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**Section 3: Spiritual Approaches to Happiness (J. Henry, ed.)**

**Relational Buddhism: An Integrative Psychology Of Happiness Amidst Existential Suffering – Maurits G.T. Kwee<sup>1</sup>**

A symbol of happiness known by many is the fat laughing Buddha whose statue radiating blissful delight can be found in Chinese restaurants. Although revered by almost every Chinese as a reminder that life is to be enjoyed, few people are familiar with the story of the monk Chi-Tze and the Buddhist values of kindness, compassion, and joy that he represents. Buddhists in the Far East regard him as the future embodiment of loving-kindness (Maitreya) which stands for the ideal of a cordial humankind. In the Sino-Japanese tradition happiness does not come from the head but from the belly and to live from a big tummy means to be happy, joyful, and compassionate. Hotei is the Japanese name for this Chan/Zen figurehead who used to wander in the first half of the tenth century in the province of Fujien. He was known there as the hemp-bag monk as he carried a beggar's sack on his back. In his other hand he holds a gourd symbolizing "emptiness". His bag contains toys and sweets which he cheerfully gave away to children like a merry Santa Claus. He is often depicted surrounded by playful kids having fun. This conveys the message to celebrate life with a beginner's mind, i.e. by enjoying play and not worrying about winning or losing. Chi-Tze also exemplifies the idea that a serious subject can be addressed through humour. If there is no laughter, be suspicious.

He was eccentric, a quality in line with the Zen Buddhist love of absurd paradox. For example, when asked how old he is, he replied: "As old as space." His reply is taken to imply that life is to be lived mindfully here-and-now. Time is age-old but can only be experienced from moment to moment. One day he was in a village where someone asked him why he was wasting his time instead of teaching. He suddenly dropped his bag with a bang. People wondered: "What do you mean by that?", whereupon he said: "Drop your heavy burden, that's all!" Chi-Tze's bag was light; after all he only carried little presents, no burden of greed, hatred, or other woes of life. When the next question was fired: "Show us the way to awakening?" he immediately swung his bag on the shoulder and walked away with a gusty laugh, leaving the crowd puzzled behind. Picking up his bag indicates accepting that no-one can escape the suffering inherent in life, but by not allowing the world to live in our minds and by giving up clinging, grasping, and craving, we will be able to keep life's burden light and be happy. Chi-Tze's cosmic chuckle is a reminder that ordinary man is unhappy because

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he does not know that he is already happy (Fischer-Schreiber, Erhard, Friedrichs, and Diener, 1989).

The figure of Chi-Tze can also be found in the “ox-herding pictures” where he appeared in the tenth image depicting the happy-end of an awakening tale (Suzuki, 1956). The ox is a metaphor for the mind. The drawings help to explain the meditation stages. Briefly, the story tells of a seeker looking for Buddha-nature while he is already riding on it. While heading home on the ox in oblivion, the state of emptiness is unveiled to him. He mingles in the market place, indicating that an awakened person is not an escapist but lives a mundane social life. Clearing up the mind enables a happy life. Key aspects of the “bodyspeechmind” training required, as seen from the perspective of Zen Buddhism addressed below include the need to understand the monkey mind, the Buddha’s “not-self” psychology, the shift to an integrative Buddhist psychology, the practice of mindfulness and other meditations, the karma of happiness, and a relational map to happiness.

### **The monkey mind**

According to the Buddhist tradition the human predicament entails inescapable adversity, suffering, and non-satisfactoriness. As life is impermanent and imperfect it inheres in a state of being that is constantly unsatisfactory. In effect, we are all embarked on a ship with one destiny: sinking. The historical Buddha noted some 100 generations ago that existence is painful at birth and heads directly to death via illness and aging. According to the Buddha there is a way to overcome the painfulness of the gnawing mental imbalances that easily arise. In the spirit of free inquiry one needs to honestly ask oneself whether there is emotional balance here-and-now. If one is seriously unhappy and weakened due to a debilitating anxiety or a depressive condition some form of “talking cure” or even medication might be necessary prior to learning meditation. Only after having regained inner strength will the chances of successfully accomplishing a trajectory of striving for joy and happiness be increased. This is in line with what is known of the Buddha’s awakening. As narrated down the ages, the Buddha’s awakening was preceded by his abandoning the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The Buddha endorsed instead a subtle and stable psychological composure which he considered a *conditio sine qua non* to understand the liberating practice that he disseminated. His teaching, known as the “ennobling middle way”, comprises an eightfold entwined balancing practice to contentment. It is a path that balances: views, intentions, speech, action, living, effort, awareness, and attention.

