, nor a framework to deal with many intractable psychological issues, and without this deeper experiential insight into the metaphysical reality has the capacity to lead towards harm. "At the end of the day everyone suffers, so in Buddhism there is a method to go beyond

suffering and I think it's a good thing to introduce that has the potential to transform, reduce, or eradicate suffering altogether".

The participants shared the conceptualization of universal application of ethical practices and offered multiple examples. Karunā suggested that the teachings are applicable to people today because of the consideration that our minds are the same, the causes of problems are the same, and the solution is based on the dual ethics of right effort to remove mental negativities and develop the positive. Thus, the teachings are applicable to everyone.

> If you've got a mind, then essentially everyone's mind is the same. It's not like their minds are different and you know we have different delusions and that but essentially everyone needs to remove the negativities from their mind, and you know develop positive minds.

Appamāṇā emphasized the needs for wellbeing "to be happy," were underpinned by shared values that are universally applicable. He provided rationale for the pragmatic applicability of ethics for meeting the needs of people today. Furthermore, his rhetoric functions to counter western assumptions about ethics being based on "dogmatic" beliefs and asserted the utility of human value-based ethics found in Buddhism.

> We all understand love and compassion. They're devoid of any religion or philosophy. They're human values, and that's where we can really find common ground… It doesn't matter what country you live on, what culture, what background, we all want to be happy and avoid suffering, and that's really the roots of the ethics. So, it's human ethics. It's not dogmatic ones. It's not ones that someone says we should adhere by. It's common sense, when you look at Buddhist ethics it makes sense. It's practical for everyone.

Ānandin also outlined that the precepts encapsulated universal values. He gave an example that demonstrated the shared human values in the joined responses to disaster and the collective outrage at terrorist attacks. He thinks these behavioural responses are driven by implicit normative ethical judgement of wrong and right, which are rooted in shared values. However, he noted the outlier of the collective - the Taliban, which challenges the universal applicability of the first Buddhist precept.

> Just all the main ones [precepts] that people should live by. I think they're universal. I don't know of any culture other than the Taliban where they consider killing people a good thing… People just do what's right, whatever right is, and the universal outrage and grief as well, like when the World Trade slipped into collapse and the shootings in Christchurch. The collective around the world saying that's not right. So, there are universal ethics, but maybe they're not very well followed sometimes.

Avisaggatā outlined the beneficial societal effects as a rationale for the universal application of Buddhist ethics. In his hypothetical example, he made use of normative ethical statements e.g., "they should be common values", because the adoption of the first precept would have vast reaching implications for reducing harm in the world. However, he recognized the impossibility for everyone to enact this precept, which counters that the precepts can be universally adhered to, even though they may be beneficial.

> The world should adopt the five precepts or at least they should be common values or things that people should share because of the simple thing of to protect life right, to not take someone else's life, that would mean essentially there wouldn't be killings, you know war,

and things like that. But it doesn't work like that. The entire world is not going to stop killing living beings.

Karunā suggested that the modern western audience values ethics. She gave examples that demonstrated both the ethical teachings and ethical qualities of a person are valued in her lived experience of teaching. "I'm teaching about karma at the moment and that includes the ten non-virtuous actions and people loved those teachings about holding back from killing and stealing and that sort of thing". Also, "people appreciate someone with good ethics. You can just rely on them to you know, not tell lies and just be a good person, and I think everyone appreciates someone like that". Thus, people who enact ethical behaviours fulfil relational needs for safety, reliability, and trustworthiness, which is valued in society. Furthermore, Karunā argued that by living ethically you fulfil a need for positive role models in today's world, "Young kids especially young men who are growing up need positive role models". Hence, in this way ethics is both relevant and necessary for people today.

Dhammavicaya considered that Buddhist ethics helps develop inner qualities that are applicable in our modern context. She quoted a sutta that included the aspect of fearlessness. To be fearless and to know what to do in the face of moral dilemmas requires the development of moral clarity and courage that comes from ethical training. In psychology, this encompasses the components of authenticity, the courage to be able to act genuinely in congruence with one's values. This is important for Dhammavicaya in her context of patriarchal challenges as a pioneering Theravāda bhikkhunī. Thus, ethical training provides the means to our autonomy, to deal with challenging situations, where the capacity to act with authenticity leads to wellbeing.

> "One who is wise is not one who speaks much, but one who is peaceable, friendly, and fearless…" There's just incredible strength and incredible clarity. I really think that is what ethics is about. I think it really speaks to the modern context, because that fearlessness also needs a lot of moral clarity and moral courage.

Buddhist ethics were considered relevant to modern society to meet needs for connection. Dhammavicaya talked about how our current individualistic paradigm does not meet our deeper needs for social connection. The current loneliness epidemic was conceived of as being an artefact of our societies' individualistic focus. She noted how this results in adverse health effects and countered that we best survive collectively where compassion is central to our survival. Buddhist ethics are both rooted in and elicit compassion and hold an inclusive component of beneficence towards others. Hence, compassion-based ethics was conceived as pertinent to our survival and fulfilment of a deeper connection.

> But as people we're not well suited to individualism. Being lonely is equivalent to having two packets of cigarettes a day what does that say about the individualistic paradigms? It's not working. It's not reality based… Individuals don't survive. If you have a compassionate society that can look after each other to work together, that help each other, as we are social creatures.

Buddhist ethics were seen to epitomize modern values of inclusivity and thus relevant to modern society. Dhammavicaya highlighted how the original vision of the Buddha was modern and inclusive, which at the time was "pretty progressive". The caste system is based on social hierarchy in India that is determined by birth and dictates what jobs you can do and who you marry. The Buddha introduced the concept that your ethics are more important than your birth in determining

your purity. This was a radical proposal at the time and was aligned to the egalitarian stance of modern people.

> I mean he created a sangha that had no caste system, that was open to women and men right, that was open to everyone, and he said himself, "You're a brahman depending on the purity of your mind". It's got nothing to do with how you were born, and so in some ways I feel like that original vision was very modern.

In Adhiṭṭhāna's following vignette, she made use of comparative scenarios to argue for the ethics of caring.

> Be pampered at all costs because you deserve it… One person wants to use the bench and the other person is, "No. I deserve it!" and a fight starts because everyone thinks they deserve the best. Caring for others. That's going to make it. It's caring that the other person gets the bench, that they need it, and that's what's going to make that person love you, and that person loving you is going to make you happy.

Her rhetoric demonstrated that the prosocial behaviours that are derived from caring, leads to relational harmony, and wellbeing for all people. Whereas a focus on one's own needs, based on entitlement (e.g., "I deserve it") and where everyone holds that view, they will compete for a limited resource resulting in those that benefit and those that do not, the disparity of which causes friction. Thus, it alludes to the way people live in our individualistic paradigm from a self-centered view does not bring satisfaction, whereas a loving-kindness-based ethics leads to fulfillment.

Necessity of Ethics for Mindfulness and Psychology?

The participants talked about the necessity of ethics for mindfulness, thus pertinent to MBIs and as a resolution to issues particular to secular mindfulness. Appamāṇā outlined the necessity of

ethics as a precondition for the arousing of mindfulness. He made use of an example of drinking alcohol as an unethical behaviour that disturbs the stability of the mind, which results in a loss of mindfulness. This frames his rhetoric in support of ethical engagement based on causality as opposed to moralizing and counters assumptions that ethics are unnecessary for mindfulness.

> When we talk about alcohol, it's not that drinking is bad. The main thing is that it clouds your judgement. It makes you lose mindfulness. So, that's an obvious perspective and really debunks any question that you don't need ethics from a mindfulness perspective in psychology. If you think that's the case, then try practicing mindfulness when you drink a bottle of wine every day…

Adhiṭṭhāna made use of the metaphor of getting "the roots out," when referring to the benefits of ethics for psychological interventions. She attributed the causes of "mental problems" to the antecedents of unethical behaviours that lead to a disturbed mind. She also gives the example that meditation without ethics is a futile endeavor with limited benefits because without focus or a mind trained in ethics, we will keep repeating the same patterns of reactivity. Thus, she provided rationale for the necessity of transformative ethics in interventions.

> The mind wouldn't be disturbed the same, because all those ethical practices that we talked about. If you were to do the unethical things like killing and stealing and sexual misconduct, which of course many people have done when they get into bad mental states. You know of some form. That disturbs the mind. The mind becomes very ruffled and disturbed and unhappy. So, when the person is like that, of course they have mental problems. So, if you get to the root, it's like having bad weeds in the garden, if you don't get the roots out, they'll just regrow. So, that's the same. You can't just still the mind in meditation. Certainly, that

> will ease the pain of mind being riotous with bad thoughts and unhappy feelings and emotions, but once that stillness is gone it's going to go, as soon as you get up off your seat probably or certainly when you walk out the door or somebody you don't like walks in the door, it's going to go.

