

Persuasion: the social construction of mindfulness

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19. July 2017

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Recommended Citation:

Smith, M., 2017. Persuasion: the social construction of mindfulness. *Institutional Repository of the Freie Universität Berlin*, [online] Available at: < http://edocs.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCs_document_000000029766 > [Accessed Day Month Year]

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful and inspiring daughter Ivy. A special thank you to Julia her mother and my friend. Thank you to all my family who are too many to name. Thank you for the vital support from my friends. Thank you to Prof. Dieter Ohr for his encouragement and understanding throughout my studies, and to Prof. Harald Wenzel and Dr. Justyna Stypińska for their kind encouragement and feedback. Importantly, a huge thank you to all the generous and warm people that took the time to speak with me and participate in my study.

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Introduction

The following thesis is a sociological inquiry into Western mindfulness. The English word “mindfulness” predates its ascription to the subject of this sociological inquiry. What is of interest here is *sati*, which in 1886 British scholar of the Pali language and founder of the *Pali Text Society*, Thomas Rhys Davids translated as *mindfulness*. The role of *sati* in all Buddhism streams of theological thought is highly significant and relates to many things. It is safe to say that *mindfulness* is an important religious and spiritual concept. This thesis will not be a theological or historical account of *sati*. This thesis *is* an empirical sociological inquiry into mindfulness based upon eleven participant accounts of mindfulness that were shared with me during interviews in Berlin, Germany between 2016 and 2017. The methodological underpinning of this thesis is an inductive one and is guided by a constructionist approach to grounded theory as my research intention was to be exploratory.

My interest into mindfulness derives from it quietly and incrementally becoming present in more parts of my life over the last years. It first came to my attention when my father mentioned that he attended a mindfulness group organised by the English charity *Mind*, I do remember that he spoke positively about it, although at that time I did not pay much attention to the topic. I found myself dipping my toe into mindfulness via YouTube for a short period of time when my own life went through a crisis since it’s practicality and availability to me was more useful to me than becoming preoccupied with the medical and therapeutic market in Berlin to which there existed either a financial or language barrier, as well as the limitations to my time and motivation.

Furthermore, in my employment at a business and management school I noticed the presences of mindfulness and mindfulness related books in the school’s library, and I often overheard the teachers and business coaches’ discussions over the topic of mindfulness. Mindfulness related articles are also becoming increasingly frequent in the press and media. Things seem to be culminating when there now exists in the UK; *The Mindfulness Initiative* that helped create the *Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group* that published the *Mindful Nation UK Report* (MAPPG, 2015). When I take my daughter to school I notice that on her classroom door is a sign saying *Achtsamkeit*, the German term for mindfulness

and on her teacher's desk lay a singing meditation bowl. On the way home, I also pass a Yoga (a practice that can overlap with mindfulness) studio named *Myway; Yoga ohne Om und Gong*. Naturally then, the principle motivation for carrying out this study was too simply try to comprehend what is going on, why has mindfulness come to be so present in Western society? What does it suggest? Does it come *mit* oder *ohne Om und Gong*? Why are people afraid of *Om und Gong*? Is it just a result of political and commercial Buddha Branding? I did not expect the outcome of this research to provide detailed answers to these questions (and it hasn't) but I did hope to arrive at a more knowledgeable position from which I could ask more refined questions in the future.

Procrastinating instead of writing my thesis and finding myself reading the news reports regarding the Grenfell Tower tragedy in London; reading about the tragic consequences of shoddy workmanship due to building contractors taking short-cuts to win contracts and maintain profits, precarious workers and crooked government counsellors; reminded me of a book that pertains to the same issues, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*. The book was influential for me because at the time of reading I was an apprentice electrician working in the building industry, therefore I could relate easily with the characters and scenes from the book and project myself into the story. The book depicts the reality of a building site in early twentieth century England, and plays on the themes of the social conditions of illness, suffering, the importance of your creative work, alienation, capitalism, and socialism. Some of the questions the story raises related to the questions that I was beginning to ask myself; why do we needlessly suffer? Why is there so much inequality? Why is life so complicated? Why is it that we can work and try to lead a good life but feel unrewarded and unhappy? Is there a solution? I turned to sociology to try to understand some of these questions.

I would hazard a guess and guess that many sociological students begin to study sociology for similar reasons as I did. Whilst sociology has no readymade answers to any of the questions above (so it seems so far), it does offer a paradigm with an expansive labyrinth of knowledge in which one can meander through to slowly discover and learn. The process of enculturating (*Bildung*) yourself sociologically as you walk through the labyrinth can potentially help you to personally develop a better understanding of the world you are a

part of and your relation to it rather than provide any quick or simple solutions to the problems that exist within it.

Sociology is a '*province of meaning*' (Schutz, 1973), it has its own language, history, backdrop, rituals and stories through which you can navigate. But, sociology is only one province of meaning or culture, and it is not only sociological students to which existential questions are pertinent. Different people will find different provinces that offer them the same chance to discover, learn and to find meaning in the world, some examples of those provinces are; literature, one's craft, music, maths, art, history or gardening. Based upon my research I believe that essentially mindfulness constitutes one such province of meaning, in which people can explore to the degree they are content with, to search for help for their own suffering or to understand their own existential questions. It can be reasonably argued that mindfulness, rather than being an altruistic culture, can be utilised and monetised for nefarious reasons, for economic greed or political manipulation, but the argument holds also for sociology and all other provinces. Provinces of meaning can *only* offer you meaning, which can be interpreted and enacted upon in infinite ways, but it is the actors within it that must choose how to act.

Constructionist Grounded Theory Methodology

The methodological framework of this thesis has followed a social constructionist grounded theory approach, as outlined in the work of Kathy Charmaz (2006). Adopting a constructionist grounded theory framework allowed me to compensate for the lack of extensive ethnographic research for this thesis with procedure, and all the while concurring with an interpretive and inductive process which is at the heart of this research. Importantly Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach gave my research a platform on which I could move beyond the philosophical and theoretical and in doing so gave me a clear methodological concept from which to conduct empirical research.

The grounded theory methodological (GT) approach was created in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and was outlined in their work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Glaser and Strauss's definition of the grounded theory method was "the discovery

of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.2). In simple terms, the GT is a research process that puts field work and participants first, and it is the field work and participant accounts that provided the ground for all further theorising and claims to be built upon and GT provides guidelines to do this in a systematic way. The original grounded theory was a synthesis that mirrored its creator’s backgrounds. Barney Glaser’s background partially stems from his time at Columbia University where he was heavily influenced by the positivistic and quantitative work of Paul Lazerfeld (Charmaz, 2006). Anselm Strauss’s background lay in the pragmatism of the Chicago School in which qualitative field research, human action, emergent processes and open-ended enquiry were primary characteristics of his outlook.

The rise of and increasing dominance of the positivistic and quantitativistic paradigm in the social sciences in the mid-20th century led to qualitative research to be criticised as being too ‘impressionistic, anecdotal, unsystematic and biased’ in contrast to the ‘unitary method of systematic observation, replicable experiments, operational definitions of concepts, logically deduced hypotheses, and confirmed evidence-often taken as *the* scientific method’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.4). Therefore, Glaser and Strauss responded by synthesizing Strauss’s epistemological background with Glaser’s practical guidelines for action. GT was the systematic strategy that via the production of mid-level theories made salient the inherent, latent and unique logic of qualitative analysis.

Glaser and Strauss appropriated language from the dominant scientific paradigm of the day to defend and validate qualitative analysis. The guidelines that Glaser and Strauss established for conducting grounded theory research were nevertheless supposed to be flexible in the same manner quantitative analysts are pragmatic in their own use and interpretation of numerical data. Whilst this strategy by Glaser and Strauss may have proved to be successful it soon came to be seen by more purists of the qualitative or interpretive world of social research as too positivistic and objectivist. There have been numerous developments of the original grounded theory method, including the divergent paths Glaser and Strauss both took in developing the method, it has been said that there are now as many grounded theory methods as there are grounded theorists (Dey, 1999, p.2). The one development that is of relevance to this study is the social constructionist adaptation of grounded theory.

A brief reading of *constructionist* or *constructivist* literature will quickly bring you to the conclusion that the two terms are often used interchangeably. That there is something important distinguishing the two terms can lead to confusion, particularly when it is mostly unclear whether an author intentionally selected one term over the other or not. The conflation of 'constructionism' and 'constructivism' is a probable result from the pressure sociology researchers feel to use a 'special language for these procedures' when in fact at the heart of much interpretive research terminology is the difficult yet simple process of 'watch, listen, ask, record, examine' (Schwandt, 1994, p.222). That said, I think if I am to continue using specific research terminology that I should do so with less ambiguity. Constructionism and constructivism for the most part share the same influences, lineage and perspective. According to Andrews (2012) 'constructivism proposed that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes whilst social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus' (p.39). In light of that important difference, the use of constructionism in this thesis is intended to refer to a social process rather than an individual one. I have used Charmaz's (2006) as a flexible guideline, not found her use of 'constructivist' problematic and I have no reason to deliberate on Charmaz's (2006) motivations on her use of the term 'constructivist'.

We are all constructionists in the sense that 'knowing' is an active social process and knowledge is socially constructed and our understandings of social knowledge can only ever be an interpretation. My account in this study is only my interpretation of a social phenomenon based primarily on the interpretations of the social actors with whom I spoke with, and requires your interpretation as a reader. Any agreement between the interpretations of the participants of this study, the reader and myself would be an achievement and would therefore point to something 'culturally believable' or there being a thread of 'common sense' (Andrews, 2012) that holds my interpretation together.

Social constructionists do not attempt to make ontological claims, they do not intend to make assertions of what reality is or make assertions regarding real objective elements that constitute that reality. Social constructionists make epistemological claims, on *how* we know, not on *what we know*. An important aspect of constructionist theory is that objective reality is intersubjectively created; it is created socially through social interaction. Social constructionists do not deny objective phenomena or an objective reality; for

example, constructionists (Andrews, 2012) would not claim a disease does not exist and that it is only a language construct, but would rather claim that study into the practices, communication and attitudes surrounding the disease would display how accepted knowledge regarding the disease is determined through social (intersubjective) interaction.

There is a forever ongoing dialectical relationship between social actor and society. The society, knowledge system or culture is a product of the interactions between social actors; and social actors are then nurtured in the very same culture or knowledge system that has been socially constructed. For the social actor to be successful in communicating effectively they are impelled to refer to and thus re-enforce the social knowledge system (culture) that they are a part of. Significantly, and what some critics often misunderstand, is that although our culture influences us, and influences whether a certain perspective or custom is to be accepted and integrated, it does not completely determine us; there is always potential through our creative endeavours to add to, adapt, and appropriate existing culture.

The validity or the 'belief-ability' of a claim is a matter to be decided socially, in a time and in a context rather than be inherent wholly as an essential element in the actual demonstration of the claim. That validity is contingent on the judgement of the audience, society or a community nullifies the oft criticism that knowledge becomes too relative and subjective in a constructionist view of the world. It is often cited that constructionist go from psychological claims to subjective claims to a theoretical claim (Schwandt, 1994); that the constructionist perspective paints a picture of a world congested with many subjective claims that have no reference point from which to be judged. With 'no notion of what constitutes truth' (Burr, 1995 in Andrews, 2012 pp. 43), critics claim that society would be drawn to inertia as there would be no ability to make logical decisions that would lead to action (Andrews, 2012 pp.43). The problem of validity and inertia are said to become real methodological problems rather than hypothetical problems when it comes to social research. The criticism though rests on a misunderstanding of social constructionism.

The primary premise of the misunderstanding of social constructionism is based on the misunderstanding that social constructionists make ontological claims, claims of *what* there is; when in fact constructionist only make epistemological claims, claims of *how* we come to know what there is. Crucially, as formerly stated, the validity of the claim is derived

socially. It is the audience, community, or society that *are* the reference points *and* arbiters of knowledge. Therefore, the problem of validity dissolves when we move the problem away from abstraction and instead anchor it into reality. If a claim makes an audience have belief in it (to be persuaded), then it will be accepted as valid; if a claim fails to persuade the audience (to make believe) it will not be accepted and validated. As already outlined the strategy of being persuasive and making a claim that can lead to action and change must be rooted in the *existing* culture, and as we shall discuss later in the paper, hold an affective connection with virtue.

The existing culture can be that of an office, a classroom, a village or a country and so forth. The more culturally heterodox a claim is deemed to be the higher probability that the claim will fall on deaf ears and fail to affect cultural taken-for-granted knowledge (*endoxa*). The more culturally orthodox a claim is the higher the probability that the claim will be validated and consequently integrated into the existing culture and thus have affected change. If a claim is perfectly compliant of course it will not likely cause change, unless such a compliant view causes some unintended reverberations. Claims that do not contain anything new, exotic, different or heterodox are not necessarily claims that require any persuasion at all, and would be better described as mundane statements or repetitions of already taken for granted knowledge.

A social constructionist view of communication is that it is culturally bounded at any given moment due to the necessity borne of the fact that communication is a social process and thereby requires a degree of mutually held *a priori* cultural beliefs. Time does not stand still though, therefore as an actor pushes out onto the boundary of what is culturally believable, they simultaneously shift and create a new boundary which now encompasses the actor's actions, allowing for yet more potential for change. Therefore, culture provides stability but allows for invention, in a similar vein to Talcott Parsons (1991) view of the social system, culture is a dynamic process consisting of a moving equilibrium that encapsulates social change.

The processes of culture, and equally true of society and personality, encapsulate change but the outcome or potential of change may not always show itself before it has been arrived at. An amount of intentionality, faith and imagination is required. A journey in a car provides a good example of the moving equilibrium and the possibility of arriving

somewhere new without at first seeing the possibility. As a safe driver you need to broadly scan the distant horizon ahead of you so to detect for possible signs and obstacles so that you can prepare to navigate them when they arrive. Instantaneously you need to narrow and funnel your attention down to what is immediately before the car so to control the car adequately and navigate the road where you are currently and to be attentive to any potential surprises which may require quick action. As a driver, you will only reach the horizon if you negate what is in front of you, but the horizon is limitless, as you reach it new vistas emerge ahead of you and the view in the rear-view mirror look altogether different. The fact that arriving at a desired place requires a journey is knowledge that is taken for granted. If you are in the city centre and wish to drive to the countryside, upon entering the car you do not quickly jump out of the car again and start dismantling the engine because you were disappointed to only see buildings through the windscreen rather than trees. Rather, you keep the intention and belief of going to the countryside in mind, even in the face of becoming lost, and negate street after street, horizon after horizon, until the countryside comes into view.

Society is a complex conglomerate of all our journeys and interactions and there is no sure way of knowing what vistas will emerge ahead of us. Even on an individual level we sometimes struggle holding consistent intentions or land at surprising places despite our best intentions (or worst intentions). What we do know though is that all our actions and interactions are an inescapable component of whatever emerges on a societal level as well as making us feel who we are and who we are perceived to be. Social research too, does not stand outside of society, it is a social activity. The relationship between social research and society is not a one-way process, it is a two process. The relationship between social research and society is not only a two-way process because of the subjectivity of the sociologist *during* and *within* the social research process but the two-way dialectical process continues *beyond and after* the conclusion of the social research. The process is what Anthony Giddens (1987) calls the '*double hermeneutic*'. There are many categories of 'reflexivity' in social research, Michael Lynch (2000) provides a thorough analysis of them all. I personally find the term 'double hermeneutic' preferable because it conveys well the interpretive process of social research. What is important here is to simply recognise that there is a recursive character between social research and society.

At the heart of socially constructed knowledge, culture and society, there is no hard drive, no engine room, no control centre, no centre and therefore it makes sense to think of it as a complex system in which system characteristics apply, for example, society does not equate to the sum of its individual members. The most valid knowledge or dominant knowledge that emerges from the system does so without one been able to accurately predict it to do so *a priori*. May be the best we can hope for is to understand (*verstehen*) the world we live in as much as we can and forego the comforting idea that we can have the full knowledge of the potential consequences that will emerge from an action taken before it has been taken.

The real consequences derived via a sequence of ongoing intersubjective interactions between social actors may result in the integration of derivate interpretations of the social research that are paradoxical to the intentions of the original social research and could ultimately condemn or devalue the original social research. This problem of interpretation can be illustrated in what we commonly refer to as '*following the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law*' as famously played out in William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Shylock interprets Venetian law literally by making claims for his 'pound of flesh' from Antonio as a penalty for unpaid dues which leads to Portia to rescue the situation to also insist upon the literal and exact translation of the law that and she successfully claims that 'not a jot of blood can be spilt' thereby making it impossible for Shylock to get his pound of flesh either literally or metaphorically. In contesting the meaning of the agreement, the original understanding of the agreement was lost.

The 'double hermeneutic' nature of social activity and hence social research is an explicit character of the grounded theory method. The constructionist researcher also acknowledges that the 'relationship between social actor(s) and social culture is non-linear and indeterminate and this principle is reflected in the approach of the constructionist researcher who instead prioritise 'sowing patterns and connections' rather than linear reasoning' (Charmaz, 2006, p.126). To aid the constructionist researcher to sow such patterns constant and recursive comparisons are made throughout the research and analysis process. The constant and recursive comparison within and between the researcher's field data, and between emerging interpretations and the field data, is the underlying dynamic from which the social researcher's interpretations develop and

emerge. It is a process that I have followed when working with the information that I have collected from the eleven people that I have interviewed on a one-to-one basis. The recursive and constant comparative process has also been a feature of the way the literature has been reviewed for this thesis.

The role of reviewing existing literature in grounded theory research is a problematic and debated aspect of GT. The original and puritan version of GT by Glaser and Strauss (1967) promotes the view that *if* a literature review is to be carried out it should be done so in the latter stages of a study, after data collection and after the completion of analysis. Resisting engagement with existing theories until the latter stages of the research process was an attempt to minimize the chance of repeating 'received theory' (Charmaz, 2006, p.165) instead of generating new theories. The problem of falling back onto existing theory was more a problem of the era Glaser and Strauss found themselves in, when big sociological theories dominated the scene, currently this is less of an issue.

The purist stance of keeping your mind empty of existing social theories before conducting research is logical when considering the historical roots of the grounded theory method, but adhering to the purist stance is more problematic. The role of existing literature in grounded theory is even an issue which Glaser and Strauss went on to fundamentally disagree upon (McGhee et al, 2007). There are two main problems regarding the role of existing literature in grounded theory research. The first issue is theoretical and abstract in nature but also has practical implications; the issue is, when and how to conduct a literature review? The second issue is how to write up and structure a thesis that employed the grounded theory method. It is important to briefly summarize these problems and for me to be clear on how my research and this present thesis has been formulated in relation to these two problems.