Even after recovery from an emotional disorder through psychotherapy or other means the mind usually remains fuzzy and restless due to the hardships of life and particularly when defiled by ignorance of the workings of the mind, such as that manifested in the illusion of having a self and the delusion of believing in god(s) despite the extensive use of enticing god-like images by some Buddhist denominations. Buddhism does not involve any godhead and the Buddha dismissed metaphysics. He did not claim to be a prophet or assign people to worship him. By negating the existence of a god (theism) and negating the non-existence of a god (atheism), *non-theistic* emptiness remains which is to be filled by pro-social action. In

effect, the Buddha considered both a “god in the sky” and a more impersonal supernatural “one-and-only” as a delusion of the ignorant. Indeed, religious beliefs often befuddle the mind with absolutisms, dichotomous thinking, and the illusion of a self or soul transmigrating to some paradise in the beyond. The run-of-the-mill mind plagued by daily emotional imbalances due to ignorant and detrimental views about self may well profit from balancing attention and awareness through Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is the all-embracing meditative process that can clear and prepare the mind to practice a dozen other meditations offered by the Buddha to help humanity gain insight into how to end the misery of emotional suffering. Mindfulness, a multifaceted term, may take the form of being attentive, aware, and alert or vigilant (*Appamada Sutta*).<sup>2</sup> The latter is found in the Buddha’s admonishing to mindfully strive for discernment about what is wholesome and unwholesome. What is wholesome is not afflicted by greed (including fear and grief of loss), hatred (including anger and self-dejection), and ignorance (on how the mind works; illusions and delusions). Wholesomeness augments the relational qualities of loving-kindness, empathic compassion, shared joy, and mindful equanimity in speech to eventually benefit humanity.

The Buddha meditated until he found the key to end mental misery and felt liberation. This key, which is of a non-dual nature, is ineffable much like the concept of zero (emptiness) was for the ancient Greek mathematicians who allocated this “missing nothing” to the realm of the sacrosanct. We lack a linguistic foundation for understanding this, so words cannot replace what is experienced in meditation. Instead of worshipping the Buddha (nothing but a mere image or concept), one rather trains the mind to gain clarity on not-self and emptiness to pave the way toward happiness and become pro-social human beings. Indeed the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama declared that the purpose of life is to seek happiness and that his religion is loving-kindness.

Training the fuzzy, restless or monkey mind, as it is often called in Buddhism, is to control the mind by accepting or rather audaciously allowing, tolerating, and enduring *experiencing* to happen, which is not a passive or apathetic undergoing. This might sound paradoxical for an urban mind but it is the meditative way to calm the mind toward balance, composure, and peacefulness. Externally inactive or active, an allowing mentality permits the mind to open up resources and redirect its focus to transcend the seemingly uncontrollable. Transcendence is not a goal as Buddhism is not directed towards esoteric spheres where joy is indefatigable and suffering is eliminated forever, rather Buddhism is about self-transcendence which moves beyond a separated and isolated sense of self.

### **The psychology of “not-self”**

All major psychologies in the West, whether psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural, or existential/humanistic, endorse the idea of an abiding entity called self. This is in stark contrast to what the Buddha and Buddhist psychology put forward namely that the self is an

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<sup>2</sup> For the Buddha’s discourses, see [www.metta.lk](http://www.metta.lk) (*suttas*) and [www.e-sangha.com](http://www.e-sangha.com) (*sutras*).

illusion and that the pivotal understanding of not-self is indispensable in working toward happiness. Not-self can be unveiled in Buddhist analytical and insight meditation. Anchored in biological and interpersonal processes and moving in a flux the so-called self comprises the modalities of action, affect, sensation, imagery-cognition, and consciousness (awareness). These modalities, interrelated in “dependent origination”, arise and subside in concert impacting each other in circular causality. Ultimately there is no self because the modalities being in constant motion are empty even if reified and clung onto. Because there is no self to identify with, the Buddhist advice is not to attach to an illusory self. Notwithstanding, the advice to dis-attach from an eternal self or soul, the Buddha pragmatically acknowledged that there is a “provisional” (relative-empirical) self which is an indexing device serving practical purposes in society like having a name and an I.D.-card. Awakening to selflessness does not imply being out-of-orbit. On the contrary, “empty of self” one leads a meditative life full of affect, i.e. in kindness, compassion, and joy.

