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Buddhist Psychology (ACCEPTED MARCH 2010)

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Synonyms: The Psychology of Relational Buddhism, New Buddhist Psychology, Relational Dharma, Dharma/Dhamma Psychology.

Main Text

Question-1

Describe this discipline/sub-discipline and some of its most recent developments (Concise definition).

Born a prince some 100 generations ago in the clan of the Shakyas (kindness), the Buddha (awakened one), named Siddhartha (having all worldly wishes fulfilled) Gautama (most victorious on earth) before his awakening, was a fallible human being who lived at the foothills of the Himalayas in the Iron Age. Living comfortably, like many urban citizens nowadays, Siddhartha was eager to uncover life's meaning after observing *dukkha*: suffering due the predicament of birth, illness, aging, and death. Historically, his teaching (Dharma, Sanskrit) countered Brahmanism by contending "neither theism, nor a-theism". The Buddha's way was explained down the ages as a religious quest, metaphysics, ethics, and recently as a psychology. This is possible due to the principle of *upaya*, the "skillful method" enabling the Dharma to adjust to various cultures and times.

The term "Buddhist Psychology" (BP) was coined by C. Rhys Davids in her 1900 *Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*. She dealt with the Theravada (Elders') three baskets transmitted orally during four centuries and subsequently written down on palm leaves in the 1st century Before Common Era (BCE). The first basket is about rules for *bhikkhus*, Buddhist scholars, the second is about the Buddha's discourses, and the third contains abstractions of the discourses, made until the 5th century BCE. The size of these scriptures is about 10 times the bible. The size of the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Sanskrit scriptures, written during the 1st century BCE until the 12th/13th century, is about 50 times the bible. BP reflects a confluence of Buddhist scriptures and western psychological science. While psychology refers to the study of mind and behavior marked by the start of Wundt's laboratory (1879), the term "psychology" did not exist in the languages through which the Dharma is rendered. In BP the mind is not located in the head but in-between people's hearts. In first instance, BP aims at experiencing "emptiness", comparable to the universe's black hole dissolving everything and nothing. Emptiness is not a goal in itself but a reset point for pro-social behavior. Meditation awakens to **Dependent-Origination**-arising-peaking-subsiding-ceasing of experience, the Buddhist insight *par excellence*.

The Buddhist quest is to end *dukkha* by improving interpersonal conduct. Based on the enlightening view that "to be means to inter-be" a meaningful life is pursued through the **Immeasurables**, social meditations of loving kindness, empathic compassion, and shared joy, filling in the emptiness. These are serene actions to antidote the **Poisons** of greed (causing economic crises), hatred (causing global terrorism), and ignorance (causing daily misery). The most recent development is that BP concurs in many respects with Social Construction, a psychology emphasizing human interconnectedness by proposing "relational being" [1], by contending that "transcendental truths" are non-foundational (empty), and by asserting that

psychological processes are not so much under the skin as they are in-between people. Do individuals come together to form relationships or is it out of relational process that the idea of “independent agency” is derived?

Question-2

(a) To what extent does this discipline/sub-discipline self-identify as a science? How so? In what way, or why not at all?

BP identifies itself as a human science. C. Rhys Davids’ (1857-1942) pioneering endeavors might be considered as the first generation of BP studies founding a basis for two subsequent generations after WWII. Building on this “old” BP, a second generation is endowed by Padmasiri de Silva’s *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology* (1979, 4th revision: 2005), and David Kalupahana’s *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (1987). The second generation was also landmarked by Mahayana authors like: Daisetz Teitaru Suzuki (1870–1966), Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987), and Alan Watts (1915-1973). Psychology’s “grand old men” who embraced the Dharma were William James (1842-1910), Carl Jung (1875-1961), Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and Erich Fromm (1900-1980). The “psychobiologist” Francisco Varela (1946-2001) may be added to this list.