Likewise, Ānandin considered the necessity for ethics for mindfulness interventions. Although he thought a lack of ethics in interventions would affect our capacity for mindfulness, he considered the moderating effects of people's existing unethical behaviors. For people who are already inclined to ethical behaviours, right mindfulness would be established easily in contrast to people who start with poor ethics, which would lead to pseudo mindfulness. Further, people are unaware of the more subtle forms of mental ethical transgressions and their effects that are uncovered through meditation, reflection, and awareness. Thus, he considered it imperative to have a baseline of ethics to begin with.

> People have all sorts of levels of ethics, so there's no baseline as such from which to develop the mindfulness practice from, so it's hard to then get into right mindfulness if you don't have the right base, to begin with. If you have right ethics, you'll do right mindfulness, but if you are starting from a wrong ethical base your mindfulness will be flawed. You go off on a different tangent… If you don't have that base, your right mindfulness is not going to happen if you've got nothing to compare it against, so the lack of ethics would impact mindfulness greatly if you don't have a good ethical ground, to begin with.

Dhammavicaya countered that ethics is a necessary precondition of mindfulness. Instead, she considered that mindfulness results in observations of ethical causality. Once that understanding arises, then people naturally adhere to ethical behaviour.

> When I do this, it feels good. When I do that, I feel bad - the beginnings of ethical discrimination. When you see that, the mind knows what's good for it and this is how mindfulness unfolds.

However, if we consider Ānandin's view before, her perspective comes from her experience as an ordained bhikkhunī with an established baseline of ethics, with right mindfulness conducive to the co-arising of wisdom factors. The following excerpt though is harder to refute because ethical discernment arises even in the context of unethical behaviour. Dhammavicaya gives an example of a drone pilot in the army who learned mindfulness and in a context without the broader teachings can be like "opening a can of worms". Mindfulness brought this person "a self-reflective capacity", a greater awareness of their unethical actions, but inner conflict arose because of the reciprocal obligations and the difficulty to extricate oneself from life choices to work in the army. Thus, the procurement of skill in mindful discernment can lead to further complications. In Buddhism, this example also pertains to the n8fp factor of right livelihood and knowing that when one has an occupation that harms others will to lead to mental disturbance and suffering, which provides impetus to choose a profession carefully.

> Their job is to sit in front of the computer and kill people. They go remote now through drones. Now mindfulness has actually brought a self-reflective capacity into their experience, which has actually got them asking questions. Do I really want to be doing this? Whereas, before they weren't questioning the job, but mindfulness brought another dimension. The interesting thing there though you know is the army has paid for their training and their college and there's certain obligations that they have in return, so this

> mindfulness has brought them incredible inner conflict, so there's real consequences for pulling out of these programs, so I would say mindfulness - it's like opening a can of worms.

Nibbedhaka reflected on the rationale for ethics in psychology. In the following excerpt, she points to the underlying premise of non-harm as rationale for ethics in psychology as it is not based on religion but a moral imperative to counter harm, which is consistent with psychology's aims to reduce psychological distress. Nibbedhaka mentioned the issue of therapist burnout where even though the psychological distress may be treated in the client there are negative sequalae for the therapist, which she interpreted as a flaw in the psychological model and an argument for inclusion of ethics. Furthermore, this excerpt demonstrated the way the tensions between western psychological thought and the Buddhist view play out in the interview, where reflection brings understanding that perhaps the barriers to Buddhist ethics are immutable in the near future, where psychology may not be able to accommodate the Buddhist view. Both Ānandin and Avisaggatā also resolved that it will take "generations" for the values to integrate into society.

> Buddhism simply sits on non–harming, and that should be a good enough reason for indulging a more secular or psychotherapeutic community. As you know health professionals and psychotherapists are one of the largest groups of people that suffer from burnout and therefore you could say to some extent the psychotherapeutic view is not working. Therefore, if you have an expansive view as to what could benefit people and you wouldn't sit on an identity of a particular view... I think it's difficult. I don't think it will happen in a cohesive way in my lifetime.

Appamāṇā offered the rationale for the inclusion of ethics because it would hasten the therapeutic process and produce beneficial results.

> If you have the ethics component built into the psychotherapy framework, it will just speed the process up. It will speed the process up definitely. It will help people to move through their challenges quicker and have a bigger benefit for sure.

The mind being quieter, can penetrate the issues more easily. Appamāṇā considered that the hastened process is the result of ethical fusion in therapy that will help people to move through their challenges. He believed inclusion of ethics would have far reaching implications and thus provides impetus to his own purpose in life where he teaches principles of Buddhism to broad audiences.

Ethics Informed Mindfulness: To Know and Transform the Mind.

The participants outlined the Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness by drawing attention to the Pali word sati, which means to remember. Nibbedhaka expanded that "it has both a retentive and an attentive aspect", where you both have to remember what you are doing and attend to it through observation. Thus, it was conceptualised similarly to psychology as a component of active memory. However, the concept diverged in the holistic application of right mindfulness alongside other factors of the n8fp and when it comes to what is being remembered and for what purpose.

Alluding to the perceived misconceptualization in secular mindfulness, Karunā posited euphemistically, "It's just a little bit different from just being mindful of the present moment". Instead, the focus of observation was dependent on the context and purpose mindfulness was being used for and had a broader scope than secular mindfulness. Thus, the participants mentioned mindfulness in reference the present moment experience, the Buddhist teachings, the four frames of reference, a meditation object, compassion, ethical causality, self-reflection, and meditations that would lead to concentration and insight, which were all allied to transformative aims.

The participants discussed mindfulness similarly to ethics, with the same purpose and benefits because of the embeddedness in the n8fp and the intertwining co-causality of factors. Dhammavicaya purported, “Well right mindfulness - you just can't separate them. All the factors of the path arise together, so the difference between something being right mindfulness is whether or not is if it’s within the context of the eightfold path or not”. Therefore, the aims of mindfulness were synonymous with ethics to cultivate what is beneficial, to develop positive thoughts, emotions, feelings, and behaviours, and to let go of what harms. Observation cojoined with investigative awareness brings interest and energy that sustains the practice and leads to ethical discernment to fulfil the aims. Adhiṭṭhāna states, “When we don’t know the mind it’s difficult to do positive things and to let things go”. Thus, mindfulness is necessary to fulfil the ethical imperatives.

Adhiṭṭhāna outlined the purpose of mindfulness was to understand the mind because “to transform the mind, we must know the mind”, and “the process of meditation was developed not just to still the mental processes, to enlighten the intelligence, enhancing self and other knowledge.” Similarly, Nibbedhaka stated the purpose of mindfulness was to counter our lack of awareness, “It becomes incumbent on every one of us to diminish the lack of awareness, the lack of insight. So, the only way to overcome the mind’s propensity for delusion is mindfulness as the first step”. Hence, ethics informed mindfulness if pursued leads to the fulfilment of self-knowledge - a component of wellbeing.

In the excerpt below, Appamāṇā asserted mindfulness with ethics has a greater transformative potential. In the context of being triggered by another person, mindfulness alone can be used to extinguish the metaphoric “fires” of reactivity, by calming our own mind. However, this is a futile activity because a multitude of unwanted happenings occur in everyday life that require

the constant putting out of fires. Comparatively, mindfulness cojoined with compassion-based ethics, shifts to considering the other person who has triggered you from a compassionate understanding as "the light of bodhicitta" and recognizes that people who act in a harmful manner do so from their own suffering. As a result, a compassionate perspective takes away the conditions that fuel the fire that results in being triggered. Instead, compassion is aroused and along with ethical discernment, mindfulness becomes a "powerful tool" that provides better strategies in the pursuit towards wellbeing that transforms the way we relate and respond to others. Thus, the purpose of Buddhist mindfulness goes beyond psychology's conceptualizations and is intertwined with other factors of the n8fp.

> It's been a massive benefit for me mindfulness practice, meditation, the dharma. It really is important. It helps, but however when we apply compassion for others, and we start to look at the others and say well the reason why they're angry at me, it's possibly because they had trauma themselves. We've got no idea what's going on in their lives. We don't know what someone might - you know they could have had something horrific happening to them over the last week, month, or year. Who knows? Their anger is – they'd much rather be happy than be suffering, so then that compassion, thinking about others, which again is an aspect of ethics. Not just thinking about yourself but others. It's a massive help to ourselves to start transforming ourselves and arguably more powerful because otherwise, we're constantly putting fires out for ourselves by practicing mindfulness with our triggers. When we shine the light with bodhicitta, we can potentially totally put the fire out. It's a very powerful tool.