There is a convergence between the social constructionist and the Buddhist understanding of the self. Social constructionists might argue that in order to deal effectively with emotions one needs to appreciate them as relational performatives. The social constructional practice of viewing the other is based on the premise that whatever we do, think, or feel is infused by interpersonal meaning. Becoming deeply aware of this, it becomes clear that our “real” self consists of relational rather than self elements. If we nevertheless insist on having a self, the only feasible construction of self is a “relational self”. This concurs with the Buddhist non-foundational provisional self. Obviously, we are not our names (speech), nor our bodies, nor our minds. The relational self, a social construction based on impermanence, is not eternal either. The only reality we have is the present moment. A relational view of self replaces the traditional emphasis on the isolated mind with a socialized mind and “relational being” (Gergen, 2009).

Psychology is central to Buddhism because dealing with the self and not-self is a core subject. The Buddha himself alluded to the central role of psyche and psychology when stating (*Rohitassa Sutta*): “In this fathom-long living body with perceptions and thoughts lays the world, the arising and cessation of the world”. Unlike the proliferation of self psychologies, Buddhist psychology is the main not-self psychology to date. Its development can be discerned in four phases comprising an archaic, classical, modern, and postmodern period. The *archaic* period is a stage of philosophical psychology and starts with the discourses of the Buddha. It continues in the philosophical reflections as written down post the Buddha in a canonical book (the *Abhidhamma*). These “deeper” teachings were written by anonymous scholars up to the 5<sup>th</sup> century and seemingly left with an open end to be completed by successors. The *classical* period of Western interest is apparent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. William James (1890) was the first who recognized that Buddhism inheres in a psychology and who endorsed the notion of karma as the interplay of cognitive-affective intentions and manifest action. He also pointed to the value of meditation in mastering the mind. Rhys Davids coined the term “Buddhist psychology” in 1914.

The move to a *modern* Buddhist psychology is covered in numerous publications. For example De Silva (1979/2005) and Kalupahana (1987) address Buddhist psychology from the Theravada tradition of Early Buddhism. Later texts stemming from Mahayana Buddhism (as from c. 400 years after the Buddha) or “great vehicle” tradition have played a significant role in Buddhist psychology. They were introduced to a wider audience by among others D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) from the Zen tradition and Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987) from the Tibetan tradition. Various psychologists have expressed interest in Buddhist ideas including Jung (1875-1961), Maslow (1908-1970), Fromm (1900-1980) and Ellis (1913-2007). The present *Zeitgeist* in psychotherapy is very much in favour of Buddhist inspired approaches (e.g., Wallace & Shapiro, 2006; Sugamura, Haruki, & Koshikawa, 2007). Kabat-Zinn devised an 8-week outpatient Mindfulness-Based (MB) Stress Reduction Training that, since 1979, has been applied with thousands of patients with various chronic and debilitating maladies (see Langer chapter). Spin-offs include MB Cognitive Therapy, MB Relapse Prevention, and MB Eating Awareness Training. Mindfulness is also included in “Dialectical Behavior Therapy” and in “Acceptance and Commitment Therapy” (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

More recently, the “Mind and Life Institute” offers an ongoing dialogue between scientists, including psychologists, and Tibetan Buddhist scholars and coordinates programs like the “Cultivating Emotional Balance” research project. Many others are committed to furthering Buddhist psychology. For example the Transcultural Society for Clinical Meditation aims to integrate evidence-based data connecting Buddhism and psychology and establish a *postmodern* social constructional Buddhist psychology according to the principle of “skillful means” (*upaya*) (e.g., Kwee & Taams, 2006a; Kwee, 2009, <http://sites.google.com/site/transculturalmeditation/home> .