There exists a consensus that GT is an 'effective research strategy for topics which have been subject to relatively little research and about which there is a paucity of knowledge' (Dunne, p.116). But how is a researcher supposed to know if a subject area has been understudied or not without some form of a literature research at the very beginning of the research process? That is the first hurdle a researcher will face when applying a GT methodology, most likely they have realized that there this hurdle exists after they have already fallen at it since they would already have been guilty of gleaming over existing

literature on *what* they will study before getting into the finer methodological details of *how* they will study it. Without some amount of knowledge of the existing literature on the subject area it is also impossible to know the boundaries between the subject of your study and the 'other substantive areas' which Glaser and Strauss (1967) do recommend the researcher to constantly read. When intending to conduct exploratory research into a subject a researcher cannot know exactly what their subject area is and therefore be unable to know what they should *not* be reading and what they should be reading *around* (Dunne, 2001, p.116).

Social research can be messy and can be seemingly inefficient. One could take the general view that nothing is a waste of time, and positive outcomes are built upon previous errors and muddles that the researcher has had to navigate through. Glaser and Strauss though intended the withholding from an early literature review to prevent wasting time on reading literature that in the end you will have found to be incongruent with the field data that emerges from your research. Dunne (2011) argues that the goal of not wasting time when reading extant literature is contradicted by the advice to read intensely around the subject area. The ambiguity of the role of existing literature is further exasperated when Glaser (1978) advances the view that sensitivity and knowledge of existing theories is 'necessary for the grounded theorists to know many theoretical codes to be sensitive to rendering explicitly the subtleties of the relationship in his data' (Glaser, 1978, p.72). In effect, the grounded theory method from the purist stand point preaches that the researcher should be liberated and empowered but it simultaneously limits and devalues the researcher's ability to read what and when they themselves see to be fit by prescribing overbearing and cumbersome advice.

The judgement, discretion and extant knowledge of the researcher has an unavoidable role in their research. The social researcher is not an empty vessel or *tabula rasa* (Charmaz, 2006) and it is unrealistic to expect researchers to attempt to wipe clean from their memories any existing knowledge and to pretend that they are 'theoretical virgins' (Dunne, 2011 p.117). I find Dunne's (2011) claim that the 'open-mindedness of the researcher should not be mistaken for the empty mindedness of the researcher who is not adequately steeped in the research traditions of a discipline' (p.157) to be helpful and provides critical guidance on how to grapple with the role of existing knowledge of the subject and extant

sociological theories. Furthermore, what is critical is not the abstention of existing literature but the abstention from building an *a priori* conceptual framework from existing literature (McGhee et al, 2007) which all following field data would be shoehorned into.

The theory generated by the social researcher in GT should primarily be grounded in their field work, and their field work should not consist of the sole activity of looking for examples to prove an already existing theoretical framework. McGhee et al. (2007) believe that is helpful and valid to view literature as a source of data that the researcher can analyse concomitantly with the process of carrying out fieldwork, conceptualizing emerging patterns and building theory. The role of literature as data concurs with Dunne's (2011) view that the researcher be involved in on-going and reflexive process with literature of the substantive area. The most important benefits of being involved with an on-going reflexive process with existing literature are according to Dunne (2011, p.116); the building of an initial cogent rationale for a study; confirmation of whether the study has already been done or not; establishing gaps on existing knowledge of the subject area; it can help the researcher develop sensitising concepts and gain clarity about concepts; and, it helps the researcher become aware of rather than numb to unhelpful preconceptions.

The second problem of the literature review, a very practical problem that cannot be resolved as abstractedly, is that of the role of the literature review in the grounded theory method. Regardless if a literature review has been done in an on-going and reflexive process or if it has been done in the latter stages of the research process, presenting the literature review does not lend itself kindly to the conventional outline of research write-ups. The conventional thesis structure of preceding orderly from an introduction onwards to a literature review, methodology, results, and finally to a conclusion is incongruous with the role that the literature review has played and also to the GT process in general. GT creates another hurdle for the researcher to jump over because of the non-linear structure of the GT research process (Dunne, 2011). A linear structure is incongruous with the recursive "concurrent, iterative and integrative" dynamic in which "data collection, analysis and conceptual theorizing occur in parallel...from the outset" (McGhee et al, 2007, p.335). GT research is therefore not a natural counterpart to a social research representation that has a linear structure (Dunne, 2011).

If one pursues a purist GT process, the introduction of existing theory and literature to the reader only in the latter stages may be confusing and lead one to accidentally introduce extant theoretical concepts that may bulldoze and overshadow the more delicate emerging patterns and therefore undermine efforts to generate something new. If one pursues a non-purist GT process in which existing theories have been engaged with at every stage of the process, trying to disentangle, isolate and compartmentalize theory into a specific literature review or theoretical background section becomes a thankless and impossible task. To overcome the problem of the how to present theoretical knowledge into the formal structure of a written thesis, I have opted to follow the elementary spirit of a conventional master thesis structure rather than the actual recommended guidelines found in many 'How to Write Your Thesis' books. The simplest workable plan I could create to present the method, theory and findings of my research was to simply start giving an account of the process from the beginning, to take the first step and to proceed gradually *schritt für schritt*, and once finished, attempt to divide the content into relevant sections.

If this thesis presents itself on this paper in anyway as deductive, it is only because it is an after-the-fact account which has been edited to try to make a presentable linear thesis, the research from start to end though has been inductive and recursive. In effect, my interpretation is still unfolding as I write currently and further interrogate further reading along with the field data. Therefore, the content of the beginning of this master thesis to some degree will include the results from my research. The gradual approach that I have attempted is similar to the "contextualization" approach outlined by Dunne (2011). I have intended that the theoretical contextualization starts from the very beginning.

Mindfulness

The first literature review that I conducted confirmed that there was a scarcity of empirical sociological studies into Mindfulness. This despite mindfulness becoming a burgeoning topic of enquiry, even more so since the start of this study, for example there are now numerous handbooks on mindfulness (Brown, 2016; Didonna, 2010; Ostafin et al, 2015; Purser, 2016). Despite the current explosion of interest in mindfulness most academic

literature on mindfulness derives from in the disciplines of medicine, nursing, psychology social work, education, management, and even law, but for empirical sociological studies there have been few and far between. Amidst the excitement there has been only the occasional sociological study (Lacoban and Mårtensson,2016; Ortiz, 2015; Wu and Wenning, 2016), of note is Greta Wagner's (2015) provoking study on the relationship between capitalism, burnout and the emergence of mindfulness.

Other reading on mindfulness revealed a tension with-in Western Buddhism. Jeff Wilson (2013) and Ronald Purser (2015) both American Buddhists share views that contain critical issues on the emergence of mindfulness in the West. They both implore for there to be more research into the emergence and mainstreaming of mindfulness in the West because they view current research into mindfulness as too focused on the positive health benefits. The lack of empirical studies into Western mindfulness has not deterred some sociologist's from eagerly proclaiming that mindfulness can save and rejuvenate sociology and sociologists (Lee, 2015; Schipper, 2012; Song and Muschert, 2012). The purveyors of 'sociological mindfulness' (MacNevin, 2004) or a 'contemplative sociology' (Lee, 2015) raise some interesting points, but although I will quickly come back to the phenomenon in my conclusion I shall not be focusing on the merits of 'sociological mindfulness' or 'Buddhist sociology' (Schipper, 2012). Nevertheless, it is intriguing that these concepts have emerged and they re-enforce my initial motivations of understanding why and how has mindfulness become so present if not influential. The eagerness of the proponents of 'sociological mindfulness' despite the lacuna of social research into mindfulness provides a reason for me to pause and reflect on how my personal experience may have the potential to have an overly dominating effect on my research.

I have personally already had a small yet positive experience with mindfulness but throughout my study I was not only conscious of keeping the 'open mind' of a grounded theorist but I was also committed to having an 'agnostic' and 'indifferent' (Illouz, 2008) view of mindfulness. Eva Illouz's (2008) opening account in *Saving the Modern; Therapy, emotions and the culture of self-help* provides a good account of the healthy scientific or philosophic scepticism that comes with having an open mind rather than an empty one. By scepticism I do not mean suspicion, rather, I am in agreement with Illouz's stance of moving cultural studies 'away from the epistemology of suspicion on which it has too heavily relied'

(Ibid., p.4). I also I did not feel it wise or for it to be my duty to 'document the pernicious effects of the therapeutic discourse nor to discuss its emancipatory potential' (Ibid., p.4).

The principle of agnosticism in social research impels the researcher to take an amoral view towards social actors and their activity. In Illouz's (2008) words; 'I wish to analyse culture without presuming to know in advance what social relations should look like' (p.4). It is not for us to make ultimate judgements and having beliefs in how the social world should be and then measuring the world we find against such beliefs is antithetic to sociological research and the spirit of scientific study (Illouz, 2008). Keeping an open mind with a cold sceptical eye has admittedly not always been easy, even a geologist will feel emotions and be passionate about some rocks that they have unearthed, so it is natural to be become carried away with emotions occasionally when submerged in the evocative world of personal narratives and contemplation. The fact that I had no choice but to let time pass between each interview and between many stages of this research process helped me to retain some sense of objectivity and assisted me to be symmetrically balanced with my analysis.

One of the main criticisms that one can read regarding the emergence of mindfulness in the West, is that it promotes a form of 'social amnesia' (Purser, 2015). The social amnesia or *magical voluntarism* (Ibid.) characteristic ascribed to the emergence of Western mindfulness is supposed to describe a process in which social, political, historical, and economic problems are repressed and individualized. The general criticisms of mindfulness, such as the individualization of responsibility, the fetishization of being 'in the moment' and of being 'non-judgemental', correspond to neo-Foucauldian critiques of contemporary capitalism and management ideology (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002; Peters, 2009), which rely heavily on the concept of *governmentality*. Governmentality or micro-governmentality entails that an atomistic culture is encouraged which whilst not seen to be overtly authoritarian, is conducive to the emergence of a mentality in which we internalize certain concepts that lead us to govern ourselves in a fashion that is coincidentally non-confrontational and complimentary to the durability and re-enforcement of the political and economic status quo. Such critiques of positive psychology in general highlight the congruency between mindfulness and the rise of self-regulation and its

various manifestations, e.g. the 'enterprising self', which paradoxically can be forms of contemporary subjugation and control rather than a form of (self) liberation.

A typical example that would illustrate the problem of the 'individualization of responsibility' would be that if an employee is under a considerable amount of stress at work or suffering due to strained relationships. The automatic logic would be that the employee should turn their critical attention inwardly and consequently they could feel that they are not adequate as they are not handling the stress sufficiently. If someone is not handling stress sufficiently the natural conclusion is that they should develop better coping mechanisms to deal with stress, to be less *emotionally un-intelligent*. Critics argue that such a pattern of thinking is encouraged and supported by the various schools of self-help discourses that could fall under the rubric of positive psychology. It is argued, that by preaching a normative emotional model of being and directing attention inwards, self-help and human potential discourses dissuades employees on focusing their attention outwardly to structural and social issues.

The communitarian critique of mindfulness a very persuasive argument. The persuasiveness of the neo-Foucauldian critique is not only theoretically persuasive, it can also be well supported by the practices we see around us, such as the trend to 'flatten' hierarchies and encourage a 'familial' feeling rather than a collegial one, to informalise and even infantilise the work place (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002; Hughes, 2005) in the manner typical of Google and which many of the new brand dependent 'digital start-ups' are renowned for. In such environments, the wellbeing and desires of employees, or 'team members' are deeply valued and their collaboration and contribution are vital to the prosperity of the company which needs to find innovative solutions to the social and economic problem that we face that are now conveniently seen as a legacy of the past.

Although, a problem with some of the critiques that are built upon Foucauldian concepts such as *governmentality*, as Illouz (2008) points out, is that they become too sweeping and:

'concepts such a "surveillance", "bio-power", and "governmentality" ...do not take the critical capacities of actors seriously, they do not ask why actors are often deeply engaged by and engrossed with meanings and they do not differentiate between social spheres, collapsing them together under what the

French sociologist Phillippe Corcuff calls “bulldozer” concepts, concepts so all-encompassing that they end up flattening the complexity of the social. (Ibid., p.4).

Jason Hughes’s (2005) study is an excellent account of what we all know to be true, that if positive psychology discourses and new management ideologies are hiding forms of dominance; the people they are supposed to dominate become quickly attuned to the fact and find will ways to subvert it even without the help of sociologists or mindfulness training. Hughes’s (2005) article reminds us that people are not ‘cultural dopes’, and in the context of his study they do not need emotional intelligence training to detect what is going on around them. Rather than being unknowing victims, Hughes’s (2005) study illuminated the ways in which employees resisted emotionally intelligence based corporate colonisation of workers subjectivities. Typical the workers in Hughes’s (2005) study found many new ways to ‘show up their corporate parents’; they would play ‘*the good soldier*’ (for example, blissfully playing ignorant and following the letter of the law rather than the spirit of it) and adopt techniques such as ‘*scrimshanking*’, ‘*flannelling*’ or adopt other ‘*ironic dispositions*’ in which they would feign ignorance to politely disrupt certain practices. Employees and people have the sophistication to interpret the environment that they are in and when required, to create novel ways to resist forms of dominance.

Augustine, one of the last people I interviewed, brought my attention to the interplay between employees and businesses. According to relatively new amendments of German employment law (Germany, 2015; Reichl, 2014; Hucht, 2013) businesses are now obliged to actively prevent chronic illnesses that can be attributed to the work place, including for example, stress. The process from which this law has emerged may not have been a simple one but I would imagine that it was not employer driven. In the US, if a similar law does exist, and if it was driven by employees as well as insurance companies, politicians, individual claimants, then not all employees were happy if the outcome was more positive psychology; consequently, they have recently won the *legal right to not be happy at work* (Ferro, 2016). Mindfulness has grown into a very popular concept that many parties make claims upon for various reasons. I do not discount that the mindfulness phenomenon in some areas overlaps with new modes of management and control, but I suggest that where that does occur the process is likely to be too fuzzy for the governmentality concept.

Interviews

More significantly, the context of work or work organisations was largely absent from the discussions in the interviews that took place, therefore any theorising of mindfulness in the work place would have been groundless. Between November 2016 to January 2017 I interviewed eleven people in the city of Berlin. The average duration of the interviews was approximately one hour, in total I collected over eleven hours of recordings. The participants of my study came from varied backgrounds and were a mix of German citizens, European Union Citizens and an Australian. The professional backgrounds and the ages of the participants also varied. Regarding their professions; there was one student, three therapists, an academic, business proprietors, a business consultant, a monk, a person that worked in the electronic goods sector and a person that worked in the media. Their ages ranged from 23 years old to 50 years old. All the interviews took place at a place that was most convenient for the interviewee and were conducted in English.

The interviews I conducted were open-ended, which sounds easier than it was in reality. Naturally, potential participants wished to gain an idea of what kind of study they would be giving up their time for and who they would be sharing their potentially personal stories with. Some people required assurances that I was prepared and that I would not be wasting their time or letting them do all the work. When questioned as to what my research question was, I informed them that I did not have a specific question, or hidden agenda, and that the focus of my thesis will be very much dependent on the people I meet and the stories and opinions that they share. I had a checklist of very general questions which acted as prompts when needed, but I generally found people to be very open and engaging and thankfully I was not required to direct the interviews too much.

That this study *only* represents the eleven discussions with eleven people is not to be a modest understatement. It has proven to be extremely difficult to thread the themes of the discussions together, to build an overarching concept that can unify the themes in an honest and meaningful way. The ideal aim of grounded theory is not to only describe findings but to try to offer an overall theoretical meaning (Charmaz, 2006). *Only* describing and repeating the interviews would have been complicated and contradictory as one interview alone could contain threads that could not so easily be merged together to paint

one simple picture. To theorise and a conjure up some consistent themes that emerged from my research required that I strike a compromise between trying to include as many of the insightful points as I could with trying to make the thesis balanced, coherent and based on some degree of commonality across the interviews, therefore it was also necessary to leave out some interesting findings and aspects of the research process.

Findings

To offer an example of the broad array of information I was attempting to analyse; one of the first and most striking themes to emerge was that there was little consensus in the way of what mindfulness was considered to be. In my initial interviews, I *assumed* there was a *taken-granted-knowledge* of what mindfulness is, e.g. a breathing meditation. But I found that my idea of what mindfulness was was seemingly not the same as the idea the interviewees held; furthermore, the idea of mindfulness which one interviewee held was not quite the same as the idea that the next interviewee held. Consequently, I began to methodically ask the interviewees to specifically define mindfulness for me; an open-ended question, but one that I thought would still set things straight and lead to a conventional and consensual response. Still no consensual definition of mindfulness emerged. It was often hard not to feel a little embarrassed, ignorant or under prepared because I simply was not getting it right and my working interpretation of what mindfulness was had to be continually amended as one interviewee after the other offered differing interpretations of what mindfulness was.

It was a frustrating and paradoxical quagmire to be in and one that was difficult to overcome. On the one hand, the main theme threading all the interviews together was that everyone had differing interpretations as to what mindfulness is, that there was this constant theme could be considered to be progress, something to build upon. Unfortunately, that one constant theme did not actually offer itself as a constant theme, it offered itself as a cryptic riddle. Mindfulness could be described as a parallax, as what it seems to be differed depending on what point of view you look at it from. That mindfulness

seemed to be all things to everyone is suggestive that its popularity is based on allowing itself to be open to personal interpretation.

Nevertheless, been all things to everyone still did not kindly lend itself to being essentialised into a theme to build my thesis around. Rather than fall back onto the default task of just listing all the content from the interviews, I aimed to keep searching for an understanding that could reasonable conceptualise this. To overcome the problem, I decided that rather than allow myself to be tempted by the ontological concern of what mindfulness *actually was*, I would instead focus on what mindfulness was to the people *for whom it was something*, and further still, why mindfulness seemed to be so successful in *being something to so many people*. In this context, if mindfulness was something to so many people, it must be *persuasive*.

Persuasion

To understand persuasion, I was naturally drawn to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; or to be specific on secondary academic sources regarding Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; as I already carried with me a very basic idea of Aristotle's *triadic concept of persuasion*. Persuasion often carries negative connotations. The mundane usage of the word implies the bending and manipulation of a persons will against their will, e.g. 'yes they did but he had to be persuaded to so'. Persuasion is also associated with propaganda, nefarious propaganda to be exact and to 'charismatic' leaders of nefarious regimes and nefarious cults. But persuasion is a neutral process, just as politics is a neutral process, it has no inherent intentions. The act of persuasion could be used to describe many mundane conversations, and can also be a constructive and positive process, vital for example in negotiating peace deals between warring factions.

The meaning of persuasion referred to in this study stems from the original Greek translation *pisteis* (Rapp, 2012). In Greek mythology *Pistis* was the personified spirit of trust, honesty and good faith. Unlike *Apate* (deception) and *Psuedologoi* (lies), *Pistis* was a god spirit who escaped from Pandora's box but she fled mankind for the heavens. *Pistis*'s Roman name was *Fides*, from which derives *bona fide*. The definition(s) of *bona fide* that

you will find in the dictionary are; i) 'made in good faith without fraud or deceit', ii) 'made with earnest intent' and iii) 'neither specious nor counterfeit' (Merriam Webster, 2017). These three elements of *bona fide*; good faith, sincerity and being genuine; move us away from the negative elements sometimes associated with persuasive acts such as deception and lies; and better convey the intended meaning of the term 'persuasion'.