Nibbedhaka differentiated mindfulness from *samādhi* [concentrated meditative state]. She refers to mindfulness as means to attain samādhi, which when you engage in right mindfulness and

have developed the other factors of the n8fp, samma samādhi is the result, which facilitates discernment of subtler aspects of experience. The implication is that although everyday mindfulness heightens awareness and discernment, it is not deeply transformative. Whilst ethics-based mindfulness transforms actions of body, speech, and mind through discernment and self-directed action, samādhi leads to understandings, which transforms the way we relate to internal and external phenomena. Thus, ethics-based mindfulness has the capacity to fulfil deeper transformative needs.

> What is important to realize right from the beginning is that the practice of mindfulness and the Buddhist meditative state if you like they are not exactly the same, so if you're practicing mindfulness that does not necessarily mean that you are in a genuine meditative state. Of course, what we are trying to do when we are practicing mindfulness is obviously to obtain that meditative state you could call samādhi - the meditative concentration. The mindfulness practice is used as a means to attain samadhi.

A Wonderful Beautiful Fusion: Proposed Adaptations to the Presentation of Buddhist Ethics

Buddhist ethics were seen as reality-based and applicable to both the modern society and secular the scientific paradigm. However, the participants recognized that due to Buddhist teachings and ethics not being well understood or valued, a different presentation was needed so that ethics are relatable and easier to understand. They took non-dogmatic approaches to offer adaptations as pragmatic solutions to solve the challenge of accessibility and enhance wellbeing in psychological interventions.

As rationale for adaptation of the presentation of Buddhist ethics to fit the current paradigm, Karunā drew on a past precedent where Lama Atisha extracted the principal teachings and presented them in a concise manner suitable for Tibetans in their sociohistorical context.

> There was a Buddhist master teacher who went to Tibet who in the 10th century, and he presented Buddhist teachings in a way that was very clear and easy to understand like the lam rim [stages of the path], but it was only a page long that was appropriate for the people of that time.

Appamāṇā considered that although some of the teachings were rooted in universal human values, they are not accessible to westerners in their current forms, which are unfamiliar to westerners as rationale for adaptations, "The six perfections, the noble eightfold path, the four immeasurables can be talked about in dhamma communities, but for non-religious communities this presentation is firstly unknown, and people may be resistant to them". Dhammavicaya believed that it was possible to change the religious language "because the nature of the mind is not exactly religious", and the dhamma is "simply nature" and "explaining parts of nature".

They presented further rationale to use any skillful means to enhance happiness and reduce suffering. Dhammavicaya suggested the maxim, "use whatever works to reduce suffering", and Appamāṇā, "Whatever works best… We can potentially take the best of many different models and frameworks that are out there, as long as we are applying good ethics", by observing "Is it bringing happiness to others or is it bringing suffering?" Therefore, Buddhist ethics can be applied outside of the Buddhist framework because it is about dealing with the experiential reality and how to make best of that. Likewise, Karunā suggested that clients "don't have to practice everything, but you need to be skilful in what practices you give to people depending on their circumstances and their mind". Appamāṇā and Adhiṭṭhāna suggested starting with just one of the precepts, "Whatever is most problematic". Ānandin considered to bring awareness into one facet – mindful observation and reflection of speech, to counter resistance to ethical directives. "I think a good place to start is

becoming aware of speech and then go back and analyze the speech instead of coming straight out with it and saying you shouldn't do this…"

Drawing on Extant Parallels in Science and Religion.

Dhammavicaya talked about how to present ethics training skillfully, but that this requires enquiry into generalizations about who our modern secular audience is. She asserted that our modern global world is not secular, but instead "We are hugely diverse, multifaith based people from different backgrounds… This is the world where we live". The question she asks is, "How do we share what is rich and valuable whilst respecting diversity?" The resolution she and the participants suggested was to use the principles of ethics and draw from parallels in science and psychology.

There was a recognition that Buddhism encompassed psychology with phrases such as Appamāṇā's, "I haven't found myself anything that is in western psychology that is not contained in Buddhist psychology"; Karunā heard in response to Buddhist teachings, "Oh yeah, I learnt that already from a psychologist... but that was actually what Buddha taught…" They pointed to parallels in neuroscience where there is ongoing dialogue with prominent Buddhists such as the Dalai Lama in the global arena, where proponents are allied in their keen interest in the nature of the mind. Appamāṇā noted, "This is a time where neuroscientists are Buddhist and dhamma practitioners, and this is where we get a lot more common ground". Also, he considered positive psychology was concordant with Buddhism, where "we talk about love and compassion" and "retrain our mind with positive thoughts" aka cognitive restructuring, which encompasses concepts such as ethics and right effort. Hence, parallels in psychology may be drawn on in ethical presentations in MBIs.

Dhammavicaya focused on scientific and neuroscience adaptations with the suggestion to present ethics as an enquiry in a "scientific mode", where the emphasis was on the exploratory nature of the wholesome and unwholesome factors, where "essentially we become our own scientist". She borrowed from Buddhist/neuroscience fusions in extant literature as rationale for ethical engagement, matched to western understandings and values that outlines the dual engagement of ethics, "Like red zone bad, stressful, wears on the body, wears on our relationships. Green zone good, nourishing, and even those basic concepts, peace, contentment, and love. It feels good. We feel happy. We can trust our conduct".

The participants suggested ethics could be explained in scientific terms as cause and effect. Appamāṇā suggested "Newton's third law of physics that every action has an equal and opposite reaction", is accepted by other religions, relevant to a western view, and a way to present ethics as enquiry of cause and effect in interventions. Appamāṇā made use of a relatable example.

> There is cause-and-effect in everything. You want to finish your psychology degree and you study for five years. There's cause and effect. You've got to start at the beginning. You work through and in the end, wow! You've got a degree, and it didn't happen by chance. It's cause and effect.

The monastics discussed the use of secular presentations of ethics that are already available. Both Adhiṭṭhāna and Ānandin draw attention to Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning - a programme that was recently developed to meet the needs for a secular society that was based on a fusion of Buddhist and psychological principles. Adhiṭṭhāna outlined that ethics was described in scientific terms as "mental hygiene" where the rationale for engagement was that "as people need physical hygiene, they also need mental hygiene".

Adhiṭṭhāna, Dhammavicaya, and Nibbedhaka suggested drawing from the Abhidhamma for a map of emotions as they considered it was more accessible for modern people. Dhammavicaya suggested below that the Abhidhamma could be useful for anyone to understand as it is "granular" and "scientific", and Nibbedhaka mentioned that "it explains why we think, feel, and perceive the way we do" and contains the premise that all things have the same nature. This framework could be adapted for MBIs as psychoeducation to enhance people's discernment and literacy of wholesome and unwholesome mental factors when they observe the mind. Thus, Buddhist teachings could inform psychological understandings.

> If people draw from them, then you have the wholesome mind and the unwholesome mind and that's a lot more granular, but there's ways we could open up these things to people and it's very scientific.

The Potential Contribution of Buddhist Views of Reality.

Although the concept of dependent origination is absent from and potentially problematic for psychology, Adhiṭṭhāna and Nibbedhaka considered there may be benefits to understanding everything arises dependent on specific causes and conditions. Adhiṭṭhāna added the nuance of cause and effect in her phenomenological description that the metaphysical nature of reality "is constantly flowing". This differs from the scientific conceptualization of cause and effect, which is understood in discrete terms. The implication in psychology, is along with a cause can be an attribution of blame, which leads to clinging and suffering. Instead, a framing of causality based on the understanding of dependent origination recognizes unceasing causes and effects, which lessens clinging and as a result reduces suffering, which can be applied along with enquiry to various psychological challenges as Adhiṭṭhāna outlines below.

> The interdependence is where it is constantly flowing. Whereas the cause-and-effect you can hold and blame. It's true but it can be hold and blame thing. Whereas the interdependent origination is a flowing thing. You can let it go. That's also true of any problem in the mind. You can let it go. Try letting it go. See what happens. Will you feel bereft without it? Or will you just be glad it's gone? It could be a very valuable thing to introduce into psychological healing, but it's also a Buddhist correct view.

Nibbedhaka referred indirectly to dependent origination and its corollary emptiness of an inherent existence (i.e., anattā). She considered that in psychology, mental afflictions are seen as solid in some sense because of the tendency to cling. "Because we're very grasping clinging thinking feeling human beings. By holding onto things, we solidify our tendencies. We think that they are solid". In contrast, from the Buddhist view she delineated the necessity for specific conditions for the arising of phenomena such as anger, which highlights the causal process.

> If you're believing depression, anxiety is actually the solidity or structure, in some sense you have an acceptance of its existence. If you were to do the basic analogy of saying, "Can you give me your feeling of anger?" That would be very difficult because in order to give rise to anger, you have to create the very conditions. So, if I am to be angry then surely I have to incorporate frustration, impatience and intolerance and some aspect of identity.