### **A “New Buddhist Psychology”**

New Buddhist Psychology addresses the social-clinical-and-neuropsychology of “bodyspeechmind” by linking work from 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspectives. Within *neuropsychology* there are attempts to link neuroscience's 3<sup>rd</sup> person “objective” level of inquiry with Buddhist concepts and practices. Attempts to explain neuroscientific knowledge in Buddhist psychological terms were initiated by neurophysiologists such as Kasamatsu, Hirai, and Akishige in the 1950s. Half a century later, neuroscientists (e.g., the late F. Varela, R. and Davidson) are still investigating the impact of Buddhist practices on hard-wired parameters. For a general review on the neuropsychology of consciousness, meditation, happiness, love, and wisdom, see Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007, Hanson, 2009, and Austin, 2010.

Notwithstanding the interesting findings, a social constructivist and relational Buddhist purview caution against any modernist claims based solely on “objective science”. From a relational stance it is doubtful whether cortical data accrued by sophisticated techniques of brain scanning of reasoning and emotional response can open up the mind to inspection as

human action is not intelligible in terms of neural activity. Although the cortex enables and limits activity, the human brain seems to primarily function as a tool of socially meaningful scenarios for action. To quote Gergen (2010, pp.18-19): “cultural life determines what we take to be the nature and importance of brain functioning.”

*Clinical psychology*, a 1<sup>st</sup> person “subjective” level of inquiry, draws on outcome studies as part of its evidence-based approach. To date, cognitive-behavioural psychology practiced by mental health clinicians and corporate well-being coaches appears to be among the most effective and efficient interventions. Interestingly, the methods, concepts, and rationale of the cognitive-behavioural approach coincide with the Buddhist *modus operandi* of meditation in a number of respects. This correspondence has been commented on a few decades back by frontrunners like W. Mikulas, P. De Silva, and M. Kwee (Kwee, 1990). Kwee and Taams (2010a) offer a recent account of Buddhist teachings as a cognitive-behavioural psychology. As described above, the application of mindfulness based approaches is now increasingly common in therapeutic practice.

Sparked by research on MB Cognitive Therapy (Teasdale, 2000), A.T. Beck (the founding father of Cognitive Therapy) had a historical dialogue with the Dalai Lama at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Cognitive Psychotherapy (see: Taams & Kwee, 2006). This groundbreaking summit included an extensive series of symposia on Buddhist psychology. The interface between Buddhist and cognitive-behavioural psychology (e.g., Christopher, 2003; Kwee & Ellis, 1998; Kwee & Taams, 2006b) paves the way for Buddhist happiness training. A number of approaches now found in Positive Psychology are arguably influenced by Buddhism, e.g., loving-kindness (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel 2008), compassion (Gilbert & Procter, 2006), and perhaps happiness and joy (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

A 2<sup>nd</sup> person “inter-subjective” level of inquiry such as that found in much European social psychology, often employs a social constructionist meta-psychological viewpoint contending that there are no “Transcendental Truths” and that reality, facts, as well as much of existential suffering, are man-made. This postmodern stance views reality as a communally-based consensus within a culture. Science and authority are considered to be relative. This framework of “*verstehen*” (understanding), highlights the need to eradicate certain Eurocentric/colonial tendencies to shape the Buddhist teachings into metaphysics and a sky-god religion, and to re-install some Buddhist key terms and concepts into their original meaning, such as the “Four Ennobling Realities” (instead of “Noble Truths”), karma as intentional choice-action (instead of inevitable destiny or fate), or nirvana as arousal extinction (instead of a paradise in the beyond) (Kwee, 2010d). Humans are “bodyspeechmind”: biochemical-sensing-moving-thinking-emoting-relational-constructs whose minds usually function at the pre-rational (child-like), irrational (foolish), and rational (scientific) levels, but seldom at the post-rational (wise) level, an aspect of which is to appreciate cultural relativity. On this level we are able to see and understand that to be means to “inter-be” and that to act is to “inter-act”, implying that what comes about happens in dependent origination between people. This enables us to understand the pervasive interconnectedness of humanity. Thrown from the cradle to the grave into a social web, we

cannot be self-contained. There is nothing that we can conceive of which is not injected by interpersonal meaning. Ensued from a history of interdependency, even “private worlds” are encapsulated in an inextricable relational network. Though we often take our socially embedded being for granted, interrelatedness is ubiquitous. Such a meta-vision views reality as a joint-venture, depicted in the Mahayana tradition as “Indra’s Jewel Net” (*Avatamsaka Sutra*) a matrix with at each juncture mirrors/beings reflecting and interpenetrating each other *ad infinitum*. Truth is culture-bound and can only be provisional, linguistically co-constructed, and negotiated in a dance of meanings. In the end it is not about revealing the truth but about unveiling reality as constructed (imbued with meaning): happiness is a relational event!