The act of being persuasive was analytically studied by Aristotle to consider how orators can come to alter the opinions of their audience. Aristotle's work on rhetoric and persuasion is a typical case of the 'doubler hermeneutic' present in social research and how research can be construed in ways that were not intended. Aristotle's investigation into rhetoric was for the sake of analysing arguments and understanding how orators and sophists and the ideas they presented won favour. Aristotle's intention was the altruistic goal of illuminating the mechanism of persuasion so that claims could be better examined and scrutinized (Fortenbaugh, 1975); and not for the future utilisation of marketers or sales people to egoistically try to make claims (and gains) better or more efficiently which the concept has often been used for.

According to Aristotle (Rapp, 2012), people hold beliefs or opinions to varying degrees, depending on the degree we have habituated them and to the degree we desire to hold them. Aristotle was not suggesting that an orator could quickly change for good the beliefs an audience held. Repetition was required for beliefs to become accepted in a stable and taken-for-granted way (*endoxa*). From his observation of persuasive speech acts Aristotle concluded that persuasive communication contained something more than reason alone, and in his analysis, he divided persuasive communication into three elements (modes). Rhetoric becomes persuasive if the audience judges (*krisis*) the speech act to display the following three modes of persuasion; *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. The following passage gives a summary of the three modes of persuasion:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends personal character of the speaker [sic] *ethos*; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [sic] *pathos*; the third the proof [sic] *logos*, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken makes us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true

generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile... Thirdly, persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question.

(Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a1-21 In Miller and Bee, 1972, p. 208)

The three modes of persuasion need to each be present and working together in a claim for the claim to stand any chance of being believed. *Ethos*, the credibility and charisma of the speaker that derives from the communication itself (rather than their prior reputation), and *pathos*, 'the mood or tone of the speech that appealed to the passions or the will of the audience' (Demirdöğen, 2010, p.192) are both emotional appeals, and on their own are not considered worthy forms of argumentation. Manipulation, for example, trying to persuade people out of their pity for you is not considered a worthy form of argument, nor is 'bringing your wife and children on stage' (Rapp, 2012, p.591). Denigrating opposing views, or denigrating the character of others is also not considered a worthy form of persuasion. *Ethos* and *pathos* must be conjoined with *logos* to be considered a reasonable form of argumentation and must be judged to be conveying some virtue by the audience.

All three modes of persuasion are dependent on the context and on the audience. The speaker needs to take into consideration what the audience in that time and context will likely consider to be reasonable; and what kind of personal character they will likely consider to be commendable and what likely emotional reaction in the current climate they will likely provoke with their claim. The process of persuasion describes the essential process at the heart of the social constructionist perspective, that knowledge or belief is a 'self-referential system, where concepts can only be defined in terms of other concepts existing in the same language' (Andrews, 2012, pp. 43).

Persuasion: embodied communication

During the analysis of the field data according to the three modes of persuasion that I was undertaking in parallel with an ongoing literature review, in this instance it was an article about 'construct-ivism' by Hubert Knoblauch (2013); it came to my attention that Aristotle's three modes of persuasion were very similar to Habermas's three validity dimensions of communicative action. By inadvertently bumping into Habermas's (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action* illustrates the difficult task of grounded theorists, or any theorists, to generate new theory to any degree. Also, becoming aware of the prescience of an Ancient Greek concept echoes G.W.F.Hegel's (Westphal, 2013) claim that ancient wisdom should be taken seriously for what it can teach us today rather than be viewed as primitive.

Even after taking into account the conceptual adequacy of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion it was tempting to move from an Ancient Greek philosophical concept to the lexicon of a contemporary sociological concept. But Habermas's (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action (TCA)* shall only be superficially touched upon here. That reference is made to Habermas's TCA is made, at the risk of muddying the waters of this thesis, is warranted mainly due to the felt need to recognise the potential elephant in the room and to illustrate that it was through intention and not total ignorance that a decision was made not to incorporate Habermas's TCA.

In bringing communication to the heart of action and to the forefront of social theory Habermas (1984) outlined the significance of communicated action. Communicated action is outlined as a process in which rationality is socially constructed and determined through communication (verbal and non-verbal communication). Communicated action and speech acts must accord to three dimensions of validity; the objective (*konstativa*), a socially accepted logic which should be validated intersubjectively to be true (*wahrheit*), this dimension we could align with *logos*; the social (*expressiva*), representing a shared emotional aspect which should be validated intersubjectively to be truthful or of its rightness (*wahrhaftigkeit*), this dimension we could align with *pathos*; and the subjective (*regulativa*), expressing the standards or intentions of the speaker which should be

validated intersubjectively to be right (*richtigkeit*), this dimension we could align with *ethos*.

According to Habermas (1984) communicative action is an ideal form of communication, a rational form of analytical communication that allows for the noncoercive understanding of our sociocultural life and it contrasts to what he calls 'strategic action'. Strategic action, Habermas claims, is a coercive and manipulative form of instrumental action with the sole purpose of successfully achieving a goal. Strategic action does not assist in understanding but in the formation of systems that can bureaucratise and regiment our life. The processes and dynamics of Habermas's TCA are far more expansive and detailed than the snippet that I have attempted to present here. A strength of Habermas's work is his idealism, but it is the separation of a morally superior 'communicative action' from a morally inferior 'strategic action' that halted the prospect of analysing and conceptualising the interview data through the lens of communicative action. I do not think that Habermas's descriptions of communicative or strategic action are false when considering them hypothetically, but in reality, his idealism transforms his concept of communication per se into 'good communication' and 'bad communication' which I have taken to be unhelpful because I proposed to carry out my research with an agnostic view.

This thesis agrees with Knoblauch's (2013) assertion that 'communicative action cannot "work" if the two types of action are separated' (p.201). Habermas's distinction between *success* and *understanding* in talk 'is an over-specification of a process that may be impervious at least to the sort of analytical fine tuning that Habermas seeks' (Chriss, 1995, p.557). Habermas's 'hyperrational' and 'traditional' (ibid.) view of speech may appreciate the intersubjective nature of reaching a mutual understanding, but it retains a utilitarian and informational view of communication that undervalues the context in which the communication takes place and the extent of the work and re-work involved. Such a utilitarian view in that there is information, or 'correct' information, that is passed from one person to another via a process of communicative rationality conveys for me a black box model of the mind.

The implication that there is a mind in which will computationally process information, to receive information, compute and process information, and thirdly to output the information, creates a cartesian duality in which there is an inner world and an outer world.

This thesis does not subscribe to the *ghost in the machine* view of the mind, a myth largely debunked by Gilbert Ryle (1949). Rather, a more Wittgensteinian view of thinking is subscribed to here as outlined by Jeff Coulter (1979); that is, that thinking (not just communication) is praxeological, social and intersubjective. Minds do not merely compute, but instead interpret and attempt to understand (Button et al., 1995), and the interpreting process is recursive and emerges from interaction with the environment. The praxiological view of the mind is that the thinking mind is a social construction that is maintained through praxis and interaction with its environment, for example, we think *about something*, we think *somewhere*, *in something*, *quietly* to ourselves or *out loud* (Coulter, 1979). The praxiological perspective of the social construction of the mind is in part a reaction to the Harold Garfinkel's view that there are only brains in the head, and that the study of brains is the task of neurologists rather than sociologists (Ibid.).

The social constructionist view of the mind is not only adhered to out of a blind stubbornness to anything that could relate to social constructionism in general. Incorporating a computational model of the mind undermines a fundamental underpinning of the constructionist and interactionist perspectives, that people are not just atoms coming together because they are merely *socially inclined*, but *are* in fact *existing* as a social organism. The interpretive process of our 'self(s)' and of our understanding is something we must continually and socially work at to construct. Habermas's communicative action seems to promote a normative concept of communication, and in doing so neglects not only how communication is embodied (Knoblauch, 2013) but neglects the elements of communication that he casts away as mere strategy. Strategy is intrinsically neutral, just as persuading is a neutral verb, and there is also not anything intrinsically morally superior to there being a 'mutual consensus' as can be attested by the common consent which occasionally underpins moral atrocities.

Strategic action, such as to persuade some people of something, is not automatically nefarious, for example, it sometimes requires the strategic work of civil protestors to persuade people and form a consensus of peace in times of conflict, or a mood of restraint in times of mercilessness. Conversely, the mutually consensual understanding reached through the demonstrable rationale of communicative action may be a clear understating as to who exactly is the stronger party and who is the weaker party and what could

consequently happen to the weaker party if they were to be disruptive and dare to challenge the status of the stronger party. Such realistic acts whereby people can 'conceal speech behind speech' or 'communication behind communication', for example, insinuation, innuendo, irony and sarcasm are largely ignored in Habermas's moral perspective of communicated action and are pragmatically (rather than cynically) labelled as 'collusive communication' in Goffman's (Chriss, 1995) analysis of communication.

That an effortless consensus momentarily seems to exist between people of mutual understanding can be explained because of sufficient processes of '*typification, sedimentation and habitualization*' in which even 'intricate sequences of social actions can be routinized in such a way that can be considered as form' (Knoblauch, 2013, p.305). That this form can easily be shaken of its natural veneer to display its strategic dynamics and rules is illustrated in the practice of breaching experiments that ethnomethodologists undertake. The non-experimental and very real communication of a person who is said to be autistic or to have Asperger's syndrome in which it is hard for them to say the right thing, at the right time in the right place in the right way despite their strategic aim of successfully integrating or ingratiating themselves with others also illustrates the delicate nature of the 'natural' form of consensual understanding and action. The natural repose of 'consensual' communication only obscures strategic action rather than differing from it.

After some deliberation in the middle of writing this thesis I decided then to persevere with Aristotle's concept of persuasion. The fulcrum for doing so is because the three modes of persuasion provides a holistic concept of thinking and communicating in which emotions (i.e. bodily senses) have a key role in reasoning. The more I learnt about the concept the more helpful and relevant it became. Admittedly though, as I progressed I could see that there were several other potential sociological theories in which I could have framed the information from my interviews in a similar way, but I came to that belief only because of my engagement with Aristotle's mode of persuasion.

The social construction of mindfulness

The social construction of mindfulness and the strategy by which it has been constructed became strikingly apparent in the conversation I had with Andrew. Andrew reports that he has been teaching the *Dharma* (the law of the cosmos according to the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama) as an ordained Buddhist monk for over 15 years. Referring to the emergence of key mediators of mindfulness and Buddhism in the West in the 1970's he said:

The teachers who introduced that, were mainly concerned with *presenting* this old spiritual tradition, this ancient wisdom in a more *accessible* and more *acceptable* way that kind of *fits with contemporary society*...If it doesn't fit, if there is a gap between a religion, a spirituality, or a spiritual tradition to modern society, then people who perceive that gap, they feel like religion in theory or in practice is not fitting to the contemporary society anymore, so there is no place or future for a religion that is perceived to be alien, not fitting to modern life...what we believe and what I believe is that there is a way to make something very ancient, just through the way, *the power of presenting it differently, make it fit into modern society through the power of modern presentation.*

I interpret the nature of presentation here as an act of persuasive communication and that the 'power of presenting' speaks of the power that a good presentation of a person, idea, or belief has to persuade others to engage with or accept the person, idea or belief. I interpret a 'modern presentation' not as a persuasive presentation that is radically different from any other, but one that is simply re-booted to integrate and reflect the contemporary culture we presently find ourselves in. To further elaborate the importance of presentation Andrew shared the anecdotal account that he had of a family member within the catholic church who was witnessing a diminishing congregation in her diocese:

it's hard for example for those who are institutionalized to reach people's heart with their theology... it's not the fault of religion, it's the problem of how you accept it

The overly bureaucratisation and institutionalization of the main Western religious churches may have prevented their respective beliefs and practices from being creatively reinterpreted, re-synthesised and re-presented. Conversely the loose culmination of interactions between Asian refugees, Western colonialists, orientalist, Buddhist activists,

and spiritual seekers from the North America and Western Europe, provided a dynamic cultural milieu from which various ancient practices and beliefs could be re-contextualized, rejuvenated and re-presented.

The adaptation or appropriation of Buddhism in general and mindfulness in particular is not an exclusively Western phenomenon. According to McMahon (2015), Buddhism has reacted with modernism in at least three distinct ways. There is Tibetan Buddhism which is presented as more traditionally sacred and religious. There is Chinese Buddhism which is contextualized and presented by the Chinese as atheist, and there is Western Buddhism which is contextualized and presented as secular, spiritual and testable. The presentation and persuasiveness of mindfulness shall be recurring themes in the following sections. That mindfulness meditation or mindfulness itself is presented differently as secular, spiritual and testable will also be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Before we go into more detail I wish to offer a summary of the delicacy involved in re-contextualizing an old meaningful tradition to make it persuasive and meaningful to a broad contemporary audience. One key figure behind the emergence of mindfulness in the West is scientist Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose books *Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (2013) and *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (2014) were instrumental in motivating several participants of this study to engage with mindfulness. Jon Kabat-Zinn has worked hard to re-contextualize mindfulness as secular and non-Buddhist, and is sincere in his clarification for doing so when he makes the analogy that mindfulness and the Dharma are not Buddhist just as the laws of gravity are not Christian or Western (Wilson, 2013). But within the Buddhist community Kabat-Zinn has been accused by some of selling out mindfulness and Buddhism by stripping it of its meaning and moral character. This worry or criticism was also confirmed in my study. For example, Sarah; who is an active member of the vipassana (Theravada based insight meditation) community in Berlin to which she turned to after feeling depressed, burnt out and disillusioned following her studies and career in corporate responsibility management; outlines the inferiority of Kabat Zinn's *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction* (MBSR) compared to the vipassana tradition. Sarah remarks that MBSR mediation is akin to acquiring only the hardware component of a computer system without the software:

There is a difference, one is short term and one is long term. MBSR is a trademark, vipassana is not...It's fine when MBSR helps people but it is not the same approach...It is not based on the values experienced at a vipassana meditation center...It is not based on morality...meditation is a technique, to focus, to concentrate. You could use music or count your fingers, coming back to your concrete sensations... [and away from] not films of the mind...to me it is not as beneficial as it is not holistic...There is the hardware and software components

Vipassana aside, the criticism that the MBSR is guilty of reductionism, if the contents of the book *Mindful America* by Jeff Wilson (2013) are correct, is a criticism that Kabat-Zinn takes very seriously. According to Wilson (2013), it is a criticism that Kabat-Zinn has said he thinks about each day and that if he did feel that he was selling out Buddhism he would quit his work on mindfulness and his MBSR program immediately. In this light, it appears that Kabat-Zinn's assertion that he is a scientist first and foremost is just one carefully managed facet of the careful game he has had to play to help establish an Eastern religious tradition in Western science and in the Western mainstream.

Although Wilson (2013) and Ergas (2014) have also noted that Kabat-Zinn's presentation of mindfulness has changed over time as the popularity of mindfulness has increased and as mindfulness based programs have become more established. It is stated that Kabat-Zinn has in recent years felt more confident in being able to openly re-introduce more Buddhist concepts to the practice of mindfulness, i.e. Dharma. It is the Dharma, the teachings of Buddha, that some worried Buddhist's or Buddhist aficionados have accused Kabat-Zinn of stripping away. Kabat-Zinn (2011) himself freely discusses his management and re-contextualisation of mindfulness, and as stated previously, it seems his re-contextualization is done so for altruistic reasons rather than to manipulate people. Kabat-Zinn (2011) states that thirty years ago the context was very different, and yoga and meditation was very much on the fringes of society, so he was therefore constrained by the culture he was in, and still now he is careful in not letting mindfulness or MBSR to be discredited as 'mysticism' or 'new age-y'. Through his work he endeavored to find the culturally appropriate way to present mindfulness which was creative as much as it was conformist. Nevertheless, the criticisms that Western mindfulness based programs, such as MBSR are

reductionist and have in some way departed from the true teachings of Buddha have remained (Ergas, 2014; Purser, 2015; Wu and Wenning, 2016).

The problem of *reductionism* in theological thought as Peter Berger (1980) highlights ‘is that the tradition, with all its religious contents, tends to disappear or dissolve in the process of secularizing translation’ (Berger, 1980, p.62). According to Berger (1980) modernity makes religious experiences harder to express and the disappearance or denial of religious experience has often engendered two specific strands of theological thought. There is the *reductive* option as described above which interprets traditions in terms of modern secularity. Reductive examples of theological thought can be seen; in both the Marxist critique of religion, i.e. that it is the ‘opium of the oppressed’ but also the emergence of communist regimes the twentieth century could also themselves be viewed as a secular political religion stemming from reductionist theological thought (Roth, 1976); and also in the rise of psychological analysis in which psychologists or ‘private identity experts’ take the role of priests in the community (Flanagan, 2001).

Resistance to reducing theological thought and religious tradition to modern secular terms is provided in the *deductive* option. The deductive option is a reassertion of religious authority in the face of modernity. The deductive option of theological thought is exemplified in the fundamentalist religious movements of the world. An alternative manifestation to the reductive and deductive options in Berger’s (1980) threefold typology is the *inductive* option. That there is still a want for any theological thought or religious experience at all is due to the angst of living in an untethered cold world in which “god is dead”, the sea has been drunk, the horizon has been erased and in which the sacred has become the mundane (Berger, 1980, p.55). For theological thought to exist and flourish in the pluralistic and modern setting, without it losing its meaning due to secularization or fundamentalism, it is required to entail an open mindedness and open ended-ness which are based upon *one’s own experience* as an empirical ground, this is the *inductive* option.

Kabat-Zinn and many others believe that the benefits of mindfulness can be gained even when practicing mindfulness in isolation from its Buddhist context; it is the *Dharma* that Kabat-Zinn hopes people will be drawn to (Wilson, 2013). The justification that he offers to his Buddhist critics is that mindfulness could naturally lead people to the *Dharma*, and it is Kabat-Zinn’s hope that it will (Wilson, 2013). Kabat-Zinn’s belief that mindfulness can

lead people to broader Buddhist matters appears not be unfounded as it has been noted that spirituality has often been an outcome of practicing mindfulness meditation. Mackenzie et al. (2007) study into a mindfulness program found that a common outcome for participants practicing in a MBSR program due to ill health, was that a spirituality was kindled (or re-kindled) within them.