The third generation is primarily gathered since 1987 in the Dalai Lama’s “Mind & Life Institute” < www.mindandlife.org > which promotes a science of mind. To its inner core belongs: Allan Wallace, Daniel Goleman, Richard Davidson, Paul Ekman, and Jon Kabat-Zinn. The latter devised an outpatient training “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction” which sparked “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy” and a number of kindred programs < <http://marc.ucla.edu> >. Other cognitive-behavioral approaches have also included mindfulness, e.g., Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Whether these mindfulness meditation inspired approaches deserve the predicate Buddhist is questionable because they conceive mindfulness as a universal method and conceal its Buddhist origins for their patients [2]. A less known group, the Transcultural Society for Clinical Meditation, founded by Yutaka Haruki, is particularly committed to advance BP < <http://transcultural.meditation.googlepages.com> >. Promoting a “new” BP, this society integrates evidence-based data connecting the Dharma with psychology in order to arrive at a “social-constructivist-clinical-neuro-Buddhist-Psychology” [3, 4].

The *psychology of Social Construction* offers a meta-perspective asserting that truth, reality, knowledge, and facts are community based, that meaning, values, morality, and ethics are a cultural consensus, that objectivity is a relational achievement – *verstehen* is more important than *erklären* – and that language is a pragmatic tool to constitute non-foundational “truths”. *Clinical psychology* prescribes an evidence-based approach of outcome research. Belonging to the most effective and efficient, the cognitive-behavioral approach gets on well with most of the pan-Buddhist tenets, see Glossary. This accordance was explored by pioneers in the 1970s and 80s, particularly by William Mikulas, Padmal de Silva and Maurits Kwee [5]. As a *neuropsychology* BP is on the lookout for neuroscientific correlates of Buddhist concepts and practices. Initiated in the 1950s by neurophysiologists A. Kasamatsu, T. Hirai, and Y. Akishige, BP seeks, amongst others, for brain-based evidence of the Buddha’s 6th sense (mind’s eye) capable to perceive *dharmas* (the smallest units of experience) during meditation [6].

2(b) To what extent does this discipline/sub-discipline self-identify as a religion? How so? In what way, or why not at all?

Buddhist classical thought evolved from the Buddha’s pristine discourses as extant in the Theravada *suttas*’ onto the Mahayana *sutras* which criticize the early traditions as not pro-social enough. All scriptures were written from the 1st century BCE until the 7th century by anonymous authors. The *sutras* can be subdivided in the *Perfection of Wisdom sutras* and the

Buddha-womb sutras which include loose texts called *tantras*. Nagarjuna, also known as the second Buddha, commented on the wisdom *sutras* through his Madhyamaka school (2nd century) and expounded “emptiness only” to attain by a “via negativa”. This school alludes to an intermediate phase in an evolution that moved from the Buddha to the last innovation of the Yogacara “meditation only” school (4th century) championed by Asanga and Vasubandhu who commented on the Buddha-womb *sutras* and complemented Nagarjuna’s “emptiness of emptiness” which they regard as a *horror vacuum*. Their “via positiva” containing metaphysical flirtations, deemed to be merely cognitive representations against the backdrop of emptiness, eventually grew exponentially. A Mahayana sub-current, called Vajrayana (Adamantine Vehicle), foremost practiced in the Himalayas, evolved from Yogacara’s metaphor of deified Buddha-natures. Thus, an extensive cosmology developed; see Table 1 for a sample of categories. By having the teachings resemble a theistic religion, the *upaya* campaign succeeded in luring the meek into a declining Dharma.

Table 1: Vajrayana Divine Cosmology Against a Backdrop of Emptiness[©]

<i>Buddhanature</i>	<i>Vairocana</i>	<i>Akshobhya</i>	<i>Ratnasambhava</i>	<i>Amitabha</i>	<i>Amoghasiddhi</i>
<i>Meaning:</i>	Illuminating	Imperturbable	Jewel-born	Infinite Light	Invincible
<i>Color:</i>	White	Blue	Yellow	Red	Green
<i>Location:</i>	Centre	East	South	West	North
<i>Element:</i>	Void	Water	Earth	Fire	Wind
<i>Consciousness:</i>	Buddha Cs	Memory Cs	Self Cs	6 th Sense Cs	5 Senses Cs
<i>Awareness:</i>	Emptying	Mirroring	Harmonising	Discriminating	Accomplishing
<i>Affliction:</i>	Ignorance	Hatred	Pride	Greed	Envy
<i>Interbeing:</i>	Lovingkindness	Joy	Equanimity	Compassion	Friendliness

Question-3

What makes this discipline/subdiscipline distinctive among the other disciplines/subdisciplines?