### **Buddhist meditations: one family**

Buddhist mindfulness as a means of accruing happiness, cultivated traditionally takes place in four frames of reference: the body, the body’s activities (i.e. feelings: perceptions and emotions), the mind, and the mind’s activities (i.e. thoughts: images and concepts) (*Mahasatipatthana Sutta*; [www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/mahasati.pdf](http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/mahasati.pdf)). It offers an overarching process to clear the mind as well as a skill to accompany various other meditations toward emptiness. These meditations refer to the body (breathing, behaviours, repulsiveness, elements, decomposing, and the senses) and to the mind (hindrances, modalities, perceptions, motivation, 4-enobling realities, and an 8-fold practice) (Kwee & Taams, 2010b). Formal meditation is generally practiced in a sitting position with the back held upright and if on a chair with the feet flat on the ground. Studies suggest that holding the back straight strengthens confidence and boosts positive mood, whereas a slouched posture invites or worsens dejection (Haruki, Homma, Umezawa, & Masaoka, 2001). The many other meditations include laughing, smiling, and singing meditations, and contemplations on kindness, compassion, and joy (see Ricard chapter). In effect, meditation is a *modus vivendi* to be applied throughout the day while sitting, lying, standing, and walking.

Mindfulness offers a scaffold for a meditative way of life comprising the balancing of attention-concentration (to discipline a wandering mind) and awareness-introspection (to understand karma and not-self). Operating in the sensory modality, it can be a process of and produce the outcome of inward concentration; through: attention (to the changeable foreground presence), awareness (of the changeable backdrop presence), and illuminating consciousness (of the unchangeable backdrop presence). Mindfulness as a process of awareness is the alert and luminous introspection (monitoring) of the smallest units of experience (*dhammas*) toward clear comprehension (*sampajana*) of things as they become in dependent origination. The first step is to tame the mind by concentrating attention usually on breathing. Table 1 presents the processes mindfulness entails: calming (*samatha*) which

engenders firming (*samadhi*)<sup>3</sup> and insight (*vipassana*) which engenders “emptiness” (*sunyata*).

**Table 1: Mindfulness Meditation Quadrant<sup>®</sup>**

MINDFULNESS: remember to keep a balanced body/mind-speech in order to be able to awaken from ignorance & to dissolve <i>existential/emotional suffering</i>	Bare attention: perception of the smallest units of experience (indirect knowledge, by description), in <i>attentiveness</i>	Impartial awareness: the mind’s apperception of thoughts (wisdom by acquaintance), in <i>luminous comprehension</i>
Relaxed/gentle/focused <i>one-pointed concentration</i> on object, i.e. process (now-to-now)	1. CALMING (Body/Mind)  Composure/quiescence  /equanimity: <i>tranquility</i>	2. FIRMING (Body/Mind)  Receptive absorption/flow-stabilization: <i>nirvana</i> (arousal extinction)
Vigilant/alert observation-introspection to discern un/wholesome karma by <i>watchfulness</i>	3. INSIGHT (Mind/Body)  Understanding the causality of things as they become in <i>dependent origination</i>	4. EMPTINESS (Mind/Body)  Liberating not-self or “suchness”, a blank mind as a reset point: (0)

The categories overlap slightly. The process from square 1 to 4 is a form of *social de-construction* (accompanied by Aha-experiences). Emptiness is not a goal in itself, a blank mind is a resetting point for electrifying the collaborative practice of *social re-construction* by contemplating and embodying kindness, compassion, and joy (accompanied by HaHa-experiences), and realizing what we already are.<sup>4</sup> Mindfulness works like a *metonym*: “there

<sup>3</sup> Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow” (1990) could be seen as a rediscovery of *samadhi* because descriptions of their essential features overlap. Both are considered to be an optimal experience while performing a skilled task (or while meditating) characterized by intense concentration, energized focus, complete absorption, total involvement, no sense of time or self, enjoyable and gratifying for its own sake, and no distracting thoughts entering the mind due to a single-minded immersion. Zen Buddhists refer to the state of spontaneous rapture as “going with the flow while nothing remains undone” which is typified by oneness or non-dual experiencing where there is neither-perception-nor-non-perception and neither-thinking-nor-non-thinking, an effortless-effort and non-controlling control due to a merging of action and awareness (Kwee, 2010a).