One participant of this study, Friedrich, a teacher and counsellor of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), shares an illustrative insight into how the transformative potential MBSR can outgrow the limitations from which it was presented. Friedrich states that 'MBSR is like planting seeds' and that expression suggests that Kabat-Zinn has based MBSR on an inductive approach in which MBSR offers the conduit for people to have an *experience* from which they will judge whether to engage and learn more, or not. Concerning the potential problem of reductionism, Friedrich commented:

It's a bit like yoga. Lots of yoga classes have become mundane, just a physical workout, but yoga itself is a complete system...if you take mindfulness out of that it is just one thing but if you take mindfulness and look at it, it unfolds...MBSR is a very low level offer to make contact with Buddhist teachings, you don't need to call it Buddhist teaching, you might find it interferes or conflicts with Buddhist teachings because it leaves certain elements out... but people get to know, they have a chance to work on themselves, and that's the main thing I think...and if the interest grows people have a chance to ask more questions...and you would never have reached so many people trying meditation without MBSR...the results will not always be good, but still they get an idea there is more to life than following the normal way

The '*unfolding*' of mindfulness could be due to the fact that despite the Buddhist or ethical content being left out, MBSR is, according to Friedrich implicitly ethical:

One criticism, or one thing I think is lacking in MBSR, I think, is the ethical content, although it's implicit "how you act in the world", the explicit expression of compassion, which is very important in Buddhism. But then Jon Kabat-Zinn said if you really practice being mindful, if you really practice being present in the very moment, the self-acceptance and the idea of being with other people is present in being mindful

That 'mindfulness' or being 'mindful' is the foundation to the broader ethical teachings of Buddhism is further supported by Andrew, the Buddhist monk, who stated that:

It's [mindfulness] a key part in subsequent practice...Buddha said if you have mindfulness you have [sic] know all dharmas, dharmas meaning all the virtues, the positive states of mind but without mindfulness you know nothing because you have forgotten it

Secular mindfulness programs such as MBSR leave open how participants adapt, utilize and adhere to mindfulness. The 'openness' of MBSR does not exclude the possibility to further inquiry but leaves further inquiry to the curiosity and intentions of the students and practitioners. The potential emergence of a Buddhist a vista deriving from a specific practice is corroborated by Henry, a young man in his late twenties who attended mindfulness workshops as part of his recovery in rehab for his addiction to cannabis. Henry's opinion is that mindfulness is a stepping way to meditation. You will learn from reading further into this thesis that I come to the opinion that generally mediation is a stepping way to mindfulness, and the theme that everyone has their own interpretation will be a recurring one. That said here is what Henry says about the potential for more, which if nothing else confirms that Western mindfulness programs are not strictly self-contained:

mindfulness and meditation are too separate things. Meditation is more experienced and mindfulness is a step towards meditation, mindfulness is Westernised, not Buddhist. Meditation is deeper, mindfulness is a stepping way, it's one step at a time, mindfulness can lead you to meditation

The curiosity that Western mindfulness programs can stimulate is further illustrated by Regina. Regina is slowly leaving her career in the media industry behind her as she gradually establishes herself as a meditation teacher. Regina took the step to engage with *Mindfulness Based Stillness Meditation* (MBSM) to help cope with the excessive stress caused from being bullied by a previous employer. It was Regina's empirical scrutiny and healthy scepticism that lead her to further investigate what lies behind the mindfulness techniques and philosophy that she had learnt and found beneficial:

Part of the reason I go to Buddhist retreats, I'm not a Buddhist but I study it time to time, is because if I am going to teach this I need to know where it is coming from and how it's worked in that context

Whilst Regina remarks that she is not a Buddhist, she does provide a juxtaposing comment that provides another interesting reason why secular mindfulness techniques may 'unfold' or 'act as a seed' as Jon Kabat-Zinn had hoped. Regina outlines that the act of getting in touch with yourself, your body and your environment is itself spiritual:

You can't do mindfulness meditation practice without touching spirit, you just can't. I'm not a religious person but I am certainly not worried to say that this is a sacred practice at all. It's special, it really is...What is "spiritual" getting in touch with your open aware self? If that is spiritual, I'll call myself Jesus if you want to, what are we so scared of? having a direct experience with life is spiritual...A direct experience, none of this other noise, no filter, it's not about pushing

A common and surprising phenomenon amongst many of the small group of participants that I spoke with is how infrequently many of them meditate in the manner they had when they participated in mindfulness based therapeutic workshops. That many participants stated they did not continue the mindfulness meditative practices that they had learnt could have supported the argument that secular mindfulness programs have been reduced to simple breathing and awareness exercise which may provide short term quick fixes. But the participants who stated that they no longer meditated, not only stated that their past mindfulness experiences were beneficial and meaningful, but that they were so to such an extent that they are ongoingly beneficial through the act of *remembering* them.

That participants reported on how they held on to certain concepts, remembered and even ritualised their past experiences would support Berger's (1980) assertion that the inductive option is the most appropriate, and undermines the accusation that Kabat-Zinn is guilty of stripping meaning away from mindfulness. *Remembering* also brings us closer to the original Pali meaning of mindfulness which in Pali is *sati*. *Sati* can be translated as *remembrance* (Buddhaddatta Mahathera, 1955), as well as being variously translated as; awareness, attentiveness and alertness (Wilson, 2013). Mindfulness is often conflated with being mindful. Mindfulness as *remembering* is distinct from being 'mindful' in general, e.g. 'to take into consideration' or 'to be cautious'. It is the ability to remember, to in some

way come back to our ourselves and our senses, that Andrew, the Buddhist monk describes as the reason why mindfulness is key to all subsequent Buddhist teachings and practices.

[mindfulness] is deeply rooted in the Buddhist tradition because it is one of the key ingredients of meditation practice. The word mindfulness translates originally as to remember...In Buddhist tradition we understand mindfulness to be a mental capacity or a mental power to remember, or simply to not forget or to hold something in your mind continually...the object of mindfulness in Buddhism is to try to hold in your mind positive states of mind. So, in the Buddhist tradition, the object of mind is nothing external, it is not how I peel an apple or how I work, in the Buddhist tradition mindfulness is not concerned with externalities...It is not about how mindfully I walk or how mindfully I talk, or how mindfully I peel an orange

In a sense then, a common effect of mindfulness is that it reminds people to remember. Max; an IT professor who has for ten years practiced and learnt mindfulness in Plum Village, the largest Buddhist monastery in Europe which was founded by Thich Nhat Hanh; describes mindfulness as giving him a “bell” that enables him to come back to himself. By becoming more aware of the signs of duress, Max remembers to come back to his breathing practice to help him cope. It is also the meaning implied by Henry, when he said that he is ‘sometimes using it without realizing I am using it’, who also states that he returns to his own breath and body when he feels it is necessary to do so. Hedwig; a psychology student in her twenties who attended a mindfulness workshop three years prior when she was in hospital seeking help for depression and anxiety; provides a clear account of how she no longer ‘practices’ mindfulness meditation as such, but she certainly still remembers:

I do not intentionally practice often, it becomes more of a lifestyle...a certain knowledge of a concept...you don’t have to do anything special, just the memory of the effect...it’s not that I do these techniques I learned there, it is often only the imagination of what it felt like and the feeling it gave me

Hedwig’s remembering is realised with her own symbolic items and practices; ‘I do have two Buddhist statues in my interior in order to remind myself of mindfulness’. Hedwig also mentioned that the period of attending a mindfulness workshop in hospital occurred in Advent, a period in which feelings of depression, sadness, loneliness and anxiety are often felt most acutely and a period that is already associated with remembering. Advent,

remembrance, and the lighting of her Advent wreath is now a ritual that has taken on an extra personal dimension for Hedwig due to her associated past experiences.

The participants in this study who do not maintain any form of meditative practice are far from being alone, as Friedrich, the mindfulness teacher explains:

They keep the concept in mind and that helps them, to be present even though they don't meditate. To remember to stop and realize what is going on. They don't meditate, they find it hard to do it by themselves or to motivate themselves to do one thing for twenty minutes

Logos: demonstration of apparent truth

The culture of the period and the context is the reference point for *logos* (apparent proof), *ethos* (perceived character of the speaker) and *pathos* (the speakers appeal to the audience's emotion). It is therefore impossible to separate and isolate the three types completely; just as it is impossible to completely isolate the themes neatly between culture, personality and society, as to understand any one of the three categories, consideration of their relation to another is required. The cultural binding of the threefold typology will therefore lead to a certain amount of repetition. If I do start to become repetitive I hope to at least be successful in showing how a common reference point has different implications depending from which angle it is viewed from

The salutary claim of mindfulness is arguably the most important and persuasive claim of mindfulness in the West (Farb, 2014). It is the salutary claim that is most culturally resonant and persuasive when considering the *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* of mindfulness. The logic is that it has been *scientifically proven* to have health-giving attributes. The character that mindfulness's key mediators display is predominantly that of altruism, as they have a single mindedness to help with the suffering of others. The social affectivity is based upon the solidarity and compassion that is kindled through suffering and which is the mindfulness antidote to suffering. Suffering and compassion are the are most present and persuasive themes in mindfulness as far as my research has reached and were frequently present in the interviews with the participants of this study.

Speaking to participants regarding their understanding, motivation and practice of mindfulness, the only pattern that I could ascertain to be emerging was related to their motivation of practicing mindfulness. Even establishing a consistent and shared motivation for engaging with mindfulness took a level of abstraction because on the surface people had different reasons for engaging with mindfulness, for example, anxiety, stress, disillusionment, bullying, pain management and curiosity. Several of the participants were teachers of mindfulness in some form, e.g. yoga, MBSR or MBSM, but their professional choice seemed to be built upon the wish to make a vocation of helping others with the skills they have learnt from their own experiences. I came to the belief then that the motivations share the same underlying issue, that is, coping with suffering. Taking into consideration the nature of my discussions with the respective participants, suffering in this case not also subsumes the vocational motivations of the monk and the teachers but also to Augustine, who stated that he was simply curious.

Suffering shall be shall be discussed, but only on an abstract level. Personal biographical accounts of suffering could not be present in this thesis because discussions consisted of single interviews with strangers that lasted for the average duration of one hour. Although the participants were very open, warm and helpful, I did not feel I could provide the sufficient level of competency, sensitivity and time required to approach the topic with participants in a respectful way. Fortunately, the interviews with the participants provided a rich array of topics to be discussed. Even after taking into consideration I only interviewed eleven people, the interviews all together provided a rich body of expansive, if not chaotic, information. Whilst it was possible to ascertain a common motivation, it was hard work to ascertain a consensual understanding or meaning of mindfulness, or a common method of practicing mindfulness.

Trying to map out a clear consensual reasoning of what mindfulness is; or what the logic of mindfulness is; what it is a demonstration of; was a fun but frustrating task and I cannot be highly confident that I was able to come to an understanding for which there will be a common consensus for. As one interview would shape my understanding of what mindfulness was, the subsequent interview in which I disclosed my new understanding of mindfulness only served to dispel my new understanding. This process was often repeated *ad infinitum*, in the end I decided the issue was inherent in the meaning of mindfulness,

rather than been down to any deficiencies of my own faculties. The participant's explanations of what mindfulness was can be seen on the next page. Aside from the frequent mentioning of learning to be in the present moment and the importance of compassion, a singular consensual concrete explanation of what mindfulness fails to materialise.

I myself was expecting people to talk about their breathing exercises, but this was only partially the case. Some of the ambiguities and differences amongst the explanations may result from the fact that my own invitations that I had posted in various places asked for people with experience of 'mindfulness'. It was a conscious decision not to restrict the invitation to people who have experience of MBSR. I believed that limiting my scope to people with experience of the English named mindfulness program MBSR when in Germany, would be too restrictive, people who have experience of '*Achtsamkeit*' may needlessly exclude themselves, so too would people with experience of any of the other 'many MB xyz somethings' (Augustine).

As I was interested in the diversity of people engaging with mindfulness in diverse contexts, I thought the general term 'mindfulness' was suitable. In this respect I was successful, as the participants included people coming from different contexts, for example; mindfulness workshops in clinical settings, from a German vipassana retreat, the Plum Village in Bordeaux, Dynamic Mindfulness Zen Yoga, the standard and most well-known eight week MBSR program, MBSN (Mindfulness Based Stillness Meditation) from the Gawler Foundation in Australia, self-education through reading and experiences at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (now known as the Triratna Buddhist Community) and the New Kadampa Tradition. In my naivety, I thought that although the presentation of mindfulness may differ depending on the context in which it is presented from, that there would still be some agreed upon definition on what mindfulness is. I have taken the liberty of presenting the definitions of mindfulness for each participant so that you can for yourself obtain a good overview:

[you learn] how to *feel* things...managing your *feelings*...I am not busy with trying to relax...I see it as something more *biological*...*mindfulness and meditation are two separate things*...Buddhism is a way of life, mindfulness is a *philosophy*...mindfulness is like a *tool* and Buddhism is a way of life (Henry)

to me *meditation was a technique*, this is what I thought, a technique to help concentrate the mind, which is fine, let's do it! Wow! Wow! It was such an experience that I have never thought about. It was great, wow! I discovered so many things, I understood so many things. I realised I was not the only one to think like this or to have such kind of way of thinking or living or perspective...*meditation is a technique, like a technology...meditation as a mind cleaner* (Sarah)

It's like a *resource* that I can use, I do not intentionally practice often, *it becomes more of a lifestyle*" ...a certain knowledge of a concept...for me it is to be aware of *what my mind and body feel like and need in the present* (Hedwig)

I like to use the word mindfulness or *achtsamkeit* in German even though it's rather limiting, *it's only one word, it's an expression*...It's the ability to direct one's mind deliberately to one object, to focus and to *concentrate the mind* and at the same time been able to let go if necessary, to allow thoughts like a passing train, the train of thought to pass by, the ability to focus and the ability to broaden out...and *a very important component is the heart*, loving, kindness, compassion, friendliness, that together gives an idea of what mindfulness entails in a nutshell (Friedrich)

I can repeat back to you what I tell my students every week which is the Jon Kabat-Zinn basic definition which is "*Paying attention without judgement on purpose to the experience of the present moment*" that is a paraphrase but the other side of that is also with an attitude of, warmth and friendliness and compassion, which is the non-judgement side of it. On the broader level for me mindfulness is a way to be in the world and it takes a lot of work for us westerners to get our mind around it so to speak but also *to embody it*. It's really something you embody, it is not just about thinking *it is about moving away from* thinking and becoming aware of the totality of your experience in each given moment... I'm not a religious person but I am certainly not worried to say that this *is a sacred practice* at all. It's special, it really is (Regina)

I am familiar about mindfulness, I've read books about mindfulness but I would personally probably more use the words "*to be present*" (Cassandra)

This [mindfulness] is actually now a label to what I actually thought was *normal in life*...for me it is so clear that is actually what *is core of being*. To be present and to *be attuned* with yourself and to your surroundings (Helen)

the object of mindfulness in Buddhism is try to hold in your mind positive states of mind...The core meaning in the Buddhist thought is it refers more to the *inner states of mind* that we try to be mindful and [of] *nothing external*... strictly speaking, we try not to be mindful of other people, we try to be *mindful of our own cherishing attitude* meaning we try to hold that attitude, we try not to forget that attitude so as to maintain it throughout the day...Just to summarize, from a Buddhist point of view *mindfulness is a spiritual training*, in a spiritual context coming from a special motivation and the object of Mindfulness is nothing external, it is something positive that you try to keep in your heart basically to come more familiar with that. (Andrew)

Mindfulness is about *calming the mind down*. Heartfulness I guess is about calming the heart down and going into the feelings, the greater space that is can hold... [on meditation] When you close your eyes and you focus and you go inside and you try to settle inside of you for a while and to try to *touch the bigger parts of you*...You do that because it feels very beneficial and it makes you live life better. It makes you be less anxious and more close to what is happening around you. Adding a lot of thinking to feelings traps them and becomes painful... [on mindfulness] The thing is *the explanation for meditation was also [the explanation for] mindfulness, they are both, meditation is when you let go of the things that come and go and you get hugged by what stays and that is meditation. And Mindfulness is becoming aware of when things come and go*, becoming aware that there is more, becoming aware of what your obstacles are to reach that. That's mindfulness for me, it's calming the mind down, it's mostly *pratyahara* [withdrawal of sense] and *Dharana* [concentration]...Also just those moments of realization that, oh this is happening! (Patricia)

Mindfulness is really a kind of *attitude towards the wonders of the world*...It calms you down and relaxes...Being aware of a kind of metacognition a little bit, the mental processes and emotional processes that happen in you, that are happening right now inside of you (Augustine)

according to my understanding *there is no scientific definition* [of mindfulness], right. But there is a *method on how to practice*, a clearly defined method. The clear approach of how you practice this mindfulness. This method is described in the *sutra [satipatthana]*...this method is clearly defined and if we practice this daylily, day by day, hour by hour, then *you yourself can touch the effect* (Max)

In light of the heterogeneity of the explanations, The Jon Kabat-Zinn definition of mindfulness offered by Regina '*Paying attention without judgement on purpose to the experience of the present moment*' may seem like the most appropriate explanation to stick with but it is not very insightful, for example, are we not paying attention to the present moment all the time? even if in that moment you are lost in your day dreams? Kabat-Zinn's definition seems to explain a practice, but there are those that state that mindfulness is not a practice and is not meditation but is an internalized concept or a philosophy. 'Holding a cherishing attitude' also starts to point to the more normative elements of mindfulness that make the non-judgemental notion a little fuzzy. That mindfulness for some is 'not about relaxing' but for others it is about 'relaxing', that 'gets you away from thinking' but helps you to 'concentrate', that it is 'pratyahara [withdrawal of sense] but helps you 'feel', that it is 'nothing external' but connects you with your 'surroundings' and 'with the wonders of world', that it is a; 'resource', 'technique', 'technology', 'tool', 'mind cleaner' that helps you 'touch the bigger parts of you' whilst 'calming your mind down', and is 'core of being' and 'normal in life' but it is a 'method' for which 'there is no scientific definition', seems not to be conveyed fully in Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition.

Once more, attention in the interviews was placed on the participants own explanations of what mindfulness was rather than taking it for granted that mindfulness was anything in particular. The famous Ludwig Wittgenstein claim came to my mind, 'What can be said, can be said with clarity: What can't be said, must remain unsaid' (Wittgenstein, 1961). Wittgenstein's message was that there are simply some things in life for which we fail to describe adequately fully with words, that they are beyond the limits of language, and that he believed we only do those same things an injustice by trying to describe them so it is better not to try. Yet, I was still able to relate to what the participants were communicating even if the premises were incongruent or beyond exact comprehension.

An *enthymeme* is a syllogism in which one premise is implicit but left unstated. An *example* is a form of inductive argument, and an enthymeme is a form of deductive argument and the deductive argument holds higher value in rhetoric as the answer is unstated and therefore leaves a void for the audience to project their own interpretation into, thus forming a link between what the speaker aims to prove by making the listener believe and the beliefs the listener already holds. For Aristotle, the enthymeme 'holds a position of

unquestioned prominence; it is the ‘substance of rhetorical persuasion, the very body of proof’ and the “orator’s proper mode of persuasion” (Miller and Bee, 1972, p.201).