With the understanding of dependent origination, negative (and positive) mental states are seen as inherently empty of a reified, solidified existence and are a phenomenon that will arise and pass away. Adhiṭṭhāna expands on this understanding and uses it to reframe psychological problems to provide the fortitude to withstand psychological challenges and not add further layers of suffering.

> For a person with psychological problems realizing that what is occurring to them is not in itself a concrete thing to be frightened of or a challenge or to be beaten by. It's not concrete. It's arisen due to causes and conditions, and it will have its time and it will fade away due to causes and conditions.

Taking this view on board of dependent origination, anicca, and anattā arouses a sense of equanimity, ease, and acceptance, which Adhiṭṭhāna expressed in her poetry.

> nothing abides here,
>
> myriad things arise in mind,
>
> myriad beings appear on the earth,
>
> they come,
>
> they rise and they fall on their own causes,
>
> nothing abides here.

She begins and ends with "nothing abides here". This seemingly nihilistic comment is explained that nothing remains due to the impermanency of phenomena whose arising and passing are subject to specific causes and conditions. She makes use of the word "own" because there is an emphasis on responsibility where we are heir to our actions. By understanding this, fixed rigid understandings, stories, and views are no longer clung to, and neither is the identification of self. Instead, meaning and interpretations are reshaped, where knowledge of the perpetual unfolding of various aspects phenomena arising and passing away fosters equanimity. This being a right view about the interpretation of experience, shapes our experience concordant with the nature of reality. Knowing this arouses an appreciation of the unfolding reality, that is ephemeral. Nothing abides here strips the delusion and enquires as to what is meaningful.

Compassion and Loving Kindness.

Some of the participants considered the ethical practices that elicit compassion and loving kindness would be beneficial for modern society and relevant for MBIs. At the broadest level, Karunā considered ethics can be simplified with the phrase, "Maybe the ethics can just be everyone wants to be happy", where she refers to the practices that elicit compassion. The "just" meaning to exclude a focus on precepts, where she had earlier in her narrative recognized people's potential resistance. Adhiṭṭhāna drew attention to her student's research in Japan where the participants who did compassion meditation found it much easier to sit still, had more understanding of others, and were able to work more effectively (Miyahara et al., 2017). In contrast, although mindfulness meditation had some benefits the participants were agitated where they kept wanting to move. Thus, it may be helpful for people to focus on compassion as a driver of ethical action in psychological interventions, to make use of causality to facilitate a beneficial state of mind where less hindrances arise.

Adhiṭṭhāna refers to ethics being grounded in compassion and lovingkindness that is essential to our growth and survival as rationale for use within psychology. This perspective was asserted to be based in reality, where the requirements of compassion begin with dependency on a caregiver from the moment we are born. This is concordant with scientific view of the necessity of human touch, attention, and connection for infants to thrive. Further, Mahāyāna Buddhism places emphasis on the idealized mother in the relational role of kindness and caring. She asserted that goodness is inherent within humans, which is the essential buddha nature or innativist view.

> The ethics which are based on the fact that human beings are born of their mothers, and they're bred in compassion, and they need compassion, and they need lovingkindness from

> the day they are born, otherwise they wouldn't survive… It's like this goodness is there, inherently there amongst all human beings. That's what they need. We are social beings. So, psychologists should be looking at that model because they are studying the mind.

In this final excerpt, Appamāṇā believed that Buddhism had the potential to contribute to psychological interventions in a "beautiful fusion" – this potentiality that epitomizes the intention of this IPA exploration. In the excerpt, he emphatically espoused the benefits of psychological treatment for trauma with multiple qualifiers and adjectives that demonstrated the strength of his convictions. In the context of trauma treatment, he considered psychology gets to the root, but to enhance the treatment he cojoins Buddhist perspectives and qualities of compassion and loving kindness. Although the overarching concepts he draws on are not new in psychology e.g., cojoining compassion, normalizing to counter stigma, and reframing; he demonstrated strategies common to Buddhism such as specific cognitions that evoke self-compassion, connection with others, and reframes suffering as being the ground for potential growth, with no mud no lotus. It demonstrated how Buddhism offers a compassionate perspective that is non-pathologizing, with suffering framed as universal, which if understood within dyadic treatment would remove power imbalances and potentially enhance therapeutic outcomes. Further, normalizing and situating trauma within the context of commonality counters the psychological distress that may arise as sequalae from complex or interpersonal traumas that includes isolation, stigmatization, and altered self-concepts.

> This is where there is this beautiful, wonderful relationship between modern psychology – or there can be – between modern psychology and Buddhist ethics, because I think psychology has a very powerful and very useful way of being able to find the root cause of the problems. It's a wonderful process that that can help people to find the root cause of some of these

> really destructive behaviors or destructive thought patterns, and then you bring in the compassion and loving-kindness for that, realize that we are all the same, that we all go through – without the mud, there's no lotus flowers. Without the struggling, we don't transform, and that we're never alone in our suffering. It's normal and it's okay and this is where there's so much judgment in society. Obviously, this is where Buddhism shines a light on that and we try and transform that because we realize that no one's perfect, that we all struggle, and that it's a natural process to have these challenges and to have compassion for ourselves, and that we're all learning and to support each other on that journey. So that again is where that selflessness comes in and how we can bring in good ethics and morality into that and have compassion for ourselves and compassion for others. So, there's that wonderful, beautiful, I think, fusion.

Discussion

Emergent Understandings and Implications

What emerges from the analysis is the rationale rooted in the monastics western preunderstandings functions to dispel the myths about Buddhism, mindfulness, and ethics. Unequivocally the participants find the lived practice of ethics to be enriching and meaningful in their lives, in which they have invested their time, orientation of life, and identity to foster their personal and spiritual transformation. From this locale, they are motivated to share the benefits of lived ethics. In this way, descriptive aspects of IPA give voice to what the monastics wish to share and what is meaningful to them. Furthermore, the participants' dispelling of myths is aligned to my own rationale for this research, to counter the assumptions about Buddhist ethics in scientific literature. Thus, the rationale in part comes from a double hermeneutic that is my attempt to bring a

more nuanced understanding of lived Buddhist ethics into psychology with a focus on elucidating conceptual understandings and principles that could contribute to second generation MBIs.

The participants presented Buddhist ethics with a positive framing that emphasized the normative aim of flourishing as optimal psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual functioning and "the end to which our actions are directed". Superficially, the framing is reminiscent of a combination of hedonic and eudaemonic wellbeing or Seligman's hypothesized dimensions of flourishing (e.g., "Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment"; Deci & Ryan, 2006; Seligman, 2018, p. 333). What differed from the extant formulations in positive psychology, was the expansive aim of wellbeing that encompassed all beings and the emergence of meditative experiential insight that fulfils deeper transformational needs. The way the participants framed ethics may have been derived from their implicit western world views to frame it in a way that was meaningful for a western perspective - a perspective that would otherwise eschew an abstracted ideal of nibbāna that is not well known or understood in the west, and to deemphasize dukkha where the first noble truth could erroneously be distilled to a pessimistic "life is suffering". Thus, the positive emphasis "to flourish" is concordant with western values of positive emotions and experiences as proclaimed earlier by Wilson (2014) that can be translated into psychological terms of wellbeing, which is relevant to a western audience.

The participants conceptualized Buddhist ethics as a transformative programme of self-education that enhances autonomy and through engagement fulfils the aim to flourish. They countered western assumptions about ethics similarly to Amaro (2015), where ethics were not external impositions from an authority akin to the commandments, nor entirely restrictive. Instead, ethics training is taken on voluntarily, where through ethical exploration and adherence, people

develop a capacity for authentically motivated action in accordance with one's values that enhances their wellbeing. Highlighted were the notions that people lack self-agency because of our habitual behavioural responses, lack of awareness of the processes of the mind, and from a lack of ethics themselves. Through the process of self-education in ethics, people develop psychological resources to discern causality and utilize self-regulation strategies to enact value-congruent action to live in way that leads to personal growth, understanding, and fulfilment. Further, the participants asserted that ethical actions are the result of living in alignment towards compassion-based collective flourishing.

The monastics go beyond textual understandings of the precepts in their narratives of how lived ethics are enacted. They outlined that a focus on restraint, while important to not cause harm and "purify" the mind of negativities, does not capture the fullness of Buddhist ethics practice. In their dual framing, ethics is both a restraint from harm and engagement in beneficial actions, which are encapsulated in right effort. Both aspects were necessary to contribute towards wellbeing, which again reconceptualizes ethics in a positive manner. Furthermore, compassion was the core principle that informed the precepts and was the motivational force for ethical engagement. The rationale for compassionate care was derived from the understanding that one's own wellbeing is intrinsically related to the wellbeing of others. Thus, an extension on the textual precepts was the impetus to encourage ethical behaviour in other people or to discourage them from causing harm.