<sup>4</sup> These two processes are a relevant theme in the Mahayana teachings depicted on more than 1460 bas reliefs (panels of 2 by 1 meter) and by 504 sitting Buddha statues in 10 circumambulatory corridors of an immense *stupa* structure or dome-like building called the Borobudur – a UNESCO protected world wonder stemming from the year 800 – located on the island of Java (Indonesia) where this author was born. The visitor who ascends this huge pyramidal construction learns to meditate toward liberation as symbolized by the highest towering *empty* dome via the pictorial narratives and instructions on the panels. Once liberated, s/he begins the journey of descending back to the mundane world to fulfil the vow of practicing, in mindful equanimity, the social meditations of loving-kindness, compassion, and joy, and particularly the compassion meditation of offering (*kasih*) and receiving (*terima*), known in Tibet as *tonglen*, a legacy of Javanese Buddhism.



is no way to mindfulness, mindfulness is the way”. This is an insight that we are not going anywhere for we are “already there”, therefore nothing needs to be done (“the grass grows by itself”). Containing means and goals, mindfulness implies an effortless effort of a beginner’s mind with no aim and no agenda. However, at bottom mindfulness is purposeful as it furthers wise reflection on karma. It is advisable to practice mindfulness with a heedful introspection to the (un)wholesomeness of intentions and with illuminating insight. Impartial or “choiceless” awareness implies that there is no prejudice, sympathy, or antipathy for what appears in the space of “bodyspeechmind”. Apperception is a pre-conceptual perception excluding pre-conceived ideas (by definition conceptual and judgmental).

Davidson and Kabat-Zinn (2004, pp.150-152) explicitly de-contextualized their MB intervention by dismissing Buddhist psychology. They blatantly state that it “does not include Buddhist psychology”. Indeed, we see that MB applications are limited to attention regulation and operate only in the first two quadrants of Table 1. Kabat-Zinn’s (2003) describes a non-judgmental attitude in his working definition of mindfulness as the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose in the present moment to the unfolding of experience. This “Buddhist-lite” mindfulness generally deprives the practitioner of the quintessential insight into dependent origination and not-self, and from the introspection and reversal of karma, which lie at the heart of Buddhism. De-contextualizing mindfulness from its original Buddhist origins and re-contextualizing it into western psychological paradigms is seen by many in the East as disrespectful to their tradition (e.g., Kwee, 2010a). A reductionist conversion of mindfulness (if taken from Buddhism) to a magic bullet is disapproved of as a *chutzpah*. Thus, controlled trials employing mindfulness without the Buddhist essence have got little to do with the original conception of mindfulness which is embedded in the whole teaching.

### **Karma and “dependent origination”**

Dependent origination, the Buddha’s causality hypothesis and the crux of his awakening, contends that phenomena of the mind, things and events, arise, peak, subside, and cease to exist jointly. Focusing on events, psychologists, therapists, and coaches are interested in freedom from emotional suffering and in augmenting happiness (even if only to prevent relapse). This is in line with the Buddha’s activity during his life as a “karmavadin”, someone who deals with the “birth and rebirth of karmic episodes”. Working with clients, the *modus operandi* is to tackle one emotional happening at a time in retrospect. Although this is when the damage is already done, there is no other way to prepare for the next potentially hurting event. The interpersonal context of daily agony is evident and the rethinking and replaying of the dialogued drama is aimed at rendering relational scenarios leading to emotional harmony and eventually sustainable happiness. Thus for instance, the cognitive-behavioural psychologist discusses emotional vicissitudes in collaborative practice with the client. In each instance the client is trained to accrue satisfying results by avoiding deficit discourse with an

antagonist and by role playing a discourse which constructs the world and each other in a more promising way.