BP is to be distinguished from the Dharma interpreted as a religion. As a clinical and neuropsychology, it bears strong resemblance with the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm widely used in cognitive-behavioral psychology. The Dharma as Social Construction applies a family of redefined terms. This is in accord with Wittgenstein’s observation that meanings of words are constructed while they are actively used by a community in service of its particular needs. Thus, a Dharma qua religion applies a “language game” of religion, while a Dharma qua psychology applies a “language game” of psychology. A social constructivist idiom of ten keywords is submitted in the following vocabulary:

- (1) Instead of Buddhism: *Dharma*. Translated as Buddh-“ism” which came to denote religion, philosophy, metaphysics, or ethics, the Dharma refers to a way of life for which there is no western equivalent. Nonetheless, Buddhism can be used as a container term like in “Relational Buddhism”. With a capital D, it is differentiated from *dharma* with a simple *d*: perceivables, conceivable, imaginables, knowables, memorables, dreams, illusions, and delusions; manifesting in protean versatility, they all continuously change qua form and content.
- (2) Instead of the 4 Noble Truths: **4-Ennobling Realities**. Truth smells of transcendence while *sacca* from which truth is derived might also mean real. Ennobling is preferred because one will not become a nobleman by walking the Buddhist talk. A similar rationale applies to the **8-Fold Balancing Practice**.
- (3) Instead of “right”: *balancing* (for *samma*) to denote eight factors entwined in a transforming practice: view-understanding, intention-thought, speech-communication, action-behavior, living-habitude, effort-commitment,

attention-concentration, and awareness-introspection. Obviously, right means not wrong. Because these are dualistic terms, non-dual balancing reflects the process of the “Middle Way”. BP offers a practical guide toward awakening to **Dependent Origination**, emptiness/**Not-self**, and interbeing while balancing in life’s journey. Balancing implies a spirit of equanimity/serenity. NB: dogma and sin are anathema in the Dharma.

(4) Instead of suffering: *dukkha* which refers to life’s non-satisfactoriness, hence the adjective “existential” is applicable. Due to existential impermanence, imperfection, and gnawing imbalances, *dukkha* is not a punishment or sacrifice but a disquieting “dis-ease” to be endured as regards to what the next moment will bring. This gives rise to agony due to angst, anguish, aversion, despair, discomfort, frustration, lamentation, misery, pain, sorrow, and stress. Enduring *dukkha* becomes cyclical through “rebirths” of emotional episodes.

(5) Instead of a paradise in the beyond, **Nirvana** as a state/trait of mental coolness; i.e. the result of extinction of ignorance-craving and its affective-behavioral ramifications (greed-grasping/hatred-clinging). While greed hides anxiety (fear of shortage) and sadness (grief of loss), hatred hides anger (other-blame) and depression (self-blame). It may also refer to happiness amidst adversity, smiling contentment, and silent emptiness.

(6) Instead of reward/punishment or fate, **Karma** as self-chosen intentional interaction (*Kamma Sutta*). The Buddhist **Karma** is not a “bank account” of demeanor like in the following mind-boggling teaching anecdote (*koan*). Once in 521, Bodhidharma visited the emperor Wu, a great patron of the Dharma. Having had built many priories, he asked what merit his generosity had earned. “No merit,” was the answer. Flabbergasted, he asked what the supreme essence of the Dharma is. “Vast emptiness, nothing holy,” was the reply. Finally, he asked, “Who are you?” “Don’t know,” said Bodhidharma alluding to “**Not-self**”.