A recent study supported the participants' assertions that cherishing others leads to happiness. Titova and Sheldon (2021) demonstrated that people feel greater subjective wellbeing when they attempt to make others happy, rather than themselves. Thus, the pursuit of individualistic happiness may be less effective than caring for others. Further rhetoric in support of the principle of

compassion was the evolutionary-based collective nature of humans where we do best as groups, which contributes towards relational harmony and fostering beneficial connections. Towards these ends, the monastics outlined strategies such as reflection on the commonality of all beings, which elicited perceptions of a shared humanity and compassionate mental states. This lessened the psychological distance from other people and led to prosocial construals that counters othering.

Othering is a concept related to identity that differentiates between us and them (Dervin, 2016). However, when identity is conceptualized in opposition to the other with associations of inferiority and superiority, this seeds discrimination and vilification of the other in its varied forms (e.g., Racism, sexism, ableism, victim-blaming), which has a significant impact on people at home, online, and in the community. At the extreme, othering can facilitate dehumanization and genocide (Uzonyi & Asa 2020). Thus, the compassion-based strategies if adopted in MBIs would potentially provide a prophylaxis against a multitude of societal harms. However, the view of commonality could be a problematic from a critical perspective if the challenges of oppressed peoples were rendered invisible – as a form of spiritual bypassing or from empathizing with oppressors who would otherwise be othered. Thus, practices that elicit a sense of shared humanity from understandings of commonality require tempering with knowledge of intersectionality.

The monastics suggested precepts provide a useful framework to guide and reflect on one's behaviours, but much of the lived ethical behavior they described was autonomous investigation of everyday experiential phenomena through an ethical lens. Mindfulness was an integral part of the lens, where awareness was cojoined with interest and curiosity as an investigative enquiry in pursuit of close analysis of internal (e.g., thoughts, intentions, emotions, somatic feelings) and external cues (e.g., observations of others) and the causal processes that link these phenomena to enhance

understandings of things taken for granted. This led to the ethical discernment of beneficial or harmful behaviours and their consequences. Hence, heightened investigative awareness of everyday phenomena and causality were central components of the development of ethical knowledge that further supports informed autonomous decision-making.

The conceptualizations of ethics and mindfulness are situated within the holistic teachings of n8fp. Practice occurs in an integrated way, which hinges on the concept of *idappaccayatā*, which is the specific conditionality required for something to arise. Because of this, that. Training in ethics cannot occur without mindfulness, which contributes to experiential ethical discernment and knowledge (i.e., wisdom), and the development of mindfulness requires the stability of mind that comes from acting ethically. To pursue transformative aims requires development of both mindfulness and ethics along with the other factors in the n8fp. Thus, in practice there is no way to encapsulate mindfulness on its own within this view.

Within the context of the n8fp the purpose and results of Buddhist mindfulness was synonymous with the monastics renderings of ethics. Because of the inclusion of ethics, mindfulness had more to offer, resolved the root of problems, and countered potential harms that arise without ethical discernment. The participants perceived the psychological constructs of mindfulness as narrowly defined and lacking the ethical onus and interaction. Their perceptions were posited in similar terms to the earlier critiques (e.g., Monteiro et al., 2015), but included two further aspects: The promotion of non-conceptual formulations may mislead a practitioner to considering the goal of mindfulness is to be without thoughts instead of learning how not to attach to proliferations of the mind; Also, that recognition of the unfolding experience that is witnessed in the present is central to mindfulness rather than an aim of being present centred. Furthermore, the

purpose of mindfulness as the penultimate goal of the n8fp was to facilitate the state of samādhi in meditation, where the development of the other factors of the n8fp are corequisite. Yet the omission of samādhi from psychological formulations reduces the aims of mindfulness and ethics in everyday life to transformation of body, speech, and action but misses the potential for greater transformation through the development of highly refined insight. Thus, the potential for transformative effects is constrained in psychology and the n8fp as a threefold practice of sīla, samādhi, paññā – mindfulness cannot take place of samādhi.

The benefits of ethical practice spread across the psychosocial and spiritual domains of wellbeing. It encompassed the development of psychosocial maturation, encapsulated by the enactment of autonomous value-congruent behaviours, which resulted in positive self-concepts and self-appraisal along with substantive character development. Ethical training supported self-discovery through enhanced self-awareness and transparency, and adherence to ethical goals required the mastery of psychological skills (e.g., patience, self-regulation), which facilitated positive emotions and mental states. Also, perspective shifts from self-focus to compassionate care of others resulted in prosocial behaviours, which enhanced relational harmony and happiness. Ethical adherence removed the causes of psychological distress, both as behaviours in the mind and ways that we respond to and interpret the world, which stabilized the mind to facilitate clear discernment of causality of intentions, thoughts, behaviours, and their consequences. The emergence of a clear, stable mind was foundational to the development of spiritual aims, which provided the means to fulfil the monastics' life purpose. Thus, the wellbeing outcomes fulfilled hedonic and eudemonic conceptualizations of wellbeing that have relevance to westerners and were unlikely to be antithetical to western values except in the language and ways that they were framed.

However, the spiritual benefits may be less relevant in the secular context of psychological treatment.

Self-Determination Theory and Buddhist Ethics

The phenomenological descriptions of the monastics were situated in accordance with the self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017) framework, which is concerned with the conditions that enhance or inhibit flourishing. SDT posits that the type of motivation that engages behaviour has important consequences for wellbeing. Intrinsic motivation is engagement in behaviours for personal reward and is associated with enhanced interest and enjoyment of activities that results in manifold benefits of psychological functioning (Fong et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation arises from a perceptual fusion between an activity and its goal (i.e., Means-End Fusion Model; Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). This is fulfilled through enacting ethics that orientate behaviours towards wellbeing and because of the immediacy of the rewards (e.g., happiness) leads to a perceptual fusion. Also, initially the practice of ethics is taken on voluntarily, and through enhanced awareness and enquiry, the associated benefits are linked to ethical engagement, which encourages further persistence. Thus, the ethical practices were intrinsically motivated through perceived associations enacted as fully authored self-perpetuated actions through the supportive strategies that the monastics outlined.

Authenticity consists of autonomy, genuineness, and congruence, which is conceptualized as a trait in psychology (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Authenticity involves autonomous actions and communication, which were epitomized by phenomenological descriptors in the monastics' narratives. In the monastics' conceptualizations, authenticity is a construct that arises through processes of ethical maturation, competency in self-regulatory skills, development of moral courage,

and consolidation of positive habitual behaviours. Authenticity is enacted in everyday experiences, which enhances positive self-concepts and appraisals leading to wellbeing. Therefore, authenticity is something that can be acquired and developed through ethical training rather than an innate construct.

Authenticity as a dimension of autonomy is an associated construct of SDT because autonomy is one of the three theorized psychological needs along with competency and relatedness. Lived ethical adherence also fulfilled the requirements of competency through the development of various skillsets e.g., Self-regulation, which enhances the capacity to enact value-congruent behaviours and resulted in positive self-construals. Relatedness arises from the compassion practices that enhance prosocial construals, elicits a sense of shared humanity, and compassionate care. Thus, SDT is an alternative framework to present ethics in translatory work introduced into MBIs.

The participants described various self-regulation strategies, which supported both ethical adherence to the wellbeing goals and negotiated potential goal conflicts. Self-regulation as an umbrella definition, includes all behaviours (of body, speech, and mind) that are directed towards a goal, which encompasses the dual approach to ethics. Self-regulation took place through the observation, monitoring, and modification of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in situ as reactive inhibition, enacting desired behaviours, retrospectively through reflection, and compassion-based action. The various self-regulatory models in psychology lack cohesion (see Inzlicht et al., 2021) and provided partial explanations of the monastics' descriptions. At a coarse level, the highly reflective component of the monastics' ethical behaviours, reduces habitual reactive behaviours and impulsivity, which could be explained by development of system 2 thinking (e.g., Dual System; Kahneman, 2011). Most self-regulatory models focused on goal conflicts. Some of the monastics'

scenarios described engaged effortful self-control to resolve conflict or outlined causal strategies that lessen or circumvent sources of conflict (e.g., their own or others unethical actions derived from the three poisons, hindrances, ignorance): Attention to future consequences of ethical or unethical behaviour leads brings a recognition of the greater value of ethical action, which resulted in value-congruent behaviour (e.g., Value Based Choice; Berkman et al., 2017); Fostering beneficial states of mind or reframing others actions as derived from suffering, circumvented or lessened sources of conflict (e.g., Process Model of Self-Control; Duckworth et al., 2016). Through ethical maturation the monastics become skilled self-regulators, sensitive to ethical causality, and spend less time dealing with conflict, and aware of the precursors to unethical action stop conflict pre-action. Thus, ethical goals become resistant to conflict. Hence, Buddhist ethics offers training in self-regulation, which is a fundamental facet of healthy functioning of individuals that supports the pursuit of various goals with beneficial outcomes in disparate domains e.g., relationship satisfaction, health, and longevity (Inzlicht et al., 2021).