The enthymeme consists of an affective component that can only be known (or interpreted to be known) from experience, or from practice (*praxis*). Logos, logic, reason, or the cold hard facts would naturally incline us to believe that the presence of it is a matter for our minds to compute and determine but this mode of persuasion too has an affective dimension. As has been discussed earlier in the thesis, the validity of claims, and what is considered to be true, is contingent on the audience, i.e. it is a social and intersubjective phenomenon. It is not an exclusive property of the claim. In the case of the enthymematic reasoning of the claim, it is the affective experience of the hearer that the proof (*pistis*) is contingent upon (Ibid.). Hence, the reasoning is *nonlogical*, the reasoning is *experiential* and *embodied*. Miller and Bee (1972) state that knowing that a fever is a sign that you are ill, is known from experience, a person needs to have experienced what a fever is and felt ill, and therefore the reasoning has been established empirically and experientially. That affective experience for Aristotle is the gold standard of proof and is a natural consequence as in Berger’s (1980) words; ‘man is an empirical animal (an *anima naturaliter scientifica*), to the extent that his own direct experience is always the most convincing evidence of the reality of anything’ (p.32).

A clearer example of the significance of affective experience in an enthymeme would be knowing what it feels like to be in love, whilst we may understand and accept the concepts and the stories of romance, passion and heart break before we have been in love, it is after we have experienced romantic love that the stories take on an added dimension in which there is a more acute and visceral connection. Love too could be labelled as uncertain or enthymematic; or it could be reduced to being an evolutionary biological, chemical and neurological process. A complex process that serves the simple function of procreation and/or creating the mutual bonds required to make it easier to attain other essentials of life. It could therefore be argued that the rhetoric of love is only enthymematic due to the choices or competencies of the speaker because it can be explained in words quite clearly with certainty and clarity. For verbal and theoretical explanations of love there exists very authoritative, scientific and detailed explanations which clearly describe the phenomena. Still, even after taking into consideration our understanding what the functional basis of

love *is*, it can be argued that we still don't know what it *feels* like until we have *experienced* it. Love like many of other emotional experiences can therefore become enthymematic in rhetoric because we feel it is inherently difficult to verbally explain the feeling(s) without feeling we are not adequately conveying the experience of the feeling(s) in all of their dimensions.

If we are experiencing anything in dimensions beyond what we are directly perceiving in our everyday world of the here and now, then we are *transcending* the boundaries of our immediate reality. Thomas Luckmann (1990), following on from Alfred Schutz (Luckmann and Schutz, 1973) outlined that there are three modes of transcendence which characterize human experience. There are the *little* transcendences of time and space; our conscious memory of past moments which may be freshly falling away from the moment you are in; or may be memories of the distant past that make a sudden and vivid re-emergence; or we may transcend our immediate reality by gazing to the future, imagining what we will say to mister or miss such-and-such tomorrow, or to greater horizons in which our hopes for the future exist. Little transcendences enable us to know more beyond what we see immediately and directly with our own eyes. Sitting in a room, we may only see one aspect of the room but our past experiences of the house enables us to imagine all the other nooks, crannies and eccentricities that are not immediately available to our senses.

Little transcendences are knowable and on the surface more mundane but they still remind us of our boundaries. Little transcendences, such as memories, dreams, and hopes of the future are comprehensible and can often be communicated quite readily. Little transcendences may remind us that our direct experience of reality and present consciousness of reality is only front stage to a more extensive and ambiguous background. The background is another reality, the extent we delve in and out of it may be different for everyone at various times but it generally does not take primacy over our immediate reality in our day-to-day lives. Luckmann (1990) coins the term '*naive realism*' (p.128), which is a blinkered view of reality that we pragmatically adapt to navigate through our days and focus on fulfilling the essential goals of everyday life. Sometimes we become aware of our naïve realism and reality can for us takes on a character of having a *doppelbödigkeit* (Berger, 1980, p.40), a double floor, in which there exists a reservoir of ambiguity

underneath the literal and concrete surface of reality that we perceive, interpret and construct.

Beyond the temporal transcendence of our inner experiences, there are *intermediate transcendencies* in which we transcend ourselves *within* the world. Intermediate transcendences are when we become aware of the social world, of others and the consciousness of others. Unlike little transcendencies which can be known to us and be communicated unproblematically, the perspective or conscious of others can never be truly known to us. The witnessing of the birth and death of others, and never being able to know with certainty how others experience the world serves as a further reminder of the boundaries of our own experiential existence in the world, and that there exists a realm of the unknown and other beyond our own consciousness.

Little and intermediate transcendencies are transcendences of the everyday life, but the third mode of transcendence, *great* transcendencies, are further removed from any mundane reality that we can see, touch or handle (Luckmann, 1990). Great transcendencies are concerned with our union *with* the world, universe or cosmos. Great transcendences lead us to depart from the mundane reality, and are not only unknowable but are non-rational. According to Luckmann (1990) there are numerous paths that lead away from mundane reality and our naive realism, typical examples are; meditation, ecstasy and dreams. The departure from our mundane reality:

suspends its practical "theory", i.e. common sense...everyday life loses its status as the preeminent reality at least for the duration of these experiences. After one returns to everyday life, only recollections of such experiences remain; the experience themselves cannot be reproduced at will. Some recollections may be evanescent, but one may try to communicate them to others. Others may have left a lasting impression yet be *difficult to articulate*. (Luckmann, 1980, p.130)

Language and meaning are intersubjectively created, they emerge from the social and dialectical processes that pertain to the environment we are a part of. The world we communicate together in in our 'language of everyday life' (Schutz, 1962) gives us the consensual foundation and practice to competently and fluently use our everyday language when applying it to the reality around us. Our everyday lives can contain multiple realities, spheres (Max Weber), subsystems (Talcott Parsons), systems of symbols (Alfred Schutz) or

symbolic universes (Thomas Luckmann), and for those we do cohabit, we are practiced enough in the engagement of dialectical communication that the language and meaning derived from that communication can become to be taken-for-granted. The transcendent reality is more akin to a silent and private world in which there are no clear dialectical relationships from which a consensual vocabulary or language can be achieved. On our own, with no communal sign posts we can become to feel rudderless when trying to describe our transcendent experiences. The problem of feeling incompetent at communicating in our everyday language the transcendent reality that we experience as being *utterly other* or *totaliter aliter* (Berger, 1980), is what Schutz calls the *paradox of communication* (Knoblauch, 1999, p.80)

The paradox of communication is a reaffirmation of the philosophical idea of "*ineffability*" (Knoblauch, 1999) to which Wittgenstein's previously mentioned claim of 'saying only what can be said' harks to. Contrary to William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Thomas Luckmann, Alfred Schutz believed the paradox of communication could be overcome. Theoretically the paradox of communication can be bridged when considered that the transcendent reality is not in fact an ontological other reality; it is still the same us that embodies the transcendent reality as well as embodying our everyday realities, and there exists no insurmountable barrier that can prevent us from finding ways to depict one reality in another reality.

The demonstration of proof and thus logic (*logos*) of mindfulness is left only partially stated (*enthymeme*) and is reserved for your own experience to prove demonstrably. That the demonstration of proof of mindfulness is left open for your own experience is in this light not only due to a matter of taste but out of the necessity arising from the fact that mindfulness meditation relates to the transcendent reality. Mindfulness then is an example that it is through our own bodily experiences that we learn to understand and communicate the transcendent reality in the mundane reality.

The significance of experience as proof, that a certain experience resisted verbal articulation and therefore was communicated as the unstated premise of the affective laden enthymeme was an overarching characteristic in the way that the reasoning (*logos*) of mindfulness was defined by the participants of this study. The importance of the

experiential knowledge that we embody, which provides a bridge between transcendent realities and mundane realities is explicitly highlighted by Regina and Max:

It's an experiential knowledge. It's even called a technology. It's part of Buddhist psychology which is a science. Science is now starting to validate subjective research now... *It's an experiential knowledge, or an experiential wisdom,* you can't learn about it without doing it, that's why they call it praxis, it is about practicing in order to physically understand as well, as mentally it's about unifying mind and body it is about bringing them together

the effect is a state of your mind, I can't define it, I can't give you any definition. It is like if I tell you coca cola is very refreshing and delicious, I can't define for you how delicious coca cola is, you have to touch it, you need to touch this by your tongue or your mouth. (Max)

There was also another way in which participants communicated the transcendent reality they experienced in relation to mindfulness. The transcendent reality is not an actual other reality but it does have a different '*province of meaning*' compared to the provinces of our mundane realities (Schutz in Knoblauch, 1999). In practice, to depict the transcendent reality in the mundane reality requires one to creatively find *indirect* ways to do so, which is often why we turn to the work of poets and artists if we wish to have a peek at the reality that transcends the one we find ourselves in (Ibid.). Although, finding creative indirect ways to express experiences of the transcendent reality are not the sole preserve of artists, as we are all creative beings. A common indirect way of communicating the transcendent reality, as Knoblauch (1999) outlines, is through the rhetorical use of metaphors. Metaphors, like enthymemes, contain a non-disclosed element, they are insinuations that contain 'substitutions of primary semantic units by secondary units which stand in an analogical relation to the former; this relation may be obvious and close (*Nahmetapher*), but it may also be distant (*Fernmetapher*)' (Ibid., p.75). The myriad of explanations and metaphors as already presented in the previous pages illustrate the language of 'ciphers' (*Chiffren*) which, argues Karl Jaspers, stems from the 'attempts to communicate experiences of transcendence' (Ibid., p.15).

Max explained what mindfulness does by using a coca cola metaphor, but that metaphor was only for me. The difficulty in communicating a transcendent reality, and the nature of

the work that Max is undertaking, I think is described well by Berger (1980) who writes that the predicament is one of ‘a poet among bureaucrats, or one who wants to tell of his love at a business meeting’ (p.47). Consequently Berger (1980) asks ‘How can the nocturnal voices of the angels be remembered in the sobering daytime of ordinary life?’ (p.49), and he answers, ‘by incorporating the memory in traditions claiming social authority’ (p.49). Max’s development of an academically funded scientific IT based research project to show the effects of mindfulness meditation illustrates that he goes beyond the use of everyday rhetorical metaphors not only to demonstrate the proof of mindfulness but to relate the transcendent reality. To understand the transcendent reality and its impression that he felt it had on him, Max turned to what humans often turn to (Martins, 1993); technological metaphors and what Ernst Kapp named *Organprojektion*, which is the use of technology to project our self-interpretations (Martins, 1993):

I think that, because *we speak from the perspective of science. So we need to illustrate this kind of state, one means to illustrate this kind of effect of mindfulness state is to use MRI pictures or EEG electroencephalograms*, and many people have conducted this. They compare those EEG states of the people after practicing mindfulness after one week and with people rushing around... If we want to talk about the scientific definitions of those states then we have also MRI pictures or EEG diagrams, in Buddhism this state is called nirvana (Max)

After ten days in the Plum Village after practicing with over ten thousand people around the world, the effect has been internalized in my mind, I take it home with me. I can’t forget this kind of deliciousness. This effect has a long-term effect, a long-term impact (Max)

The excerpt of Max ‘s account outlining the ‘deliciousness’ that he cannot forget explains to some degree the lengths he goes to remember, communicate and legitimate his experience of transcendence. To communicate and legitimise his own transcendent experiences and the mindfulness tradition through which they have been channelled, Max turns to science to provide a powerful scientific metaphor and a demonstration of proof. Max’s work in which he attempts to incorporate the symbolic universe of transcendence into the province of science, is a re-iteration of the process on which mindfulness in the West has emerged from. The mainstream emergence of mindfulness in the west, in

hospitals, clinics, educational institutions etc. has been dependent on the work of molecular biologist Jon Kabat-Zinn who in 1979 founded the *Stress Reduction Clinic* at the University of Massachusetts. It was the published scientific and scholarly work of Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at the Stress Reduction Clinic that first legitimised mindfulness as medically beneficial. Kabat-Zinn was not only an engaged scientist but he was also an engaged Buddhist, and the work of his, just as the work of Max's, is contrary to Max Weber's belief that 'there was no scientific way to God, for there was an unbridgeable gap between the value spheres of science and the sphere of the holy' (Flanagan, 2010, p.261).

I do not claim that all participant descriptions of mindfulness were enthymemes. I do claim (even if only metaphorically) that mindfulness, and the reasoning it shrouds itself with is enthymematic. That mindfulness is often described with metaphors and enthymemes is principally because mindfulness inhabits the transcendent realms. The reasoning of mindfulness has three premises; there are the stated claims that it provides techniques that can help you manage your thoughts and feelings, your mind (little transcendences); there are the stated claims that the same techniques cultivate or can be expanded so as to cultivate awareness and compassion of others (intermediate transcendencies); and thirdly, cosmic great transcendencies are not clearly stated, but only insinuated, but the insinuation is persuasive as one is drawn to fill the void with your own interpretations and experience.

The most frequent benefit of mindfulness practice reported by participants is the benefit of coming back to their own bodily senses in the present moment rather than be lost in the *little* transcendent films of their mind. Being aware of and creating distance from the reactive feelings and thoughts occurring is claimed to give one the ability to be able to choose to be *responsive rather than reactive*. Being responsive and responsible with your thoughts and feelings allows one to 'not to be too desperate to act, to act again, to go on' (Hedwig). Being reactive implies answering automatically, with little consideration and with little control or agency, were as being responsive implies a level of consideration, thoughtfulness, control and agency. Further accounts of this benefit can be seen below:

It is not just about thinking but moving away from thinking and *becoming aware of your totality of your experience in a given moment...it's pausing instead of a reacting, and in that pause you can choose how to react*. It's called wise action (Regina)

It seems so simple on one hand, *they don't have to change much but stop and look what is going on, become a bit more responsible for their own inner responses...* Even if there was a different response like anger welling up, you want the anger or the energy to be still alive. Even if the anger wells up, what's the next step? There is always a chance for the next or first step again (Friedrich)

It's getting a bit *detached by [from] this urgency*, this immediate urgency, by the help of meditation, so to repeat a little bit and to get distance to that and to watch it from a less, from an emotional distance also can help to understand of course it is heavy, life is not easy necessarily, but it is ok... And getting to not necessarily accept but to at least understand that they are there, so that they are really happening. So first it is the perception capabilities, secondly it is a kind of attitude towards what you have perceived and thirdly it might be letting things go, so not intending to change what you have perceived. It helped to understand the problems you might face are not as serious as they seem in the moment (Augustine)

There is a moment we are so trapped in our own lives that *we need an exit ad it provides a potential... the way I see it is that it creates a little more space in a pressure cooker*, just a little bit more space, you move a little bit less tight, the way you live (Patricia)

meditation is a technique, to focus, to concentrate. *You could use music or count your fingers, coming back to your concrete sensations, not films of the mind* (Sarah)

Be aware of what you feel, why? How? Where are you feeling it? Not to change your feeling. (Henry)

[It helps] To be present and to be attuned with yourself and to your surroundings... When I don't do it, I would always feel it immediately, Thoughts go everywhere, energy goes different, I'm becoming less efficient in things, I'm running in five different directions...It has helped me a lot to not feel stress, frustrated or to react to things...*I feel there is more space created before I react* (Helen)

Mindfulness teachings encourage participants to embody their consciousness, to anchor their consciousness to their bodies primarily through the awareness of breathing, which is always with you. The meditative practice of paying attention to the breath provides a sense of security and a heuristic that people can use during their everyday lives. To describe the heuristic Henry states 'mindfulness gives me...in Dutch we would say *handvatten*, like

handlebars, something you can grab on to keep you steady'. Breath awareness as an anchored embodied heuristic is also the foundation from which broader *metta meditations* are practiced. Metta meditations, meditations based upon on loving-kindness, extend awareness from the breath to the body, and then incrementally encompass different levels of your environment, from the surface that your body is in contact with, to the empty room, to the people in your life, to the social world and beyond. It is always the breath and awareness of your body that anchors you, but mindfulness is not supposed to individualize and isolate you in a narcissistic fashion, instead it is supposed to help you inhabit the intersubjective reality by reminding you of your relation to the social world, for example:

You can't be truly mindful without being compassionate. They call it the two wings, one is clear seeing and having insight and the other is *bringing warmth compassion and connection to it. It is not just for self, it's for others, it's meant to connect you to community* (Regina)

The body-scan was already popular in the late 80's when I started to meditate...But the metta meditation, there's meditations called metta meditations, *in order to embrace not only yourself but embrace the world and doing good, so having an idea of how it is to do good to everybody*. This might have been popular already at that time in the late 1980's but I did not practice that, it was too early for me...[Regarding his recent attendance of an MBSR 8 week program] So we had three or even four different meditation techniques one was the body-scan, and there was another in between but I just don't remember it and then we had two metta meditations, one on a beginners level *so doing good to ourselves especially and then to may be the close circle, and then widening the circle of affection in the advanced metta meditation* (Augustine)

It is conceivable that great transcendences are quite easy to verbally communicate rather than been ineffable, for example Patricia offers 'Basically the heart started to have amazing amounts off heat just coming out'. But it could be the impression that the experience had upon us that we feel is difficult to elaborate, or the asymmetry between its experience and its elaboration could leave one with anticlimactic feelings. Just as the greater transcendencies that we may occasionally experience from non-meditative techniques; such as the runner's high, the elation from a hike in the countryside, euphoric sex, intense pain and sleep deprivation; the transcendence experienced from mindfulness is said to

leave its mark upon us. It could be the effect that transcendence has upon us that is ineffable or which cannot so easily be reduced to short explanations.

Stories of great transcendences can be skewed towards the emphasis of feelings of euphoria, ecstasy, elation and so forth, to the detriment of darker yet just as powerful feelings, or figuratively put, the bad trip. The negative experiences of transcendence are just as potent as positive experiences of transcendence, and no hallucinogen is required to experience either. Long periods of stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, illness, and the loss of loved ones all take their toll on our strength and spirits, even more so if we forget how 'to replenish or re-nourish ourselves' (Friedrich). The exhaustion and crisis can leave our senses feeling fragile and burnt out. Without the strength and calmness needed to maintain our naive realism we can lose our blinkers and the chaos and ambiguity of the universe can flood in and overwhelm the fragile order we project on our mundane everyday selves and the reality we are in. Management and coordination of little transcendences can break down, our memories can become confusing, conflicted, turn against us. The weight of the cosmos and the loss of trust in the little transcendencies of the mind mean the social intermediate transcendence also become strained as common communication patterns become yet even more difficult tasks. Without adequate communication trust between people as well as with yourself can be eroded.