(7) **Skandhas**: Behavior, Affect, Sensation, Imagery/Cognition, and awareness, these BASIC modalities, move in a flux, are anchored in biological processes and in social interactions. Constituting the “provisional self”, they are subject to habits of clinging/attachment. Ultimately, this self is empty which is obvious if its reified and abstract nature is understood. BASIC’s emptiness implies that there is no ghost in the machine nor a soul to identify with, a notion discarding reincarnation. The **Skandhas** are the Buddhist down-to-earth-all-and-everything dismissing metaphysics and a psychological cornerstone of interbeing.

(8) Instead of the Eurocentric term enlightenment, awakening which is the pristine meaning of *bodhi*. The root *budh* means “to be wakeful and aware of”, i.e. not to be illusioned by a self/soul or delusioned by a god. As from the age of enlightenment (18th century) scientists believe in “timeless truths” and declared the supremacy of rational-empirical/logical-positivistic science. Dharma illuminates by means of heartfelt interpersonal understanding rather than through the calculating mind.

(9) **Mara**: a projection of inner states. The seducing demon Mara symbolizes inner foes: i.e., fears of death, illusions of self/soul, delusions of celestial beings, and the six realms. The realms are: bliss-pride (gods), envy-struggle (demi-gods), greed-ignorance (animals), hate-anger (hell fires), craving-grasping (hungry ghosts), and doubting-clinging on the one hand and awakening-**Nirvana** on the other hand (humans).

(10) Because the Dharma does not acknowledge sinners and saints, the *arahant* is not a saint but someone who has overcome her/his proverbial inner enemies.

Question-4

To what extent does this discipline/sub-discipline see itself as relevant to, interested in the scholarly area called ‘Science and Religion’?

BP moves away from the Dharma viewed as a religion toward becoming a psychology of transformational dialogue. Although *upaya* permits presenting a “sky-god religion”, the Dharma is not a religion as commonly viewed. BP will not satisfy seekers of eternalism or annihilationism. Instead, a “neither all nor nothing” is proposed which cancels out the existence of a god as well as the non-existence of god, leaving us behind with “non-theistic emptiness”. Non-theistic means neither gnostic/theistic, nor agnostic/atheistic, and even not something in the middle: god is a non-issue. Instead, BP promotes mind’s emptiness as a reset point from where to cultivate pro-social feeling-thinking-interacting. Its sole aim is to end *dukkha* by an experiential/experimental understanding how the mind works. Not conducive to inner freedom, metaphysics, dogma, creed, belief, omniscience, miracles are viewed as impossible to confirm or deny non-sense. Never claiming to be a godly authority, the Buddha never assigned people to worship him. Notwithstanding, he is usually listed alongside Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. The Buddha does not belong to this Abrahamic Company because at bottom his Dharma considers godheads as delusional. Rather than god created man, the adage “first man created god and then god created man” is endorsed. Later adherents of the Chan/Zen denomination even admonished to kill the Buddha and advised to urinate on

Buddha statues or to clean ass with scriptures, thus clarifying that concepts are empty. Phenotypical similarities mask genotypical differences: vodka and water taste differently.

Question-5

What are the sources of authority for this discipline/sub-discipline? What makes these sources authoritative?

James, founding father of American psychology, embraced the Dharma as a psychology. He not only recognized its psychology, he also agreed on the notion of *Karma* (the interplay of intentional meaning and relational action), acknowledged that we “normally” are only half awake, drew on the Dharma when framing concepts, like e.g. the “stream of consciousness” and “pure” experience, and addressed the value of mindfulness on the wandering mind.

Question-6

What are the ethical principles that guide this discipline/sub-discipline?

Robin Hood’s morality is different from the sheriff’s. By the same token BP is a morality without ethics which concurs with the social constructivist “*non-foundational morality of collaborative practice*” [1]. Ethics are rooted in differing interpersonal values and variegated communal conduct. Because absolutisms are anathema, BP’s morality is based on relational motives. The focus is on the relational process itself in reflective negotiation and transformational dialogue as exemplified in the *Jataka* allegories wherein the Buddha lied and killed. Thus, Dharma is not a theory of ethics but a psychology of *Not-self* and interbeing. Avoiding karmic non-virtues of *body* (killing, stealing, misconduct), *speech* (lying, divisive/harsh/idle talk), and *mind* (envy, harmful intent, erroneous views), BP cultivates responsibility in relationships through: generosity, virtue, renunciation, insight, effort, forbearance, honesty, resolution, kindness, and equanimity.