Tensions

The participants recognized the shortcomings of Buddhist ethics for the modern context. The barriers to Buddhist ethics for westerners were rooted in ignorance and cultural conditioning of perspectives and values that were antithetical to ethics. Also, a lack of familiarity or understanding of Buddhist teachings led to misunderstandings and devaluation of ethical practices where ethics were conflated with moralizing or a threat to autonomy. In contrast, the participants highlighted that westerners value those with ethical qualities and meet people's needs for transformation and wellbeing. Thus, there was a perceived tension between values of ethical engagement and the values

of autonomy, that could be overcome with psychoeducation that demonstrates how intrinsic motivation and self-regulation enhances autonomy towards wellbeing goals.

Buddhism itself was captured by unethical values where there was deviation from the original egalitarian vision of the Buddha, and textual expansionism reflected patriarchal views that promoted the inequitable treatment of women monastics and aspirants. Also, brought to the fore was that in nominally Buddhist countries there was a widespread failure of ethical adherence, which counters an argument for engagement in Buddhist ethics. Furthermore, some of the more conservative Buddhist groups fall into the error of passivity (Vish.). This may in part due to the turn away from politics in the suttas, the development of equanimity not balanced with the other brahmavihārās, and pre-existing individualistic values that lessens the motivation to engage ethically at the community level. Further, the emphasis on apoliticality where people hold positions of unreflexive privilege, their unseen bias reproduces harm where our inter-relational nature is forgotten and that doing nothing impacts others and as such, we are never apolitical. Hence, Buddhism suffers from the same error of passivity that was the critique of secular mindfulness.

The participants emphasized the view that ignorance of the mind was the origin of our problems, which is resolved through transformation of the mind. Hence, the causal attribution was internally based, and although there was reflection on the contribution of external conditions, context was deemphasized. The issue with an internal attribution of a problem is that the solution is at the level of the individual. Thus, there is a tendency to ignore external contributors of systemic issues (e.g., poverty) and solutions to problems either politically, or at the level of community, which results in systemic inertia. Alternatively, the above view replicates individualistic societies' ideas about the individual pursuit of wellbeing and may be derived from the monastics' embedded

western preunderstandings. In tension with this perspective, the principles of ahimsā and compassion are implicit in an inclusive ethical orientation and provide the onus to seek broader social emancipation. Thus, Buddhist ethics was positioned as universally applicable to provide solutions to today's problems and fulfil our needs at both an individual and social level. Therefore, a fusion of Buddhist ethics and a psychological approach that includes modern critical understandings could contribute to MBIs.

Although Buddhist ethics fulfil psychology's formulations of flourishing, the conceptualizations are not matched. Nibbāna is the culmination of endeavour from the n8fp, that entails emergent experiential understandings that eradicates sources of conflict within us. It is not something that arises from everyday transformative effects of ethics alone. The western turn to the positive may in part be motivated by the discomfort and avoidance of the negative. In preoccupation with the positive, we may lose some of the benefits of the teachings where insight into dukkha itself is transformative, and although negative states may arise, their transitory nature is recognized, which lessens perceived distress. Also, what we consider negative emotions in the west can be considered wholesome mental factors, which colour interpretations of phenomena e.g., moral shame – possibly a mistranslation of guilt – because it supports restraint from harmful actions. Also, negative experiences can translate into development e.g., post-traumatic growth with "no mud, no lotus". Hence, any shift into the western domain situated within psychological understandings entails a loss of subtleties. Thus, it may be better to develop data-derived formulations rather than translating into existing models that lack cohesive metatheoretical understandings (e.g., in positive psychology; Van Zyl et al., 2023).

Suggestions for the Integration of Ethics into MBIs

Buddhist ethics requires adaptations to be presented within MBIs for diverse peoples in a secular therapeutic setting. The Buddhist ethical framework offers an approach of how to negotiate life ethically through mindfulness and enquiry, to live with thoughts, speech, and body orientated towards an inclusive flourishing. The participants took the pragmatic and non-dogmatic approach to use whatever works and offered suggestions that they considered may be beneficial. The following principles and concepts distilled from the monastics descriptions of lived ethics may be considered as to their utility within the development of second-generation MBIs.

1. Psychoeducation: The rationale for ethics could be outlined by highlighting a) the value westerners have of people who epitomize ethical qualities e.g., when people are reliable; b) this could take place as a process of enquiry e.g., value clarification: Enquiring about what ethical qualities they value in others, themselves; c) the potential benefits of ethical adherence e.g., flourishing, maturation, beneficial mental states and emotions, self-development, compassionate care leading to connectedness and relational harmony; d) how ethical training develops self-regulatory skills that enhances authenticity and wellbeing and can facilitate adherence to their life's purpose through recognition of goal conflicts and strategies to overcome with them.
2. The Five Precepts: Amaro (2015) suggested the precepts could be presented as guidelines for behaviour that may "help you reduce stress and live comfortably, if you are interested you could try and see what the effects are" (p. 68). The five precepts could be represented as a modernized training framework. For example, in the Five Mindfulness Trainings (Hanh, 2015), the first precept that prohibits killing

living beings has been reframed as “reverence for life”, which incorporates both restraint of killing, not to support killing in the world and the development of “openness, non-discrimination and non-attachment to views”, which counters violence and dogma in oneself and the world (p. 1). Thus, it includes the dual aspects of ethics as both restraint and proactive engagement and makes explicit the positive framing that westerners value. Furthermore, it promotes ethical action both at the individual and community level and includes an ethical response to modern issues such as care for the environment and consumption of media. However, Hanh (2015) used concepts that he has coined such as “interbeing” that are less applicable to a secular setting (p. 1). Monteiro and colleagues (2010) developed the Five Skillful Habits, which is a psychologically orientated adaptation that emphasizes behavioural practices within each precept’s subcategory of body, emotions, sensations, and thoughts, which offers utility for the practice orientated westerner. However, the focus is on the self, which misses the inclusive orientation intrinsic to Buddhist ethics and wellbeing. Also absent, is an orientation to right view and enquiry into causality that drives the intrinsic motivation to ethical engagement that leads to enhanced effort, persistence, and enjoyment. Hence, an ethical framework based on the precepts requires further development that includes the following principles outlined below.

3. Principles only: An ethical framework may shift MBIs away from their perceived secularization. Therefore, the following could be offered as alternatives to the five precepts or integrated into an ethical framework: a) Investigative Enquiry:

Mindfulness of everyday phenomena, motivations, and reflection of motivations, thoughts, actions, and consequences to develop ethical discernment of causality; b) enhance intrinsic motivation through directed awareness to associations of ethical behaviours and their beneficial outcomes; c) training in self-regulation strategies to enhance ethical adherence and circumvent or lessen conflict; d) training in replacement behaviours e.g., skilled communication; e) compassion training; f) the previous principles provide a base for ethical engagement. Ethical action based on the dual nature of lived ethics could focus on fostering beneficial behaviours of body, speech, mind (e.g., thoughts, intentions), development of compassion and discouraging unskillful actions. This could be based on two thoughts, or similar constructs as growing flowers and pulling weeds.

4. Compassion and inclusivity: Amaro (2015) suggested that living according to ethical standards could be introduced as an extension of compassion where the development of a more holistic mindfulness will naturally lead to an inclination to live ethically. Some of the participants suggested the brahmavihārās could be used as a framework of ethics, but this would require more translatory work to be acceptable for a western audience. Three principles of compassion: Compassionate care orientated towards others wellbeing (Based in wise compassion and not synonymous with people pleasing, trauma safety responses e.g., from domestic violence, or enabling); Shared humanity derived from understandings of shared needs to be happy and not suffer; Positive construals developed from attention to beneficial aspects of others.

Furthermore, this could include practices like paying it forward or putting money on other people's parking meters.

5. Useful conceptualizations for therapists to support power sharing, humility, and counter implicit othering: Reflections on shared humanity, commonalities of suffering and shared goals of happiness.