Berger (1980) states that transcendence can become dangerous, and my interpretation is that it can be dangerous in two ways. First, they could be dangerous to the political authorities of the period, there is potential for some sort of enlightenment or solidarity that may cause a person, or persons, to diverge from dominant political and economic ideas of the day. Secondly, transcendence can become literally dangerous to ourselves, to our senses, maintaining our self, our identity and our everyday reality. Social relationships take continual work and maintenance; if life can be seen symbolically as a stage and we as actors, then the danger here is that we forget any sort of script all together, fail to piece our own story together, miss our cues or become frozen with stage fright. Accounts of suffering, of 'burn out', nervous break downs, depressions and loss are numerous and heterogenous. The task of re-establishing and shoring up our naive realism so that we can feel comfortable, at home in our immediate reality, achieve the practical accomplishments

and enjoy the enjoyments that each mundane day brings, and so so that we can nourish ourselves and nourish others, was also a common theme.

It is this common challenge that mindfulness offers itself to, to overcome negative greater transcendencies by making the transcendental world 'limited, controlled, circumscribed' (Berger, 1980, p.49) through domestication, routinisation, and ritualization. Controlling and reflecting upon our transcendental realities by being reminded that experience is embodied; and reminding oneself how one's experiences, actions, and thoughts and feelings are embodied (and impermanent); addresses the '*problem of sequentiality*' (Knoblauch, 2013, p.303). The problem of sequentiality in communication occurs when reactions, actions and consciousness of our actions could, at least hypothetically, become muddled, and begs the questions how there becomes a degree of order or synchronicity between what we think and what we do. The controlling of transcendence in mindfulness so that people are taught to transcend their bodies, to feel connected to others and to their environment, and to return to their own body in a controlled and intended manner, teaches the person to trust their sensual experiences and consequently allows the person a little time to respond responsibly and accordingly rather than react neurotically. A person may even choose not to respond at all as they give feelings and thoughts a chance to pass or come back again. According to Knoblauch (2013) a phenomenological social constructionist view of embodied communication would lead to a disintegration of the cartesian view of mind and body and this is reflected in the mantras of Western mindfulness, such as there is no inner and outer self, and that everything is simply arising and passing. The calibration of transcendental experience helps to bring a return to our illusion of control:

I think it gives back the illusion of having self-control, you know, our emotions are a really difficult part of our human existence and we just don't know why they are there, where they are coming from. Of course, we have certain ideas about biology, psychology and we know that there are hormones working and whatever but emotions are very difficult to control and with mindfulness I think we get more control of our ourselves not in the sense that we can adjust ourselves and do what we want but that we can accept that our body, our hormones, whatever, our emotional part is doing something with us and that we are not overwhelmed by what is happening. I think

this is one reason that we as autonomous persons, as we get more and more autonomous need this control even in this very basic part (Augustine)

To summarise, the logic of mindfulness is malleable to its participants interpretations and therefore participants explanations of what mindfulness are heterogeneous. That mindfulness means many things to many people allows itself to be accessible to many people. The logic of mindfulness is also heavily dependent on the invitation and necessity to experience it for yourself, therefore the proof of mindfulness is not intrinsic to mindfulness as such but emerges from the participants own experience and interaction. Mindfulness then is accessible to people of many persuasions and it is the persons own visceral experience that is the demonstration of proof upon which they will make judgement (*krisis*); the proof is thus emotionally dependent and emotionally persuasive rather than conceptually and abstractedly persuasive. People's explanations of the logic of mindfulness, and their own personal experiences of it, can be sometimes be difficult to communicate literally, consequently people find creative ways to explain things symbolically through metaphors, enthymemes and *science*.

Ethos: appeals to character

This section of the thesis is concerned with the personalities of key mindfulness mediators as the credibility of the source of communication is just as important as the proof of the communication. As stated from the beginning of the thesis, this research has only ever intended to be exploratory, therefore the brush strokes are big and rough and not detailed. I believe though the big, rough tentative strokes are a necessary preceding step to finer focused streams of research. Although I have attempted to empirically ground all my interpretations to the interviews I conducted, I believe this section to be the least empirically grounded. This is because I shall concentrate on the notable figures that have been mentioned by the participants in this study, and though they were mentioned by the participants their influence was never discussed at length. In this section I will only provide a summary of what can be gleaned from a general media review of the personalities that were mentioned by the participants. Therefore, further study is required for the large task of thoroughly analysing the public presentations of key mindfulness characters. I also believe that several of the participants of this study to be mediators of mindfulness just as

much as the more established personalities that have had an influence upon them. But because the theme was never at the forefront of my attention or a topic of discussion at the time of the interviews this potential research stream would also require further study.

The logic or apparent proof of a claim is more likely to be persuasive if it is presented from a source that shares a culturally desired *ethos*. *Ethos* refers to the *apparent* intrinsic, habitualised, moral character of the speaker. We can only know and judge the credibility of the speaker via the information that is portrayed to us in the content of the persons communication and in the context in which the communication occurs. If the speaker successfully conveys a sense of virtue, authority, trustworthiness and honesty, it goes without saying that they are more likely to be believed. *Ethos* is a non-argumentative form of persuasion, it is not that that speaker should argue that they are credible, rather credibility is bestowed upon the speaker if the speaker gives no reason for the audience to doubt them. If the audience doubts or mistrusts the speaker then they are unlikely to ascribe credibility to the speaker. Knowledge of their past behaviour or reputation is not taken for granted and it is necessary to imbue current communication with indicators of their character. Indicators referring to the speaker's *ethos* are primarily conveyed and judged via rhetoric but may also be assisted by extra-rhetorical communication that is present within the context that the communication takes place in, for example, appropriate uniforms, attire, personal salutations, insignia and so forth.

It is important to emphasise two characteristics of *ethos*; firstly, the subjectivity of *ethos* and secondly, the importance of culture. The character of the speaker is not to be understood as an objectively intrinsic quality of the speaker but is established and ascribed by the audience. Therefore *ethos*, as well as *logos*, follow the same social constructionist perspective that meaning is constructed socially intersubjectively. The dialectic relationship between speaker and audience is mediated through the culture that they share, maintain and construct together. To be credible, authoritative, or virtuous one needs to intuit and manifest what is desirable in the culture in which the audience belongs. If the speaker shows adequate mastery then the audience will deem the speaker to be of good character. If the speaker does not display mastery then they will be deemed to be in-authentic, inexperienced or at worst immoral.

Just as good leaders should be a manifestation of the group that they are guiding and that they should position themselves as a member of the group rather than above it, ethical speakers need to also position themselves as a member of the audience to which they speak. One's chances that their presentation of their self is to be judged to be authentic and credible are boosted by having an actual reservoir of private experiences to draw from. To be seen as having an authentic and credible character is not dependent on a concrete set of rules, but is a creative art and a practical skill. The speaker's negotiation between their own private experience and their public persona is an art, and just as we as an audience can fail at attempts to reduce the merits of an artistic masterpiece to some explicit rules, we cannot always reduce why we feel we can trust someone to be authentic to some hard-simple facts if they have appeared to master their role in communication.

The ethos of the speaker is always a result of the skilful choices and execution of the speaker and the judgement of the audience, and together both are dependent on the culture of the time and place. A simple law of homophily does not suffice to account for the process or likelihood of an audience casting positive judgement on the speaker's character. If the speaker simply mimics the audience in order to be accepted as one of their own, the mimicry will at some point likely become apparent and be judged negatively. If a professor tries to appear to be young and cool to ingratiate themselves with their students, they run the risk of been judged as inauthentic or ridiculous which can erode trust and undermine the authority that the professor has in the first instance because they are a professor. But one role of a professor is also to teach students and it can be inducive to learning if difficult ideas are presented to students in a way that relates to the students. A professor could connect with students in the classroom by presenting abstract ideas in relation to common everyday phenomena, or by presenting old ideas in relation to current trends. If a professor is successful in stimulating thought then not only will their title of 'professor' lend credibility to their character but their preparedness and knowledge of their own field coupled with their ability to re-present their own expert knowledge according to what they know to be relevant to their students will validate the professor's credibility beyond what an academic salutation could bring on its own. Furthermore, traits, such as being patient, honest, authentic, truthful and equitable are culturally shared and desirable virtues that rise above and beyond skin deep differences such as age, gender, ethnicity,

class and the associated mannerisms that may seem to separate us. Conversely, the vices of arrogance, intolerance, impatience will reduce the likelihood of the speaker's character to be judged as credible regardless of the fact if they are a professor or president. The character of the speaker then is judged on other criteria which are independent and beyond titles and personal demographic information.

Typically, there are three mediums in which appeals of character can be made; virtues (*arete*), good will (*eunoia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) (Rapp, 2012). Virtues (*arete*) are marks of excellence that we can aspire to achieve and that can inspire faith in others who seem to display them. The second type of ethos, according to Aristotle, is that of *eunoia*, *eunoia* is simply showing goodwill to the audience, explicitly wishing them well or simply making them feel well or at ease with some charm thus laying a foundation upon which a relationship with the audience can be developed. It would be imprudent to neglect some form of social recognition to concentrate only on the content of what you want to communicate, without a simple "good morning!" or facing the person in you are speaking with, or somehow recognising and reaching out to the audience even if they are not physically present. *Goodwill* can pave the way for other elements of ethos to be channelled and can concurrently pave a way for *pathos to follow* as you have begun to engage directly with the current emotional state of the audience.

Phronesis is a demonstration of a teleological wisdom in which appropriate means are chosen for appropriate ends. To be judged to have a virtuous character is one way the speaker can be ethical (*ethos*) and therefore credible, but virtues cannot be rigidly applied and determined *a priori*. 'For everything there is a season' is an expression stemming from the Ecclesiastes Book of the Bible and turned into a song by 60's folk and psychedelic band The Byrd's in the song *Turn! Turn! Turn!* The biblical passage, or song, describes well the practical dimensions of virtues in which a person's *agency* is crucial. Whilst virtues in themselves are a mark of excellence (*arete*), according to Aristotle that mark of excellence stems from demonstrating the virtue at the appropriate time (*phronesis*). It would not be deemed virtuous if one's honesty unnecessarily brings harm to a friend, it would be disloyal. It is not deemed courageous to kill a lion with modern weaponry for sport, but cowardly; it would be rash to jump into the lion's enclosure to pet one; but it would be deemed courageous if you put yourself in harm's way to protect the lives of others if a lion

was on the attack. The lion example may be an unrealistic example, but deciding whether to tell the truth or to protect a friend is a typical moral dilemma amongst many others which we all occasionally face. If we do manage to come out of the dilemma with a sense that we did the appropriate thing at the appropriate time then we can be considered to have a practical wisdom (*phronesis*) that has been demonstrated.

The key mediators of mindfulness that either acted as gateways to participants by introducing them to mindfulness or serve as current and ongoing influences have been; *Jon Kabat Zinn; Thich Nhat Hanh; Jack Kornfield; Tara Brach; Sharon Salzberg; the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso; Ian Gawler and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso*. All are either Buddhists, engaged Buddhists, or Buddhist meditation teachers. From these key mediators, four are Buddhist monks; the Dalai Lama; Kelsang Gyatso another Tibetan exile who split from, and has a strained relationship with the Tibetan Mahayana Tradition and founded the global New Kadampa Tradition in England (U.K.); Thich Naht Hanh, an engaged Vietnamese Buddhist who has lived in exile and has been a notable peace activist since the American-Vietnamese War and became the founder of Plum Village, a Buddhist mediation centre and intentional community based upon his Order of Interbeing; and finally American Jack Kornfield became a Buddhist monk in Thailand after initially arriving there as a member of the United States Peace Corps, Kornfield went on to jointly found the influential Insight Meditation Center in Massachusetts in 1975.

The Insight Meditation Center was founded by Jack Kornfield along with Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein and it was one place where Jon Kabat Zinn studied mindfulness and would also become a mindfulness teacher. Sharon Salzberg is the only non-Asian monk not to be medically trained, and has been a student and teacher of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation since she was a young adult. Jack Kornfield and Jon Kabat Zinn are also trained and qualified medical doctors, Jon Kabat Zinn is a Professor Medicine Emeritus and doctor of molecular biology and Jack Kornfield is a doctor of clinical psychology. Tara Brach is also a doctor of clinical psychology and founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington and her mindfulness meditation teaching is expressed as RAIN (*Recognise* what is going on, *Allow* the experience to be there just as it is, *Investigate* with Interest and Care, *Nourish* with self-compassion). Ian Gawler is a doctor of medicine, of veterinary medicine but also holds a master's degree in counselling and he is a long-time student of

Buddhism and founded his own mindfulness program, *Mindfulness Based Stillness Meditation* (MBSM), as well as the Gawler Foundation which offers wellness services based upon holistic integrative medicine.

It is apparent that a significant proportion of key mindfulness mediators are not fishermen, carpenters, butchers, bakers or candlestick makers, but men and women of science and medicine. Being educated people with high academic qualifications as well as their apparent thorough schooling in Buddhist traditions automatically serves to legitimise the opinions of the mediators, but only to an extent. The credibility bestowed upon the mediators of mindfulness is furthered because their academic qualifications and professional expertise are in the field of medicine. The quality of there been an elective affinity, of them being the right people in the right time speaking about the appropriate thing, illustrates that the speaker's credibility is not dependent on them making a spectacle by arguing that they are credible, virtuous or wise.

Being the right people is to be people of medicine and the time right now is a time of heightened medicalisation (Conrad, 2008, Barker, 2010). The process of medicalisation refers to the twentieth-century process in which, physicians organised and institutionalised themselves, creating the medical establishment that distinguishes itself with legal and professional barriers that sets it apart from laymen and lay knowledge. Evermore environmental risks are identified and linked to the diagnosis of new bodily symptom's; socially undesirable behaviours such as drinking or gambling are reconstructed as biological pathologies; mundane phenomena such as losing your hair is branded as male patterned baldness; and the technological capabilities provide evermore possibilities to detect the illnesses, diseases, or disruptions at the DNA level and offer the potential for evermore cures.

Akin to the criticisms aimed at mindfulness in the West, there have been longstanding criticisms that the medicalisation of some forms of human suffering depoliticises forms of suffering and promotes medical intervention of the human body rather than a political or economic intervention (Barker, 2010). The medical establishment has gained further authority and stature due not only to the zealous custodianship and protection of it by its members but also because of the biomedical industry which can advertises its new wares directly to the customers as well as to the physicians. Importantly the process of

medicalisation is stimulated from the bottom up as well as from the top down, we the people, demand them to do something! To recognise our suffering as a disease or a biological malfunction, thus opening the gates to further treatment. To help us perfect our health and do away with unseemly and unnerving manifestations. Maybe we simply wish to understand our condition in the only way we think we can. Maybe we simply want a piece of paper so that we can be sick according to bureaucratic standards and therefore through gritted teeth must go to the doctors.

Medicalisation of society is a bidirectional process as there are instances in which issues either do not become totally medicalised and issues that become de-medicalised (Barker, 2010). But the de-medicalisation of past constructions of illness can be seen as deviations when compared to the level of new medical illnesses emerging. As new categories of illness are created so to have new cures, new engineering capabilities and a persistent illusion that we can tame our reality and control our lives, an illusion depicted in the ancient story of Prometheus and retold in Mary Shelly's *Modern Prometheus*. Suffering's ability to remain and reinvent itself is equally as progressive and adaptive as our engineering capabilities.

Why do humans want to make progress at all? Why are we scared of risk? Why do we find our lives to be so precious? There are manifold arguments that could be debated here, a debate for which I don't have the expertise to do any justice. There are views that; just like the rest of the animal kingdom everything comes down to survival in terms of reproduction and progeny; but there are views that for the social system to maintain stable functions that support reproduction there requires a principle which people gravitate around otherwise because of the consciousness we have, we might just decide it is all pointless so therefore we permit ourselves to withdraw from all normal customs in any manner we wish. That most of the time people choose to bind themselves to society even when conscious of all forms of socialisation and subjugation could be for, love? The belief that our life is a gift? (Joas, 2001) Or the simple fear of death? These have been sociological concerns as well as theological ones, and it suffices to just draw attention to one sociological concept of suffering. The presentation of *suffering* in mindfulness discourses as universal and intrinsic to living is synonymous to Alfred Schutz's (1962) theory that it is the essential fear that our life will end, our *Fundamentalangst* (fundamental anxiety), that

serves to organise the choices we make during the work of living as it is the basis from which our hopes and fears spring from.

It is via such a hegemonic medical context that mindfulness, via MBSR has become increasingly integrated into spheres of society. The persistent *fundamentalangst* corresponds to what Kabat-Zinn (2005) refers to as the constant deep 'dis-ease' that is all too human. Despite achieving what we have desired or managing to avert something unpleasant suffering is still part of most of our lives. Kabat-Zinn's terms of 'dis-ease' and simply 'stress' stem from his explanations of *dukkha* which is the Pali term given to the Buddhist conceptual understanding of human suffering. That suffering persists despite new categorisations and treatments, has challenged our illusion of control and has led new people to mindfulness. It was the people who were suffering from chronic illnesses that seemed to puzzle the rest of the medical establishment and who therefore had nothing to lose and who were the ones recruited as the initial volunteers of Kabat-Zinn's research program at his Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical school (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

The outcome of Kabat-Zinn's medical research provided the empirical pillar of proof which has allowed the integration of mindfulness (via MBSR) into other spheres of society. As it is Kabat-Zinn's initial proof (which continues to be built upon) which is often brought forth as the demonstration of proof. As a part of Buddhism, mindfulness had already been recontextualised as a 'Buddhist science' or 'A rational religion' (Wilson, 2013) by Eastern Buddhists and Western Theosophists earlier in the 20th century, but it is the current group of scientists, including, Kabat-Zinn and neurosurgeon James Doty of Stanford University, that have moved beyond rhetoric and provided empirical validation through their scientific and academic research. The contemporary scientific recontextualisation of mindfulness has made mindfulness palatable to people weary of religion or spirituality, and assuaged the trepidation of people and institutions whom *required a priori bona fide proof* from the highest authority of the day.

The mediators of mindfulness are positioned in modern society in the right place at the right time to tap into our natural desires to deal with suffering, and attempt to help those suffering by offering a pedagogy of suffering rather than a cure for it. As the qualifications and titles of many of the key mediators of mindfulness will indicate, that right place in

society to engage with people's suffering is from a medical context. Mediators of an Eastern religious tradition offer a pedagogy of suffering in the most appropriate context of the day (medical), and do so because of the virtuous (*arete*) endeavour to help people with their suffering (*dukkha*), and the appropriate symbiosis or affinity between the appropriate virtue in the appropriate times (*kairos*) can be interpreted as a sign of their practical wisdom (*phronesis*), thus the credibility of their character (*ethos*) is established.

Suffering as a focal point of the presentations of mindfulness, from both the medical mediators of mindfulness and the non-medical mediators of mindfulness, is commonly discussed and recognised as fundamental to life. That suffering (*dukkha*) is intrinsic to the reality of living stems from the Buddhist theological viewpoint from which they communicate. For example, Thich Naht Hanh, describes suffering and happiness as '*inter-are*', in accordance to his Buddhist dialectical teachings of '*interbeing*'. Hanh can be considered virtuous because of his protest during the war in Vietnam when as an engaged Buddhist he believed in monks coming out from the monasteries to try to peacefully bring warring factions together, which was considered dangerous and thus brave. He was a key figure along with Martin Luther King Jr. in opposing the American-Vietnam War and promoting non-violent civil disobedience which also display virtues such as bravery, assertiveness, compassion and patience.