The cognitive-behavioural notion of a stimulus-organism-response shows certain parallels with Buddhist ideas of karma. Karma also emphasizes cognition and behaviour by highlighting intentional motivation/conation and behavioural (inter)action, here termed *intentional (inter)action*. These parallels are depicted in Table 2. The karma sequence starts with a sensory perception by one of the sense organs, immediately registered as sensory feeling relatively positive, neutral, or negative. This activating event on the input level of sensory feeling sparked by an external or internal stimulus can be discriminated as new or known. On the level of the organism, ignorance will result in irrational thoughts and beliefs: the illusion of self, the delusion of god(s), and unwholesome intentions and volitions (conation). They guide motivation by intensifying affect and emotions into unwholesome conduct and responses of greed-grasping and hatred-clinging which emanate from “bodyspeechmind” in an interpersonal context. Mindfulness can raise awareness of karmic activity which might consequently increase or decrease depending on the contingencies of learning. An emotional episode is part of a chain, preceded and followed by other episodes, thus forming vicious or virtuous karmic cycles.

Table 2: Parallels between Cognitive-Behavioural and Buddhist Micro-analytic Approaches to Emotional Episodes<sup>©</sup>

<i>Basic Cognitive-Behavioural Scheme</i>	<i>Multi-modal &amp; Tri-modal Assessment</i>	<i>The Buddha's Karma Sequence</i>
Stimulus  Discriminative  Generalized	Sensation ( <i>feeling</i> )	Awareness of sensory perception ( <i>felt: + / 0 / -</i> )
Organism  Cognitive  Somatic	Imagery ( <i>thinking</i> )  Cognition ( <i>thinking</i> )	Projections of ignorance: Illusion- <i>self</i> /Delusion- <i>god</i> Intention/conation/motive
Response  Emotional  Behavioural	Affect ( <i>feeling</i> )  Behaviour ( <i>doing</i> )	Craving “musts” & action of Greed-grasping and/or  Hatred-clinging
Contingency  Reinforcement	Interactions ( <i>doing</i> )  Biology/neurogenetics/	Body/Speech/Mind in interaction & in consciousness (to be mindfully aware of)

Punishment	Drives	
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The *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s sayings in 423 verses), a gem of world literature, clarifies:

We are what we *think*. All that we are arises with our *thoughts*. With our *thoughts* we make the world. *Speak* or *act* with an impure mind, and trouble will follow you as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.

We are what we *think*. All that we are arises with our *thoughts*. With our *thoughts* we make the world. *Speak* or *act* with a pure mind, and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakable... (Byrom, 2001).

The art of turning the karma of drama into happiness lies in our own hands. In Buddhist lore karmic happiness is considered to be an epiphenomenon that occurs amidst adversity and while in the pursuit of awakening.

Positive Psychology also sees a key place for intentional activity as a path to happiness, for example the application of strengths and virtues as a means of enabling individuals and communities to thrive. A well-known proposition suggests that sustainable happiness is determined by a genetic set-point (50%), circumstantial factors (10%), and intentional activity (40%) (Lyubomirsky, 2008).<sup>5</sup> The latter opens a window of opportunity for karmic happiness. If human beings are equipped with an idiosyncratic hardly modifiable set-point for happiness comparable with a set-point for weight or length, people with high set-points find it easier to be happy, and those with a lower set-point people have to work harder to achieve and maintain happiness under similar conditions. Many studies suggest that circumstances like age, health, education, status, income, country, or religion determine only a small percentage of happiness (see Veenhoven chapter). Happy people do not just sit around being happy but by making things happen intentionally, they can experience greater happiness than that suggested by their genetic set-point or set-range and life circumstances.

## Relational Buddhism

A social constructional Buddhist psychology offers a meta-psychological roadmap to happiness from the perspective of what I have coined “Relational Buddhism”. This centres round the concept of “relational inter-being” which blends “interbeing”, as relational awakening is called in the *Diamond Sutra* (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1998), with Gergen’s notions of “relational being” (2009). The idea of “relational inter-being” is derived from the awareness that human beings are interconnected. It focuses on individual being as the intersection of multiple relationships. A Buddhist stance implies that both our speech (inner talk and outer

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<sup>5</sup> Seligman’s (2002) “happiness equation”:  $H = S + C + V$  (Happiness = Set individual range + Circumstances of life + Voluntary controllable factors) suggests that temperament and environment limit happiness and that certain actions accrue happiness.

chatter) are directed toward a loving, empathic, and humorous outlook on life if we are to experience any happiness. Sagacity necessitates adherence to the relational scenarios of being kind, compassionate, and joyful with each other. From this perspective sustainable happiness is largely an interpersonal balancing experience and an epiphenomenon of harmonious relationships.