Limitations of the Study

The potential pool of participants was limited, with few western monastics in Aotearoa, and the broad delineation of a westerner encompasses multiple nationalities with intersecting identities. This meant that any participant from any Buddhist tradition was included: One that was recently disrobed, a Thai-New Zealander, an Australian, and a Samoan/Māori/New Zealander. Thus, these broad criteria may not entirely fit with IPA requirements of homogeneity, but the life choice to take up a life of robes I considered a strong homogenizing factor. Also, I noted there was a lot of convergence between the participants' narratives irrelevant of their lineage they followed. Conversely, the way the participants responded to, emphasized different sections, and enacted the interviews was divergent. One came prepared with written answers, another did not answer directly from the questions and gave more of a dhamma talk with part direct transmission from their teacher, and another chose to answer only the questions they felt competent in. The participant that differed most was Avisaggatā, who was a Thai-New Zealander and perhaps because of his values and absorption within the Asian community in Aotearoa/NZ, he identified more with this view where he identified with an other-orientation. With several participants, I opted in some ways for a more nomothetic approach that loses some of the less data rich disparate points. In retrospect, and as other

authors have recommended, less participants for IPA Masters study would have allowed for a more in-depth analysis.

Some of the participants were known to me prior to the interview. My friendship with Dhammavicaya spanned nine years and my acquaintance with Avisaggatā for three years. On reflection, this may have influenced Avisaggatā's participation and divulgence of personal aspects of his narrative, whereas Dhammavicaya would likely have participated whether or not I was known to her. However, her interview was longer than the others, thus she invested more time, asked more questions leading to divergence from the interview, and gave more feedback. Also, I think having pre-existing understandings of their views and background, gave me a better understanding of how their views informed their narratives.

As Dhammavicaya noted, there is a wealth of knowledge to be mined. To assess the applicability to clinical applications, enhance accessibility of the teachings, and not lose their essential meanings, further exploratory and translatory work may offer utility e.g., of the Abhidhamma; or enquiry into concepts such as dependent origination and non-self. There were few studies on the benefits of Buddhist ethics in western literature. For example, some of Monteiro and colleagues (2019) later work suggested tradition congruent MBIs were valued by participants, and a recent study suggested adherence to the five precepts, lessens perceived stress and the concomitant outcome of depression (Wongpakaran et al., 2022). However, second-generation adaptations of MBIs that include ethics and their outcomes needs further development. In addition, there is a wealth of literature on ethics (purportedly 1000s of articles) written in Thai that has yet to be considered in extant western literature that could potentially further inform development of future MBIs (Thai Texts Online. In Wongpakaran et al., 2022). A further tentative suggestion would be for

psychological researchers to collaborate with the Buddhist community in the development of an ethics based MBI fusion to encourage perspective taking, clarification of meanings, and reduce potential misunderstandings.

Conclusion

This analysis assessed the potential contribution of ethics to MBIs through explorations of lived experience of monastics grounded in western and Buddhist understandings. Buddhist ethics provided a means to shape and change one's inner world and outer responses orientated towards collective flourishing. The precepts offered a framework that can be adhered to that supports the development of a compassionate ethos through restraint from harm and beneficial actions of body, speech, and mind to fulfil the aims of flourishing. The basis of adherence is learned ethical discernment rather than dogmatic obedience where mindfulness is engaged in an investigative enquiry of subjective experiences to enhance understandings of the causal relationships and processes that underpin emergent experiences of phenomena. The discernment of the causes of suffering or happiness facilitates agentic decision-making, and awareness of the associations between ethical behaviour and their benefits, enhances intrinsic motivation for ethical adherence and circumvents potential sources of conflict that would otherwise lead to suffering. Thus, Buddhist ethics is an intentional mental training that fosters the capacity for authentic, value-congruent behaviour aligned to wellbeing goals.

Buddhist ethics was positioned to fulfil universal human needs of wellbeing, connection, and happiness and to counter the harms of modern society. At the individual level, adherence to ethical living leads to psychosocial maturation that fulfils psychological conceptualizations of wellbeing and flourishing, which provided rationale for inclusion in MBIs. The precepts could be adopted by

MBIs, but because of westerners' misperceptions, either modifications of the precepts or adaptations that utilize the principles of ethics and understandings drawn from SDT may offer an alternative framing. Thus, Buddhist ethics was considered pertinent to modern society and through adaptation could be relevant to secular psychology and MBIs.

The demystification of the purpose, principles, and benefits of Buddhist ethics counters assumptions that to include ethics in MBIs requires dogmatic adherence to absolutist moral codes based on eastern historic values (e.g., Lindahl, 2015). Instead, the reconstitution of ethics alongside mindfulness translated into scientific terminology may provide a prophylaxis for society in the pursuit of collective transformation and flourishing. Ethics are central to psychological concerns, where therapists deal with the ramifications of unethical behaviours (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence). Therapeutic forms of psychology focus primarily on the treatment of disorders retrospectively, to reduce psychological distress and enhance psychological functioning. Integration of ethics in second generation MBIs may offer a form of preventative intervention that provides mental training that removes the causes of personal and relational suffering (e.g., othering), and contributes towards the maturation and wellbeing of society.

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Appendix 1. Research Proposal: Project Summary and Ethics Analysis

Are Traditional Buddhist Ethics Relevant to a Contemporary Secular Audience? A Proposed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Western Monastics.

Project Summary

The exclusion of explicit ethics practices from Buddhist derived mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs, e.g., Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) has led to some concerns from Buddhist scholars. However, it is unknown how applicable Buddhist ethics are for a largely secular audience in a western context. Monastics whose lives traverse both traditional Buddhist practices and western frames of reference are uniquely situated to add to the ongoing dialogue between Buddhism and Psychology. Thus, this potential research will explore the relevance of Buddhist-based ethics to contemporary western society and MBIs through the perspectives and lived experiences of monastics from Aotearoa/NZ.

Prospective participants (*n*=6-10) would be selected purposively from Buddhist Monasteries in Aotearoa/NZ via invitation letters. A semi-structured interview format would be used investigate how Buddhist ethics: (1) Are enacted in daily life, (2) impact the participant's wellbeing, and (3) may be a challenge to adhere to. Drawing on the participants' experiences in a western context, their perspectives would be elicited on (4) the applicability (or not) of Buddhist ethics for modern society and (5) lack of explicit ethics training in contemporary mindfulness practices. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method that offers researchers the opportunity to examine the phenomena of lived experiences in-depth, making it suitable to the aims of this proposed to study to examine the participants stories and perspectives.

Ethical Analysis

Ethical considerations of the proposed study have been informed by the MUHEC Code, NZPS Ethics Code, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and my supervisor. I also spoke to an ethics advisor to clarify some aspects of the ethics application and conflict of interest. The pros, cons, and alternatives of the research methodology has been considered and on reflection the IPA research process is perhaps less harmful than alternatives and will have the most benefits for the prospective study. The IPA research process is a participant orientated approach that shows respect and sensitivity towards participants, thus is consistent with ethical aims of harm reduction and beneficence of a low-risk research project. Using a semi-structured interview with open ended questions allows participants to express themselves as they wish and is perhaps no more stressful than what may be encountered in daily life. Also, some researchers suggest this approach enhances the research relationship. Furthermore, monastics likely do daily practices such as meditation, which helps to reduce stress – thus they may be more resilient to research stressors than the general population. Although not the intention of the interviews, potentially conversations about ethical issues could lead to participants

revealing sensitive/personal information e.g., if they gave personal examples of ethically related conduct. However, the intention is to have a conversation akin to what one would have at a public conference, and this will be made clear with the process of informed consent.

Another consideration is that monastics often have a public persona with details of their life known to their communities. Therefore, especial care will be taken to ensure the privacy of the participant.

Additionally, I am currently the chairperson (voluntary) of the NZ Bhikkhuni Sangha Trust (charitable), which is in the process of establishing a centre in Hamilton (2-3 years in the future) that support female monastics. This may be "perceived" as a potential conflict of interest and to impact research integrity from a value-free research perspective (i.e., positivist paradigm). As there is no benefit of this research to the trust and I am not in a position of authority over any monastics, this is not an "actual" conflict of interest i.e., they would not feel coerced to participate, nor are participants restricted to this organisation.

How Ethical Issues will be Addressed

Respect and autonomy - conflict of interest, sensitive information: The participants will be informed of the research process, intention that this be a conversation akin to a public conference, voluntary nature of participation, and their rights to withdraw from research at any time.

Responsible caring of vulnerable: The participants will be 18 years or older and excluded if in psychological treatment to reduce the potential of harm.

Respect for diversity and cultural sensitivity: I will reflect on my own cultural assumptions and interpretations as part of the IPA process. If a participant identifies as Maori, I will acknowledge this, the universities commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, my own positioning as an ally, and my openness to any tikanga to ground the interview (e.g., mihimihi). This is to ensure as much as possible that the research process respects diversity and does not enact imperial tools of colonization.

Privacy and confidentiality: The participant’s confidentiality and privacy will be protected and anonymized, and consent gained for use of the data. Voice recordings will be stored on a password/biometric protected computer, used solely for this project, and be disposed of at the conclusion of the study. Should the participant of their own volition bring up any information that could be considered sensitive, this would be protected through the above anonymization processes.