Hanh (2000) de-mystifies Buddhism not through science, for he is a well-respected monk and notable peace activist and it is therefore the traditional role of community elder or community sage that he inhabits and from which he appropriately speaks. Hanh (2000), a theologian, makes explicit the connection between the Buddhist concept of suffering (*dukkha*) to the prominent role suffering also plays in the Christian tradition. By drawing parallels between Buddha and Jesus Christ Hanh aims to show that Buddhism's view of suffering and overcoming suffering shares more similarities with Christianity than differences. In brief, Hanh does not give reason for you to mistrust him and as he has appeared to have displayed virtues at crucial times and continues to do so. Whilst there are many medical mediators of mindfulness it can be argued that Hanh makes mindfulness accessible to people from a Christian persuasion of any degree.

When one watches online Jon Kabat Zinn talks it can be seen that he is a competent orator and his jovial style is similar to the style of Alan Watts. Kabat- Zinn does not give dry factual

presentations of his scientific work, rather he taps into the audience's experiences through rhetorical questions, he uses humour, self-depreciation, metaphors and he can refer effortlessly to poetry and literature to present concepts of mindfulness. All the mediators of mindfulness show good will naturally by recognising and involving the audience which they speak too. The delivery style of the mediators is calm, friendly and non-threatening and compliments the content which they communicate. Naturally one of the main themes of the content communicated by all mindfulness mediators is suffering. Suffering could be discussed clinically and distantly, but it is talked about personally and inclusively by the mediators.

One can browse through the many forms of online media freely available, and when you do so you realise that the key mediators and the teachings of mindfulness are freely accessible, and people can integrate audio guides and podcasts into their lives in a manner most appropriate to them, as several participants stated that they do. Unlike psychoanalysis which posits authority on the analyst due to them having to necessarily listen to their patient do all the talking, the mindfulness pedagogy carries with it more possibilities in terms of how it is learnt. One can join groups or attend private sessions, or one can download apps such as *Headspace* on to their smartphones, listen to podcasts and follow online meditations or simply listen to interesting talks and tales at a time and place that suits you. One can listen to online audios for example by Tara Brach and Sharon Salzberg as well as by Kabat-Zinn and Hanh. They all speak very much from their own experiences in a friendly, occasionally humorous, occasionally serious and contemplative, relaxed, simple and honest manner, many virtuous characteristics. Simultaneously they emphasise to their listeners that the listeners already have everything in them required to cope with suffering, to be mindful or to be compassionate.

Pathos: appeals to emotion

Ethos and *logos*, although not explicitly, are qualities determined by the audience but *pathos* is directly and explicitly related to the emotional arousal of the audience. Pathos depends on the speaker's ability to appropriately engage with the audience's emotions in

a fashion appropriate for the content and intentions of the communication. Although Aristotle is naturally dismissive of communication that *mostly* relies on emotional persuasion, he acknowledges that emotions have an inevitable bearing on our judgments:

...for things do not seem to those who are friendly and those who are hostile [the same] , nor to the angry and the calm, but either altogether different in importance: to one who is friendly, the person about whom he passes judgement seems not to do wrong or only in a small way; to one who is hostile, the opposite... (Aristotle, Rhet. II 1 377b31 -1378a3, tr. Kennedy, modified in Rapp, 2012, p.607)

Establishing and inspiring goodwill, by wishing the audience well regardless of your own personal claim, circumstance or intentions; and been able to gauge and engage with the audience's current emotions; requires 'an ability or skill which might be called empathy or emotional intelligence in contemporary terms' (Demirdöğen, 2010, p.192). Turning once more to virtues, it is virtues that once again provide the bedrock, or the currency that is being bartered intersubjectively between audience and speaker. With virtues, one can make rational appeals to the emotions, and to make rational appeals to the audience's emotions one must first be sensitive to what their current emotional state is. Like culture, the audience's current emotional state provides the foundation from which to develop further discussions, emotional states or practical action. The speaker must gauge the audience's current emotional state, and then elaborate that emotional state by manifesting the circumstances for such an emotional state.

The idea that we are emotional animals has always been met with mixed responses, in Ancient Greek times too, when emotions were synonymous with diseases from which people suffered from (Fortenbaugh, 1975). Aristotle's work on emotions was significant because rather than treating appeals to emotions with derision he argued that they should be analysed rationally. Appeals to emotions are still held with contempt today. Consider for example the current outpouring of allegations of '*populism*' from those surprised by the election outcomes of the 2016 British EU Referendum, the 2016 USA Presidential Election and the 2017 British General Election in which the Labour party lost but made surprising gains. Political commentators often remain ignorant to the causes of the results as they criticise the emotional appeals of '*populism*' as naïve and browbeat those who have succumb to emotional appeals, thus neglecting the reasonable presence of emotions.

Unlike his contemporaries Aristotle did not take such a condescending view on emotions. Aristotle took a dim view on *purely base appeals to emotions* but he recognised emotions as intrinsic to reasoned thought. For Aristotle, there are two realms of thought, *practical thought* and *abstract thought* and it was to *practical thought* which emotions were related (Fortenbaugh, 1975), although I would suggest that our emotions can also influence over our abstract thought too.

An Aristotelian view of thought (mind) and emotions (body sense) conveys a holistic view of the mind and body that is in line with the anti-cartesian concepts of mind and body that have been briefly touched upon previously in this thesis. Emotions are neither counter to nor separate from ‘thinking’ and are not irrational. Just as thinking is social and contingent on something other (Coulter, 1979), emotions have logical contingencies to *other* phenomena. Emotions do not arise spontaneously as spirits from the mist, emotions are locative just as thinking is, in the same manner that we think *about* something or someone for some reason in some context, our emotions emerge from a rational relationship with some other stimuli. If we feel angry, we will feel angry about something or towards someone for some perceived reason (Fortenbaugh, 1975). Whilst there is potential for our perceptions and interpretation of the causes of our anger to be misguided, the actual relationship between our perceived reason to be angry and the actual anger that it stirs is normally rational and reasonable.

Aristotle argues that to establish the reason, or ‘*efficient cause*’ of our emotions, we must look to the *middle term* of a syllogism (Fortenbaugh, 1975). Below you can see two syllogisms, I have attempted to imagine one spoken by Donald Trump and one by Bernie Sanders, I will let you interpret which one would be most likely spoken by who. Each syllogism has a major premise (1), a minor premise (2) and a conclusion (3). I have underlined the middle term for each syllogism; the middle term for the first example is ‘corruption’ and the middle term for second example is ‘extreme inequality’.

Syllogism Example 1:

1. Corruption is unfair
2. US politics is corrupt
3. US politics is unfair

Syllogism Example 2:

1. Extreme inequality is unfair
2. US economy is extreme inequality
3. US economy is unfair

One can argue the merits of the premises *associated with* the middle terms, but most reasonable people perceive the middle terms to be undesirable, as insulting or unjust.

Most people will also have experienced some perceived form of injustice too, which can lend a visceral character to the insult of an ideal. By provoking in this case righteous or virtuous indignation the arguments provoke emotions, which in turn may direct future action towards whatever may be surmised from what is associated with the middle terms.

The emotional element of the middle term is rational, it is its associated premises, interpretations and possible conclusions, that may ultimately prove to be unsound. The syllogisms above are simple and general, but one could quite easily imagine more extreme and complicated examples that could lead to extreme immoral conclusions, but it is likely the middle term will hold a *rational and affective relationship to the virtues we have believe in*. Our virtues, when estranged from a level of reflective discernment have the potential to turn against themselves and cause unreasonable or immoral outcomes. Nevertheless, the main point that Aristotle outlines and which I wish to re-iterate here is that the emotional aspect of communication is not the irrational element, instead our emotional reactions have a rational relationship to our experiences and our values (Fortenbaugh, 1975).

On an everyday basis, we remind each other of the sensual nature of reason, when we remind each other to '*come to our senses!*' when one is perceived to be not acting in a *sensible* way. The relationship between our emotions and our thoughts is not simple or linear. The William James and Carl Lange theory of emotions places emotions as a secondary response to a primary physiological stimulus. Emotions can arise as a physiological response but consider too the occasions when social experiences can influence emotions such as fear, which in turn can influence physiological responses such as rashes of the skin, changes in posture, stomach cramp, irritable bowel syndrome, back aches or migraines, which in turn can influence further emotions such as shame, which in turn can influence our social experiences. Emotions, thinking and our social experience are intertwined and recursive. It is therefore natural that Aristotle (Ibid.) argues that we should be more cognisant of the role of emotions and not to alienate them from our thought processes. The awareness and acceptance of our emotions in our thinking and behaviour is also a key message that Western mindfulness reminds us of.

Emotions are not counter to reason, from the perspective of Aristotle and mindfulness, the dualism of emotions (body) and reason (mind) disintegrates, thinking is not a rational and

non-emotional as we may like to believe it to be and being emotional is not as irrational and non-thinking as we sometimes let ourselves believe. Appeals to our emotions are inextricably linked to our experiences (*praxis*) and virtues. The relationship between emotion, belief and conduct is intelligible and rational and as our realities are constructed intersubjectively, all three aspects are open to influence and thus persuasion. Emotion, belief and experience dance together, change in one will encourage change in another, our emotions can be influenced through our beliefs, our beliefs can be influenced through our practical experiences, our beliefs can be influenced through our emotions. By appealing to or conjoining with our emotions in an apparently virtuous way mindfulness becomes emotionally persuasive. In the proceeding paragraphs, I shall summarise the emotions that have been frequently highlighted by the people whom I interviewed. I concentrate on three emotions in particular; boredom, suffering and compassion.

Boredom

Boredom is an important yet underestimated emotion, especially when one considers how boredom can beget appetite and action. There are many views on what boredom is or how it arises, including boredom being an instinctive primordial emotion akin to thirst and hunger, a drive that has no goal other than to escape the dull monotonous anxiety inducing conditions that cause you to be bored (Barbalet, 1999). Conditions for boredom are manifold, they could be when we have nobody to play with, 'interplay', so our communication cannot become '*consummatory*' (Ibid., p.637) as it only aimlessly reaffirms itself and becomes stale due to the lack of others and otherness to discover and negotiate. Without *other* people to negotiate with, or *other* challenges, *other* experiences, opportunities for discovery or learning and all the risks that all of the those are pregnant with, boredom quietly emerges and ironically bites back and provides you with a new risk, the risk of time becoming stretched (*Langweile*) and void of meaning and purpose (Ibid.).

Historian, Fernández-Armesto (2000) argues that it was boredom, and the stigma associated with boredom, rather than a Protestant inner-worldly ethic, from which modern capitalism and modern industry emerged. The modern technological

advancements and material riches are fruits of bloody conquest and slavery rather than a frugal and enlightened work ethic. It was, so the argument goes, the chivalrous culture of the time, which emphasised the sense of adventure and mastering the unknown that spurred on Europeans to be explorers and to set sail from the coastlines of Western Europe; towards the vast horizons on the Atlantic Ocean, to map out the unknown world in which new hopes existed. Today the residue of boredom as a moral failing still persists (Darden, 1999). Also, Bertrand Russell (1932) claims it is the stability and stagnancy of modern Western societies and Western capitalism that has often been the cause of boredom and thus anxiety and unhappiness in the West, because people have not been active in discovering and shaping the social reality around them.

Rather than a social feeling (*anomie*), boredom is an individual emotion that is socially undesirable as Darden (1999) aptly outlines:

the socially disvalued emotion we experience in a setting where the drama fails for some reason; when the only scripts and props available are too well rehearsed and overly familiar; and roles which exist are undesirable and without the possibility of negotiation; there are not others whose roles we can or want to take, and we feel distant from our own roles. The situation has no apparent future, in the sense, because times seems to stretch endlessly ahead without a foreseeable denouement. Boredom is usually improper or rude, we often deny it whilst usually leaving the scene, either physically or through fantasy (pp. 24-25).

Loss of meaning and purpose engenders boredom, a state of anxiety which we feel impelled to escape from. It is our curiosity and creativity that can help us find the meaning and purpose required for us to escape from, or reinvigorate, the tedium of our 'naïve realities'. Of course, curiosity can turn out to be a curse as well as a blessing because curiosity is contingent on something unknown, and what is unknown is *riskfull*. No matter how much risk is banished from our lives, there is potential for emotional boredom to awaken our curiosity for discovery and change, which as it turns out are inherently risky as the fruits of either cannot be known beforehand.

The human characteristics of boredom and curiosity, and the appeal of the unknown are illustrated in the tale of Pandora's box. It was via the curious appeal of the unknown that Zeus enacted his revenge upon Prometheus along with the humans who enjoyed the

warmth of the fire and the nourishment of succulent meat which were both gained by tricking Zeus. Zeus sent the beautiful Pandora down to earth to be married to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, and with Pandora was sent a sealed vessel. Pandora was warned to never remove the lid from the jar in to look at what was inside, which was a mystery. As anticipated by Zeus, because of her curiosity and stubbornness, Pandora lifted the lid of the vessel, only to discover all the hardships of the world had been stored there and that they were now set free amongst humanity. Pandora though was fast enough to trap one last remaining thing, *hope*. Hope remained sealed in the jar, or at least we are supposed to believe that hope is there sealed in the jar, inside, which is now unobservable, and unknowable. In effect, all that is unknown and other, in the case of Pandora's box, carries our hope and appeals to our curious nature. As we cannot be certain of the vessels contents, there is also a risk, but in the reality that we do know, we are inflicted with hardships with some certainty and on occasion boredom.

Boredom and curiosity were common aspects of the motivations and practices of the participants. Expressions of boredom, in terms of loss of meaning, were frequently expressed as motivations to change careers, to learn mindfulness, to meditate, to join groups or in some case not to meditate alone. I believe the case of Patricia provides a good account of the emotional appeal of mindfulness as it provided her meaning to a routine and a role that was part of her daily reality:

My pathway to yoga has been through chronic pain, I was born with a club foot and had many years of really bad chronic pain and then I did lots and lots of physiotherapy and then my physiotherapy got quite *boring*, because it is the same five exercises every day for two hours and I kind of turned it into yoga myself...I could listen to the podcast whilst I clean and it became my favourite moment of the day, just cleaning

a lot of meditation techniques give guidelines on how meditation can be most effective, so for example you can wear the same clothes all the time so you can get that kind of energy, try to do it at the same time, so you get into a pathway, try to have a space in your home that has the meditation wave there. It makes perfect sense to me but to me it is an obstacle to try to keep those guidelines. They haven't helped me meditate because I never find or make the time to be so specific

it is something that requires [a lot of time] a busy life so I am cleaning plates and putting things away and listening to the talks, because it is a talk, and there is always 5 or 10 minutes meditation in the middle of the talk where I just sit in the middle of the dirty floor with the stacks of plates and meditate and then get back up and do things. It has been so helpful for me because I don't have more time

Patricia was in the past undertaking regular physiotherapy to manage her pain but it became boring, I assume it did so because the work of physiotherapy is a very limited compartment of knowledge and that Patricia was curious to discover more. As Patricia states, many meditative and therapeutic techniques demand that you dedicate a lot of time to them in a specific manner, but she created a way to integrate meditation into her daily work by; listening to podcasts by meditation teacher Tara Brach; and after learning, Patricia became a Dynamic Yoga teacher, so mindfulness as part of her Yoga became her vocation also.

Suffering

Declinism is the name given to the human tendency to perceive that our world is in decline. Our best years are in the past, our childhoods were better than the childhoods of our children and we worry that our grandchildren are going to be living in a post-apocalyptic world. Past generations had it good even if there was more disease and war, past centuries were simple, exciting and adventurous and now things are tedious, complicated and everything, including the planet we inhabit, has gone to rack and ruin. Things are getting worse and a sense of impending doom envelopes us, and if anyone thinks anything to the contrary then they are suffering from that modern-day arrogance of having the illusion in believing they can understand and control everything, which nobody in the past ever believed. An illuminating fact that seems to emerge from comparing the past with the present is that accounts of being human, stories of human experience are remarkably similar despite all of the material changes. The belief that the world is in decline stretches back as far as history allows us to reach, and so too are the attempts by people to

understand experiences of suffering. Friedrich states one of the key factors pushing people towards mindfulness is suffering;

I think the need for people to find answers has always been there. Times are a bit more difficult, but if you would ask people in the past, they would have said their present was the most difficult time. Always when we are alive and we have to deal with it, it is difficult...the baseline for many people is suffering

Acknowledging that declinism is a historically common human trait does not mean we must prevent ourselves from casting a cursory glance of what is wrong today, it would be inhuman not to, as it is natural process of trying to understand our lives. Friedrich himself seems unable to resist;

We've got the technology, we've got the waves of changes, and of things dissolving. There is no real, "what I should believe, where do I belong", families, secure work, careers, they don't exist anymore. If that is why people look for some more guidance, some peace or safe haven within themselves, may be that is the reason. Or simply to cope with everyday lives and tasks

The breakdown of traditional identities to which we feel we inevitably belonged to, has for at least since the inception of sociology, received a considerable amount of attention in various guises. In *The Division of Labour*, Durkheim describes the emergence of modern society positively, an organic solidarity emerges that is contingent on the significance of individual liberty over group welfare and traditional relationships based on kinship. In Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (PESC), the loss of the church's authority due to the Protestant Reformation resulted in people turning to an inner-worldly ascetic so that a person's solace was found in their craft and toil, leading to increased exploration of creating new efficient ways to work. The increased emphasis on discovering new efficient ways of organising work led to the cultural dominance of an instrumental rationality (*zweckrational*), in which finding efficient means to ends superseded the importance of abstract values. The eminence of an instrumental rationality led to social relationships becoming more formalized and bureaucratized (*Gesellschaft*) as production and administration became more efficient. Weber had a more negative view than Durkheim did regarding the hold instrumental rationality comes to have on our modern lives. Weber argued that such a cold analytical state of being not only compartmentalises

work and formalises relationships, but it extinguishes any idealistic or romantic views of life and thereby we are entrapped in a steel hard casing of our own making.

The problem of modern identity is again elaborated further by postmodernists, or current critics of modernity, and is what is referred to often as the postmodern condition (Lyotard and Bennington, 2010). Sociologists and postmodernists argue that the postmodern condition is typified by an inability to construct a stable identity because there are an exponential range of identities available to us. It is argued that the individualising effects of bureaucratization and rationalisation are exasperated by the rapid developments of technology. Rationalisation, bureaucratisation and technology leads to the endless production and fragmentation of information and ideas, as they are scrutinized under the microscope and opened to different interpretations from different perspectives, which in turn creates further specialized perspectives *ad infinitum*.