Relational Buddhism subscribes to the adage that “nobody is an island” and the reality that we live in dependent origination with the other ubiquitously present in our minds. The individual-social binary is recast to lose the artificial qualification of the individual as a separate agency independent from social processes. Mind is not confined within an individual’s subjective experience but is a continuous process between interacting individuals and from whom the experience derives its meaning. The attribution of meaning given to experience is (re)generated in co-action. Individual actors gain meaning through the enacted interpersonal process. Experience is a variety of relational action not unlike other actions. This view of experience as grounded in dialogical-narrative engagement does not mean the end of human conflict. However what we find psychologically painful can be transformed in collaborative practice dissolving the barriers of conflicting meanings. Rather than emphasizing deficiency we train people to talk positively, i.e. appreciatively.

The quest for happiness begins within our relational minds. Living in harmony (with)in our own relational selves offers the groundwork for interpersonal harmony. By demonstrating that the mind and mental processes are not so much in-between the ears as within interactions and that the “spiritual” is to be found in-between people rather than in the sky, the hope is to open up a postmodern window for happiness and the sacred. Happiness is accrued as a by-product while pursuing a meaningful life and cannot be gained as an end in itself. Intelligible meaning is created by co-action, not by a single individual’s solipsistic action. Thus, happiness necessitates awakened eyes that see our enmeshment in relationships through the language that we use. As there is no escape from relatedness, there is always someone in our actions. It is communal culture that determines our understanding of happiness. Whether an experience is happy or sad is shaped historically in the tradition we live by. Emotion and motivation are entwined in culturally immersed patterns. Relational contexts generate forestructures of experiential scenarios which make the subjective comprehensible. Hence, experiencing is part of a process of duplicating and replicating each other rather than an isolated phenomenon. It is through our dialogues that we give (re)birth to experience. By dismissing the subject-object duality as a foundation of experiencing, we might lift the self-other hiatus toward a deeper understanding and practice of relational inter-being.

While empiricists consider the person as autonomous, the validity of an independent agency is questionable. The individual actor in a continuing process of interpersonal dependence is inextricable from relational engagement. Relational inter-being implies that every individual action is embedded in a social network. If a private individual is held solely responsible for her/his action, one is positioned as an agent who takes a superior stance toward mortal others, the good, and the bad. Rather than relying on judgment of a human agency, action and responsibility are better viewed as the outcome of mutual relationships implanted in

intertwined networks. Instead of owning responsibility, the impact of togetherness is emphasized by making the inextricability of relational enmeshment transparent. This relational responsibility corresponds with the Buddhist quintessence of dependent origination. Based on the above reasoning, Relational Buddhism submits that personal happiness arises through an interpersonal orientation rather than the other way around.

## **In conclusion**

The art and science of sustainable happiness operates amidst existential suffering. This chapter argues for a social constructional perspective emphasizing the role of psychology in the transformation of cultural life. Psychology often offers the false promise that reality is controllable and that sufficient progress will alleviate suffering. Outcome results of specific therapeutic interventions for specific clients are insufficient. These studies have inherent flaws as there are simply too many variables to control (e.g., Toneatto & Nguyen, 2007; Mattes & Schraube, 2004; Ehrenreich, 2010). The Buddhist perspective of not-self/emptiness is non-foundational and practical. It views human functioning, including happiness, as a non-abiding cultural process of meaning creation. Shifting the location of the mind from behind the eye-balls to in-between interacting people shifts the focus on happiness to relational concerns. The Buddhist cultivation of a noble heart does not mean finding eternal cheerfulness but rather that one is turned-on to impartially infuse loving-kindness, compassion, and joy in much karmic activity.

We cannot all be a Chi-Tze, but perhaps the Buddhist spirit can be disseminated to those who are motivated (Kwee, 2010e). For the Buddhist activist the social is spiritual and to be pro-social is an immense task. The hope is that transcultural meditation-in-action based on the “Psychology of Relational Buddhism” will be able to secure down-to-earth happiness for all.

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