Responsible research conduct - integrity, transparency. Doing a qualitative IPA study makes the researcher's values explicit. The process of analysis will include reflection on how my role as a trustee for the NZBST impacts the research and this will be expressed in the write up as is appropriate for a qualitative IPA study. IPA is considered a participant orientated approach that shows respect and sensitivity towards participants, thus is consistent with ethical aims of harm reduction and beneficence.

Consultation

I have shared the skeleton research proposal with my supervisor - Heather Kempton. We have discussed its ethical implications, the process of low-risk notification, and full ethics process. We have considered whether the study requires further advice from the Māori community. Since non-secular Buddhist monastics are immersed in Buddhist cultural/ethical/spiritual practices it would likely be unnecessary. Furthermore, I have outlined my research proposal and sent the abstract to a Buddhist nun – Ayya Adhimutti and been given advice as to who to approach and other recommendations.

Appendix 2. Information Sheet

Are Buddhist Ethics Relevant to Contemporary Western Society and Mindfulness Based Interventions?

INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of the project is to explore the relevance of Buddhist ethics for western society and mindfulness-based interventions from the perspectives and experiences of western monastics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A small number of participants will be interviewed to provide an in-depth analysis, which will contribute to a master's thesis in psychology. This research will be done by Penelope Trevathan – a postgraduate student with a long-term practice and interest in Buddhism.

Background, Project Description, and Invitation to Participate

Buddhist derived Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) are used in psychology to enhance the wellbeing of individuals (e.g., Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction). These MBIs are based on the four foundations of mindfulness but have omitted any reference to Buddhism and explicit ethical trainings. This was done to enhance accessibility for a largely secular western audience in a clinical context. The omission of ethics represents a divergence from canonical teachings, which has led to concerns from the Buddhist community. Criticisms include that mindfulness uncoupled from ethics may result in misunderstanding, wrong mindfulness, passivity, lack of insight, misapplication (e.g., taught to the military), and limits the potential the benefits of MBIs to symptomatic relief. However, some researchers have queried the relevance of Buddhist ethics to both western contemporary society and in clinical applications. Monastics whose lives transect Buddhism and experience as a westerner may add meaningful insight to this ongoing dialogue between psychology and Buddhism. Therefore, I would like to extend an invitation to you or any other western monastics that you know that may be willing to participate in this study. If you are interested, please complete, and return the forms to the researcher.

Project Procedures

A semi-structured in-depth interview that is akin to a conversation or professional discussion will be used to explore the participant's experiences and perceptions on how Buddhist ethics: (1) Are enacted in daily life and (2) impact their wellbeing. Drawing on the monastic's experiences in a western context prior to ordination, their perspectives would be elicited on (3) the applicability (or not) of Buddhist ethics for western society and (4) how ethics may be a challenge for westerners to adhere

to. Further thoughts would be sought about (5) the lack of ethical practice in MBIs. This interview is expected to last 1-2 hours, with several open-ended questions to loosely guide the participant to express their views in their own words. Participation may be via zoom, phone call, or potentially in person and will last 1-2 hours. Furthermore, an optional diary exercise will be included that is to be completed prior to the interview. This may take about one hour in total with two diary entries to complete over a couple of weeks. The diary entries will outline the monastics day to day experience of ethical practices. Any of the materials that will be provided can be brought to the interview to support the discussion – including the diary entries and interview questions. A qualitative method of analysis (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) will be used to examine the details of the discussion and any diary entries, and this will be written up as a master's thesis.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

Participants will be recruited from monasteries in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Initially, the monasteries will be contacted by phone to outline the study and to ascertain the availability of participants that fulfil the selection criteria. A follow up invitation letter will then be emailed or sent to the potential participants along with an information sheet, participant consent form, confidentiality agreement, instructions for the optional diary entry, and a transcript release authority. Six to ten participants will be sought to participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. This is a small sample that is pragmatic for a lengthy analysis process that seeks in-depth understanding. The project is expected to be low risk - that is no more stressful than is expected in everyday life.

Selection criteria: 18 years and older, western monastic (robed or disrobed) who has lived at least five years in New Zealand (or other western country) prior to ordination.

Exclusion criteria: In current psychological treatment - in adherence to protecting the participant from potential stress.

Data Management

Interviews will be audio recorded and these will be transcribed verbatim. The participant will be invited to check the transcribed conversation and may adjust it. The transcribed interviews and diary entries will be analyzed using a process that accesses meanings as interpreted by the researcher. The participant's confidentiality and privacy will be protected through anonymization, and consent gained for use of the data. Audio recordings will be stored on a password/biometric protected computer, used solely for this project, and be disposed of at the conclusion of the study. Should the participant of their own volition bring up any information that could be considered sensitive, this would be protected through the above anonymization processes. Furthermore, the participant can have access to a summary of the research if requested.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any question*
- *withdraw from the study – the interviews will ideally be completed by September 2021*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded*
- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview*

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researcher or supervisor:

Researcher: Penelope Trevathan, penelope.trevathan@gmail.com

Supervisor: Heather Kempton, H.Kempton@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Are Buddhist Ethics Relevant to Contemporary Society and Mindfulness Based Interventions?

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ [print full name] _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Are Buddhist Ethics Relevant to Contemporary Society and Mindfulness Based Interventions?

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I ..... (Full Name - Printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project: Are Buddhist Ethics Relevant to Contemporary Society and Mindfulness Based Interventions?

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Are Buddhist Ethical Practices Relevant to Contemporary Society and Mindfulness Based Interventions

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....

Appendix 3. Optional Diary Exercise

OPTIONAL DIARY EXERCISE

Please reflect on your day and write about any experience where you engaged in ethical behaviour and note how you felt afterwards. Do you think this type of ethical behaviour has relevance to people today? This task can be completed one or two times over a couple of weeks prior to the interview and should take less than thirty minutes.

Appendix 4. Guidelines for the Interview

Interview Questions: Are Buddhist Ethics Relevant to Modern Society and Psychology?

In a nutshell: I'm interested whether you think Buddhist ethics are relevant to people today, whether they should be used in psychological interventions, and what their benefits may be…

The interview will be somewhat like a one-sided conversation that does not need to be based solely on the questions. Anything you wish to contribute is welcome. You are encouraged to speak freely and reflectively on the topic, develop ideas, include experiences and novel perspectives in as much detail as you wish to give. Also, feel free to ask questions, provide feedback, and choose to omit questions if you wish. I have included the questions below and some prompts that may give some ideas of what to speak about.

Could you briefly introduce yourself on how you came to be a Buddhist monastic… and if you have any experience/knowledge of mindfulness applications used in psychology (this is not necessary but provides context).

Experience:

***** Please can you tell me about the practice of Buddhist ethics (i.e., sīla/morality) and give me some examples of how this is enacted in daily life… How has the practice has changed for you over time…

Wellbeing

*What are the benefits of these ethical practices? How you feel… relationships with others… spiritual development…

Relevance to People Today

* Can you reflect on your own experience prior to ordination and how relevant Buddhist ethical practices may have been for you as a westerner?

* What do you think the barriers to doing Buddhist ethical practices are for westerners? precepts… western views of morality… restraint…NZ/Aotearoa alcohol culture… greed hatred delusion…

*How are Buddhist ethics relevant (or not relevant) to people today in consideration that they come from a different context (i.e., eastern, collectivist, ~2500 years ago)? Modern people… western… secular (worldly rather than religious) … universal ethics…

*Are any of the Buddhist ethics not relevant to westerners?

Mindfulness Based Interventions (Buddhist-derived psychological applications used to decrease stress, chronic pain, and depression) The omission of ethical practices from most Buddhist based mindfulness programs used in psychology has led to some debate. They were omitted to increase accessibility for westerners, assumptions that Buddhist ethics irrelevant, goes against psychological values of autonomy, benefits perhaps not fully considered, or how they could be integrated… Mindfulness in psychology is defined as present moment awareness with a non-judging attitude.

*Overall, what do you think about the psychological application of spiritual traditions in this case the application of Buddhist mindfulness practices in psychology? Pros… cons…

*How important is your ethical practice for the development of (right) mindfulness… or alternatively how would a lack of ethics impact mindfulness development? Attaining correct view… ethical discernment… factors of enlightenment… part of the noble eightfold path…

*With consideration of the prior question, what do you think about the application of mindfulness interventions without explicit ethical trainings?

*Do you think psychological applications should include Buddhist ethics and if so, which ones do you think would be most beneficial for westerners? If not, then why?

*How would having an ethical component potentially improve the outcomes of mindfulness interventions?

Prompts: Can you tell me a bit more about that?