BP and Social Construction view morality as a collaborative practice that goes beyond moral absolutism and relativism. It offers a morality continuum ranging from a rigid to a tolerant sense of “right”. Meaning on what one cares about in life is generated in togetherness and provides value in relationships. However, there are multiple voices within one community. What is acceptable in one relationship is not necessarily acceptable in another relationship. Various relationships generate various moralities. On the other hand, congealing moralities create a space of “them” and “badness”. If one group considers itself as morally just, others are bound to be wrong. The Buddhist stand is practical and submits that a morality that claims to be “transcendental truth” is inimical to human well-being. Because BP is not a set of rules the moralistic terms evil and good are avoided in favor of un/wholesomeness.

Question-7

What are the key values of this discipline/sub-discipline?

Although BP is not an ethical system, this does not imply that the Buddhist roadmap does not advance values. The Buddhist way of life embodies wholesomeness by cultivating virtue versus greed-hatred and savvy-wisdom versus ignorance. Known as the root *Poisons*, greed, hatred, and ignorance are to be eradicated for the sake of relational harmony; ignorance refers to unawareness of the mind’s functioning. Continuously lured by illusions and delusions, the mind, once awakened from enticing dreams is ready to cultivate the core virtues of the *Immeasurables*. These are relational stances to be multiplied through contemplation, visualization, and walking the talk. Teaching social meditations to as many people as possible is the Buddhist practice to make love go round in the world.

Question-8

How does this discipline/sub-discipline define/conceptualize the following:

Nature/world. BP deals with the world out-there as well as with the internal world which comes about by personal history in a cultural context and through a multitude of other

social influences. Dealing with a relationally generated mind, the **4-Ennobling Realities** is an interpersonal psychology: there is *duhkha* which originates and ceases in co-dependence, and the remedy is an **8-Fold Balancing Practice**. The nature of existence is determined by relational processes implying a view that the individual is an exponent of relationship and of the **3-Empirical Marks of Existence**. Due to the world's impermanence-imperfection, *duhkha* comes about: craving for permanence, grasping to perfection, and clinging on an abiding self. BP deconstructs erroneous views on self/I-me-mine. Although we need provisional tools in daily life, quasi self-identifications like a name, ultimately, there is no self. Whatever one says about self, it cannot be the same in the next moment of the flux.

Human Being as “biochemical-sensing-moving-thinking-emoting-relational-being” is accountable for intentional interaction. In **Karma** lies the opportunity for a turnaround despite an unfortunate past. According to a review intentional activity determines sustainable happiness for 40%, circumstances account for 10%, and genetic endowment explains 50% [7]. We are relational beings because we “inter-be” (*Avatamsaka Sutra*), as: (1) bodies conceived in sexual interaction, (2) interactive speech from the cradle to the grave, and (3) mind viewed as extended in-between people rather than as self-contained. Change comes about as effect in Body/Speech/Mind. The Body subsumes movements (*B*) and feelings (*A, S*), the Mind subsumes visualizing (*I*) and conceptualizing (*C*), and Speech subsumes *Inter*-relationships. Thus, the **BASIC-I** of interbeing is constructed. Body/Speech/Mind concurs with the Bio-Psycho-Social paradigm of self-organizing living systems operating through feedback and feedforward loops in self-perpetuating cyclical processes [4]. Body/Speech/Mind is thus a subsystem of an interpersonal meta-system called interbeing (*Heart Sutra*), which is equivalent to relational being which exists in interaction rather than behind the eyeballs [1]. Relational being implies the emptiness of solitary selves, the Buddhist proposition *par excellence*. Focusing on interactions, “you-me” binaries crumble; viewing persons as manifestations of relationships, individuals are empty of the private. Even thoughts cannot be solipsistic as they emerge from a history of language and relations. “Relational Interbeing” does not discard psychobiology, but completes our being humane.

Life, its origins, and death. BP's *raison d'être* is to end *duhkha*; thus, metaphysical questions remain unanswered (*Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta*). Instead of questioning – e.g. “Is the world eternal or not, or both, or neither?” – a simile is told on a man shot by a poison arrow to emphasize action. The man would die if rather than treating him one quizzes the archer's name, caste, appearance, home, the arrow's type, etc. Awakening does not require being a scientist or knowledge on the origin of life.

Once, the Buddha explained that he is a peerless *arahant* who had quenched his inner fires. Having attained **Nirvana**, he was going to beat the drum of “deathlessness” in a blind world (*Ariyapariyesana Sutta*). Deathless refers to liberation due to non-attachment – non-craving/non-grasping/non-clinging – to what is born and dies. Deathlessness is attained by uncovering the unborn, like in the Zen question: how does my face look like before I was born? Such is not a task of reconstruction; nothing can be done but to detach and “dis-solve” the question. **Nirvana** is featureless, colorless, tasteless, formless, and has been around like space, before realizing it's here. Deathless is a state/trait free from conditioning/conditionality from the concepts of birth and death by terminating the habit of attachment.

Notions of life after death and reincarnation are atavisms, indigenous cultural beliefs, which have become part of a local Dharma. There is nothing to transmigrate across lives without a soul. BP's rebirth is a cyclical emotional episode recurring as relational scenarios of depression, fear, anger, sadness, joy, love, or serenity. Other-worldly vagaries on rebirth are to be eschewed.

Reality of the unawakened is determined by the *sensorium* of the visible, hearable, smellable, tastable, and touchable. Reality of the meditator is determined by the mind's eye

able to perceive *dharmas*. BP hypothesizes that the neuroplastic brain functions as a sixth sense organ with the capacity to perceive the mind, its activities, and its contents. Meditation enables to see “things as they really become” and to discover that *dharmas* move in **Dependent Origination** (co-dependence, interdependence, or non-independence). Reality may be “true” in one community, but “false” in another one. Beyond community there is thundering silence. Like the self, reality is provisional, linguistically co-constructed, and arranged in a dance of meanings. Even if unveiled by science, data are man-made, inter-subjective, relative, and inextricably space-time-culture bound. Conceived as narratives they are amenable to amendment and to be replaced by better social constructions going forward. Actually, this is happening in the present transition of the Dharma from a religion towards a “Psychology of Relational Buddhism”.

Knowledge. The Buddhist community is studious. BP appreciates qualitative and quantitative research as provisional knowledge on three levels of inquiry: objective (3rd person neuropsychology), inter-subjective (2nd person social psychology), and subjective (1st person clinical psychology and meditation). Although objectivity is fictitious, it would be unwise to neglect statistical indexes, e.g. of the weather. BP endeavors to gain insight in the genesis of experience and in the nature of knowledge. Sensory data, even if neutrally observed, are biased by inference conditioned by cultural beliefs. Even objective validation of subjective experience by sophisticated brain imaging machines is guesswork and communal construction. Resorting to neuroscience seems to be another cultural conviction rather than a final revelation of mental states. Real for those who work within the tradition, it is questionable whether such mapping is *the* reflection of the world that should be privileged or is just another site of speculation. If no reality claim is privileged, there is no need to eradicate anything but to listen instead to the different voices which intersecting could spawn creative outcomes. Recognizing the pragmatics of knowledge in realizing awakening, BP advises not to carry a raft around once arrived at the other shore.

Truth. The concept of “transcendental truth” is anathema in BP which aims at experiencing emptiness via a dialectics of negation (“neither this, nor that”). We live in a provisional reality of meaning and values emerging from culture and history constructed in relationships and concatenated to action. Relationships create meaning which motivates action abandoning the invaluable while participating in new relational endeavors ever making new realities and ways of life possible. This understanding of truth and reality does not constitute a belief as it is not conclusive. Dharmic “truth”, if any, is non-dual: neither true nor false.

Perception is relevant in the unwholesomeness uprooting Buddhist meditations alluded to in the **8-Fold Balancing Practice**. The first step is to tame the restless mind by *dhyana* which is the cultivation of concentration by using the breath as an anchor. It works at one-pointedness, contentment, equanimity, and stillness (see Table 2).

Table 2: Quadrant of Mindfulness Meditation ©

MINDFULNESS: remember to keep a balanced mind in order to be able to dissolve <i>existential suffering</i>	Bare attention: perception of <i>dharmas</i> via the 6 senses (knowledge by description), in <i>attentiveness</i>	Choiceless awareness: 6 th sense <i>dharmas</i> ’ apperception (wisdom by acquaintance), in <i>clear comprehension</i>
Relaxed/gentle/focused concentration on object or process (by <i>dhyana</i>)	1.SAMATHA (Body/Mind) Calm/composure/tranquility/equanimity: <i>Quiescence</i>	2.SAMADHI (Body/Mind) Receptive absorption/flow-stabilization: <i>Nirvana</i>
Vigilant/alert introspection to discern un/wholesome Karma (by <i>watchfulness</i>)	3.VIPASSANA (Mind/Body) Insight in the causality of <i>Dependent Origination</i>	4.SUNYATA (Mind/Body) Emptiness, suchness, zero as a reset point (0): <i>Not-self</i>

Mindfulness aims at illuminating consciousness and consists of attention-concentration/awareness-introspection. *Dhyana* is a run-up to mindfulness, encompassing: Samatha meditation leading to Samadhi (stabilization) and Vipassana meditation leading to Sunyata (emptiness). While Samatha/Samadhi, comprising means and goals, operates like a metonym (there is no way to mindfulness, mindfulness is the way), Vipassana-Sunyata is purposeful by intending to further wise reflection. The quadrant clarifies that mindfulness starts by cultivating composure, tranquility, and equanimity of Body/Mind (including inner Speech) due to relaxed concentration and bare attention by neutrally observing perceptual stimuli. Practice shifts this quiescence into a non-suppressing state of stable flow in absorption due to gentle concentration on occurring *dharmas* in full presence and clear comprehension resulting in the extinction of emotional arousal (*Nirvana*). Having thus healed afflictions, one progresses onto cultivating Mind/Body (including inner Speech) by cleansing the doors of perception in order to be able to see in a “special way”, i.e. perceive “things as they really become” (in *Dependent Origination*). This insight comes about by remembering attentiveness and by being vigilantly watchful in discerning un/wholesome *Karma*. By staying heedful in wise introspection and in unclouded luminosity of clear comprehension and discernment, the mind gradually shifts and/or suddenly drops toward a bottomless emptiness/selflessness, also called: luminous “suchness” or liberating “zeroness”.

The slightly overlapping categories track a process of *social deconstruction* in order to start a process of *social reconstruction* through the *Immeasurables*. The *Sabbasava Sutta* advises to implement mindfulness “rightly” by introspecting karmic intentions/actions wisely, i.e. with a beginner’s mind. Note that “choiceless awareness” implies that there is no prejudice, sympathy, or antipathy for what occurs in the spaces of Body/Speech/Mind while observing *dharmas*. “Apperception” is a pre-conceptual perception in the absence of preconceived ideas. Thus telescoping our inner galaxies and using Body/Speech/Mind as a laboratory, we encounter *dharmas* which are empty on the ultimate level but full of affect on the provisional level. Inner speech, self-dialogue, or self-talk occurs during the entire process up to the point of emptiness. The mindfulness-based approaches mentioned in Question 2, i.e. the awareness arising by paying nonjudgmental attention on purpose and in the present moment, are limited to the first two quadrants and are not the pristine mindfulness by excluding BP [8] and its notions indispensable for understanding the Dharma, like *Dependent Origination*, emptiness/*Not-self*, and *Karma*.

Time is socially constructed, thus an illusion. Although based on consensus, time is within us rather than out-there. It is on agreement that we live in 2010 because most people follow the Christian calendar. Based on the year of the Buddha’s death (in 483 BCE), Buddhists contend that we live in 2493 (i.e. 2010 + 483).

Consciousness is like life itself enigmatic. Comparable to electricity, we cannot see consciousness but nonetheless we know it exists through its working like by our capacity to respond. Awareness is a function of consciousness which ranges from deep sleep to full alertness. Clarity of mind can be enhanced by cultivating mindfulness. The *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* refers to cultivating mindful awareness within four frames of reference: the body and its activities (feelings: sensations and emotions) and the mind and its activities (thoughts: visualizations and conceptions). Mindfulness is the general factor of subsequent practices comprising *12-Meditations*, i.e. on the body’s breathing, behaviors, organs, elements, decomposing, and feelings, and on the mind’s hindrances, modalities, senses, awakening factors, the *4-Ennobling Realities*, and the *8-Fold Balancing Practice*.

Rationality/reason. Mind usually functions at the pre-rational, irrational, and rational levels, seldom at the post-rational or wisdom level. Rationality renders the view that freedom of choice prevails in determining *Karma* or psychological fate. BP concurs with cognitive-behavior therapy, like Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy [9] and Cognitive Therapy [3, 4].

Both endorse the view that though we cannot control birds flying over our heads, we can prevent them from building nests in our minds. The *Sallatha Sutta* points at rationality as an outcome of meditation: hit by an arrow the unskilled mind grieves and laments, while the skilled mind is not distraught; it grieves and laments not. While the trained mind only feels bodily pain, the untrained mind feels bodily and mental pain as if hit by two arrows.

Mystery. Based on *suttas* [10], BP demystifies by emphasizing meditation and interpreting *sutras* in a non-metaphysical way. Although Mahayana with its more than 12 denominations including Zen is mysteriously exotic, the Vajrayana schools of Tibet with its many magical rituals are conspicuously secretive. Wisdom is hermeneutically locked in puzzling teachings; unlocking requires guru-worship.

Question-9

What additional issues/themes/concepts are especially relevant for this discipline/sub-discipline as regards ‘Science and Religion’ engagement? In what way are these issues/themes/concepts critical?

The concept of *Karma* carries religious and secular meanings causing a plethora of misunderstandings. In Brahmanism it is a law of cause and effect stretching across reincarnated lifetimes towards rejoining the Brahman. A judicial account of retribution, this *Karma* determines fate, like one’s caste. The Buddhist *Karma* renders a completely different meaning. The Buddhist pristine interpretation is psychological, not metaphysical. Action is a function of intention and conducive to its fruit: feeling/affect/emotion. In BP bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. “Evil” can be done without any purposeful intention. Without a god banking merit or demerit, BP is a psychological system of *Karma*-transformation and collaborative practice. Commemorating that the Buddha was a “karmavadin”, a craftsman who dealt with *Karma* and the motivating cause of un/wholesomeness (*Hetu Sutta*), the 21st century clinician/coach/activist might want to walk in his footsteps to alleviate *dukkha* and promote contentment for all. Hopefully, the present Psychology of Relational Buddhism is helpful to this end.

References

The referred *suttas* and *sutras* can be found in various translations on the internet by googling.

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Glossary of Terms (in bold-italics above)

Pan-Buddhist Core Themes/Terms relevant for Buddhist Psychology

- (1) The *4-Ennobling Realities* (Propositions, Experiences, Facts, Data, or Hypotheses)
- (2) The *8-Fold Balancing Practice* (a Middle Way of balanced savvy, virtue, and meditation)
- (3) The *5-Skandhas* (psychological modalities of mind or self: feeling-thought-interaction)
- (4) The Buddha's *Dependent Origination* (causality hypothesis of feeling-thought-interaction)
- (5) The "provisional self" and ultimate *Not-self* (no soul, thus no reincarnation)
- (6) The notion of *Karma* (intentional feeling/thought and concomitant relational action)
- (7) The state/trait of *Nirvana* (contentment/emptiness as unwholesome affects extinguish)
- (8) The *3-Poisons*: greed (anxiety/sadness), hatred (anger/depression), and mind's ignorance
- (9) The *4-Immeasurables* (social meditations augmenting kindness, compassion, and joy)
- (10) The *3-Empirical Marks of Existence* (*duhkha*, impermanence/imperfection, and non-self)