Developments in communication technology allows for the ability for ever increasing amounts of people to consume or engage with the ever-increasing amounts of information, and as a society becomes more individualistic and pluralistic, the information can be adapted and appropriated in ever various ways. There are endless ideas that one can identify with, but having our identity authenticated by others becomes increasingly challenging since the identities we construct are supposed to celebrate our individuality and liberty. Therefore, our identities are invariably constructed, at least in part, to stand us apart from others. The positive status of our identity is measured by the degree to which we are unique rather than by how well we conform. Postmodernists therefore argue that we push ourselves away from identifying with broader group identities as conformity to a group sits uneasy with our individual liberty.

I personally find the terms 'postmodern' and 'condition' misleading and unhelpful and the 'postmodern condition' too exaggerated. Although the phenomenon that postmodernists try to articulate is, at least subjectively, felt. Adam Curtis's documentaries; *The Trap: what happened to our dream of freedom?* (2007); and *All watched over by machines of loving grace* (2011), provide thought provoking accounts concerning our current cultural ideas of individuality. Over the course of the sixties and seventies, the political left felt defeated in the structural conflicts with governments, and thus conceded that if liberation was to be reached it would be by turning inward and in a sense the Left

merged with the movements of the counterculture era in which individual discovery was seen as radical and anti-conformist. Over time an affinity emerged between the economic sphere and the radical age of self-discovery, as the counterculture living experiments ended in disaster 'self-discovery' moved towards 'consumption'. The economic sphere, due to increased technological advancements, was in a perfect position to endlessly re-invent consumables tailored to individual tastes and thus further re-iterated the mantra of individual discovery. In the end, the radical idea of individual self-discovery essentially became the conformist hegemonic orthodoxy of the structure that it was supposed to be a liberating force from.

Over-emphasis on organic and historical enlightened processes that drive technological processes, such as occidental accounts of the development of rationality, tend to neglect and underplay the role that brute power plays and neglect the extent to which 'development' is dependent on domination, and domination is still today dependent on violence and subjugation rather than some evolved form of rationality. International trade, the suppression of unions and civil rights groups have all been dependent on slavery, plunder, and violence. In this context, the radical individuality that is much discussed seems to be a political and economic aim rather than an unintended and inevitable psychological consequence of the Enlightenment or the Reformation. One does not need to make tentative claims, the stripping of meaning from social activity (*adiaphorization*) has been clearly communicated by politicians themselves, 'there is no society!' Margaret Thatcher proclaimed, 'there are no more workers against bosses!' Tony Blair heralded.

The individuality that we are most encouraged to celebrate rests on a notion of freedom which can paradoxically feel restrictive. Individual freedom is contingent on a pluralistic society which demands from everyone tolerance of each other. It is argued that this has the unfortunate effect of not only individuals becoming to feel socially estranged but also leads to the illiberal outcome of driving out from the public square any voices that are potentially contentious to the meta-narrative of individual freedom (Flanagan (2001)). It is from our own feeling of not wanting to publicly impose our own views out of our respect for the views of other individuals. It is our fear of the real and symbolic consequences that can occur if we dare to impose ourselves and cause a controversy, that discourages people

from publicly stating anything that could be considered mildly heterodoxical; as Friedrich rhetorically stated 'We can talk about my sexuality but not about my beliefs'. Therefore, public discourses in the name of pluralism and individual freedom paradoxically tend to accentuate homogeneity. The polite homogeneity can not only become to feel restrictive and tedious, but people withhold from contentious topics such as spirituality, religion, or transcendence even if is relevant to them, thus denying themselves the lingual praxis that is beneficial to establish any consensual understanding or consensual meaning regarding those provinces. The polite narrow homogeneity that emerges from pluralism and the celebration of individual uniqueness, also adds to the fear of group solidarity which is one factor that causes apprehension in people when they think of spirituality:

I find it hard in the way I teach because if I speak of too many spiritual things most people won't or are not able to handle it so I have to be careful *but* I also think I have responsibility towards reminding them that yoga is not just some salutations...I think when people say "that it is a bit too spiritual for me" I think they mean that it is a bit "*cultish*" or the group energy. (Patricia)

May be what confounds us and leaves us feeling at sea is not the fact that we don't attend church or belong to guilds or are no longer restricted to having a car only in black, but the paradox of feeling in a steel hard case even with all the freedoms that we are led to believe we have. It is such paradoxical problems that can be the cause of crises and suffering. Sometimes our lives and choices run smoothly, but occasionally we reach a perceived crisis which we must overcome, for example; rock the boat or go with the flow? be loyal or be truthful? be protective of yourself or be generous to others? be courageous enough to persevere in the face of hardship or to be courageous enough to walk away? Crises can range in severity, can follow on from one to the next, and are not always solved as quickly as we may wish. The perseverance amidst crises, in which we '*white knuckle it*' (Regina) in the hope of reaching a resolution can cause further emotional suffering and concomitant physical ailments.

Interviewees spoke often with regards to how the world seems to be moving too fast and the feelings of unfulfillment despite striving for the contrary. But Helen offered a succinct account of the paradoxical problem that arises from the cultural significance bestowed

upon individuality that makes forming a personal identity a significant goal but one that is seems stubbornly out of reach:

Generation Y. We have been brought up to believe anything is possible and we should believe in ourselves and anything and we could do anything and then we try anything and when there are a hundred options and you need to choose, it's horrible because you lose ninety-nine and there is this constant fear, wanting to do everything and need to do anything

The crisis associated with the pre-eminence of individual freedom and the belief that the world is our oyster, but learning to feel quite limited and confined in the oyster, is described well by Kieran Flanagan (2001). The passage below reminds us of the importance we place upon journeying and the common problem of feeling anxious on that journey in which our perception of the world continually strides ahead of our capability to fully comprehend it:

In this culture, that places such a premium on movement, rootlessness, journeying and escaping yield properties of unsettlement and failures of accountability for the outcome of all this travel. The self faces the worry that its endless postponement of confrontation with itself means that it is also carrying around a fractured identity, which never sits long enough to heal. Opportunities to continually move mean that it uniquely might not know itself... If an identity can be so easily assembled in a culture that promises the realisation of any dream, one dissembled is equally simple to realise. (Flanagan, 2001, p.240)

Western mindfulness, and MBSR's approach to accepting, normalising and understanding suffering rather than proclaiming to cure it (*Nirvana* generally remains in the background or unspoken of in presentations of mindfulness), displays how mindfulness (*sati*) appeals to our emotive experiences of suffering. Importantly the mindfulness pedagogy offers simple narratives in simple language in which people can understand and learn to use to describe their own experiences of suffering. What mindfulness does proclaim itself to do, as Helen tells us:

it is not a meditation to get your suffering away. The main Buddhist teaching is that life is suffering, and we have forgotten that. When we have suffering in our life we think we are doing something wrong and we start to look for treatment that will take that suffering away but that is not the thing

Western mindfulness mediators do not necessarily need to talk about the Four Noble Truths or Eightfold path to teach in accordance with them. It is sufficient for them to do as they do, giving lay accounts of suffering; offering examples of contemporary patterns of desire and striving; offering contemporary examples of the ways we avert unpleasant feelings; and teaching the acceptance of all feelings and thought as they are and nothing more. Whilst some people will be attracted to Buddhism *per se*, more people will naturally relate to the topic of suffering, as is evident with our preoccupation of suffering in our religions, sciences and sociology. The emotional affinity between mindfulness, is an appeal to the emotions of those that suffer to any degree, whether the suffering be due to a low level of stress and weariness, loss of meaning, a crisis of identity or severe pain and loss which are categories that much of the population fall into as well as the interviewees of this study did.

Compassion

It can be tempting to add further premises to an obvious relationship, because the relationship seems suspiciously simple. Mindfulness appeals to people's emotions because it offers to speak about suffering with them. Importantly, mindfulness provides a space for a sensual and praxiological exploration of suffering. Returning to Andrew's comment that mindfulness is key to knowing all the dharmas or virtues, it becomes increasingly apparent that 'mindfulness' encompasses right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort and right concentration, which are the other practices of the Buddhist Eightfold Path. Take the practice of speech for example, I think it would be difficult through a 'speech-full based stress reduction' program to emotionally appeal to people and to connect to people's experiences of suffering or relate to other practices. Mindfulness though can relate to all practices, including speech, still appeal to people's emotions, and still have the plasticity to be open to the interpretations of the participants who practice mindfulness. The eminence of the senses in mindfulness are not only present as discussions in its presentations and lessons, but are experienced, since the pedagogy is anchored in praxis.

The claim that mindfulness is experiential knowledge that you *'have to experience'* to know, as I have experienced, is very persuasive. During the interviewers, I was invited to attend groups or to meditate so to understand mindfulness through first-hand experience and on a couple of occasions I accepted the invitation. I am not going to declare that I had a moment of clarity understanding mindfulness, or an insightful sociological moment, I never. Typically, I was too preoccupied with the pleasant way the situation arrived and was simply happy to grab any opportunity at respite that came my way after a tiring day. During the course of one evening, in a group, I experienced various moods. There were nervousness and distraction because I could not always understand as direction was given in German, and when looking around the room for cues to follow I also discovered that there was a much easier and dignified way to sit on a meditation bench than the seemingly novel, and now embarrassing, way I was perching myself on it. There was further embarrassment as I seemed to develop an untimely itch in my throat that caused me to cough uncontrollably, so out of fear of imposing myself and ruining a very harmonious moment, I left the room to catch my breath and have a drink of water. Then there was frustration since every time I thought I was free of my cough and approached the door to re-enter the room, my cough returned.

I was a little frustrated because at the time that I developed a cough I was experiencing a very joyous transcendent moment, of leaving my thoughts and body behind, and feeling at one with those in the room during a round of *Japa*. *Japa* is a Pali mantra chanting meditation. Before the chanting we were practicing silent meditation that was centred on the breath, and during that time I felt impatient as I was stuck in the loop of getting lost in many thoughts and constantly gently coming back to my breath. To break the cycle, I gave up, and directed my attention to the other people in the room and it was striking how emotional I perceived people to be as they unburdened themselves from their emotions, some seemed to be tense, some sad, pensive, fearful, and then I felt compassion, I think.

I experienced a range of feelings, and although I still felt tired when I left the meditation centre, my boots felt lighter and I had a spring in my step that wasn't present when I trudged in. The experience of the evening, and the experience of the feelings, is what I found to be persuasive, more so than if there was only talk of feelings in general, and because I experienced them, I am not only more persuaded but I will be less likely to forget

them as I would if it was only talk. It is the practice of experiencing to feel which is taught in mindfulness and which people find beneficial, as the teacher Friedrich states, 'it's a double-edged blade. The good thing about it is that people experience more. The bad thing is that people experience more. On the positive side people feel'.

Compassion was a widely used term amongst the interviewees and it is a widely used term that can be found in Western mindfulness literature and media. During the interview stage, I did not think to reflect upon and question further the interviewees meanings of compassion, it was only in hindsight, as I write now, do I realise that I underestimated and paid too little respect to what interviewees were possibly trying to convey to me. Writing up the interviewees accounts of compassion, required me to reflect upon what compassion means, for example; is compassion an emotion? What sets compassion apart from other similar emotions such as pity, commiseration or empathy? I concluded I did not really know. A superficial dictionary and literature review revealed that compassion was referred to in heterogenous ways. The standard definitions of compassion shared the same characteristics as pity but had the added dimension of the desire to *alleviate the suffering* of the other as well as being able to feel the suffering of another person *with* them. If compassion is so similar to pity, why does it often also have more benevolent connotations whilst pity often carries negative connotations? Is it really because compassion implies that you want to alleviate suffering? Would you not wish to alleviate the suffering of someone you pity?

Steve Bein (2013) provides a thorough historical and comparative account of compassion. Bein's comprehensive study illustrates the ethereal meaning of compassion as his book length discussion of compassion succeeds in raising endless caveats and contradictions rather than reduce compassion to a rational meaning. That we consider being compassionate a virtue, highlights the ambiguity of the word because it implies an emotion as well as a virtue. From an Aristotelian perspective, if compassion is to be a virtue than it is not an emotion like pity (*eleos*). Pity is an emotion, like anger, and feeling an emotion does not automatically indicate any moral significance. Pity is a feeling we have for people who are not intimately close to us, Aristotle offers the example that we may pity and weep because of the travails of a friend, but if our son was killed it is unlikely that we would weep and feel pity because the death of our children would bring altogether different emotions

(Bein, 2013). Therefore, compassion must be different than pity because it is imbued with moral significance and is not limited to people we are not intimate with.

An alternative to pity (*eleos*) is *philia*, the 'excellence of friendship'; *philia* is a state of being rather than a capacity to feel, and is also a virtue (*arete*). Unlike pity, *philia* is not confined to the feelings of sorrow, rather, *philia* is being able to share a friend's enjoyment as well as their distress. The excellence of friendship is a condition for the good life (*eudaimonia*), and the friendship could be entered with those with who are our family members, non-family members and significantly, friendship with yourself. In fact, Aristotle argues (Ibid.), an inwardly friendship with yourself is a necessary basis for outwardly friendships with other people. *Philia* seems to be an adequate explanation of compassion, as it covers positive and negative states, and it is directed inwardly as well as outwardly, but Bein (2013) argues the problem with *philia* is that it tends to only stretch as far as the people closest to us and not everyone is capable of it.

Compassion could also be *agape*, an unconditional Christian love that encompasses love for your enemies, as well as your neighbours and a love for the divine. *Agape* comes closer to *karuna* which is the Buddhist notion of compassion that Western mindfulness represents. *Agape*, like *Karuna*, requires loving-kindness (*metta*) and through the boundless love of others, selfishness and the ego are diminished, and a 'true self', 'no-self' or 'true consciousness' is cultivated. Bein (2013) though steps back from *agape* as a suitable ethical explanation for compassion for a reason that escapes me. As far as one understands Bein (2013) finds the theological wording around *agape*, such as 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' as ambiguous because if you do not love yourself then you will not love your neighbour. Thankfully it is only my concern here to come closer to the meaning of compassion rather to analyse its merits as an ethical guide. The main points here are; recognising that compassion is to Buddhism what love is to Christianity; and that a summary of *philia* and *agape* shows that compassion is altogether different from pity and commiseration.

Compassion is also different to pity because unlike pity compassion is not confined to being only an emotion as it is deemed a virtuous state too. If I am to discuss how Western mindfulness appeals to our emotions here, it would be safer to state that it does not appeal to our compassion, but it appeals to the emotions of curiosity, pensiveness and suffering;

allows the emotions of sentimentality and serenity; and encourages the emotions of trust and joy. Western mindfulness meditations and accompanied guidance are based upon loving-kindness (*metta*) and fellow feeling. The teaching of 'awareness' cultivates 'fellow feeling' to all degrees; from the inwardly fellow feelings of the breath and body, to the outwardly fellow feelings of the cosmos, and everything and everyone in between. Fellow feeling is not intrinsically a positive capacity, as fellow feeling is required just as much 'to be a good torturer as well as a good lover' (Bein, 2013, p.7). The intention of Western mindfulness is that loving (*metta*) awareness (*sati*) results in the *samma sati* (correct mindfulness) which allows for *karuna* (compassion), a virtue akin to *philia* or *agape*.

So compassion is a co-feeling that co-arises with awareness and love, but a certain type of awareness and a certain type of love. The awareness (*sati*) that mindfulness aims to sensually remind us of and trust in is; an awareness of impermanence, i.e. emotions and thoughts like all things pass; an awareness of suffering; and significantly, an awareness of the non-self (*annata*), that we as individuals do not exist independently from our environment or from other people but we exist as a unity. In sociological terms, we would describe *annata* as the *intersubjective reality* or a *social construction*. The fellow feeling Western mindfulness encourages us to be aware of is co-feeling that recognises all the dialectical interactions and relationships that we are a part; ecological relationships, environmental relationships and human relationships.

Whilst Bein (2013) states that Aristotle argued that *philia* is limited to our innermost circle of friends and family and a possible excellence that not everyone can obtain, the mediators of mindfulness claim, including many of the participants of this study, that the capacity for love is with us all but to remind ourselves of it more we need to practice it through various *metta meditations*. The *metta* meditations are a practice to cultivate and extend loving-kindness and awareness of the intersubjective world. Awareness of our 'interbeing' or our social construction that we inter-subjectively create decentres and diminishes the importance of the self which results in barriers between categories to dissolve. The loving kindness could be described as *philia* or *agape*, but to anchor it in sociological terms we can name *metta* simply as love (*Liebe* rather than *Menschenliebe*) as Max Scheler did (Ibid.) or we could call it by the name that Max Weber gave to it; is acosmistic love (*Liebesakosmisus*) (Bellah, 1999).

The love of the acosmos is a love for whatever is behind the manifest reality that we share, a love for whatever binds our interdependencies and interconnections upon which we socially construct our reality intersubjectively. It is for this reason that Max Scheler said 'love is an emotional gesture and a spiritual act' (Bein, 2013, p.7). It is argued, this type of brotherly love of the acosmos makes it easier to be compassionate with more people than if you attempted to be compassionate with people systematically on a utilitarian basis. Therefore, it is understandable that mediators of Western mindfulness believe programs such as MBSR do have an intrinsic ethical component in its *praxis* (as long as it is taught in a loving way). The compassionate attitude that mindfulness has the potential and desire to spread is synonymous with the compassionate moral ethic that Arthur Schopenhauer (Bein,2013) thought to be suitable to encourage moral acts because through compassion we become aware of our unity.

Conclusion

To bring the thesis to a conclusion the next paragraphs shall summarise the findings of the research. As mentioned at the beginning, the intention of the research was only to explore, therefore as expected the findings are broad and general. Although the findings consist of broad outlines, I do believe that it has been a fruitful first step towards mapping out more specific streams of research for the future. The rich but unfocused interview data was a natural consequence from conducting open-ended inductive research into a contemplative phenomenon. The challenge to present the illusion that I understood my findings and to find a way to present the findings in a comprehensible narrative led me to search for a metaphor to conceptualise the themes from the interview data. As I had committed myself to the inductive grounded theory method of research I attempted to refrain from basing my social research on existing social theory and thus used what I thought would be a passive concept, *the three modes of persuasion*, to bring some meaningful order to my results. The more I learnt about Aristotle's rhetorical analysis of persuasion, the more active and relevant I found the concept to be. Therefore, in a sense, I failed in my attempts not to fall back onto proving or disproving existing theory because I inadvertently began to

prove an old philosophical theory. Whilst I am unsure of the wisdom of beginning to explore philosophical concepts in a sociological master thesis, I do believe that by tentatively delving into philosophy, my understanding of certain sociological theories and their histories has developed.

An interesting insight which I gained was the extent to which that social constructionism, including communicative constructionism, Aristotle's work on rhetoric and mindfulness speak to each other; hence the title of this thesis. That they do speak to each other is a natural outcome of the interactions and connected lineage of ancient Greek philosophy, Buddhist theology and sociology, a lineage that is too rich and long to discuss here. Therefore, any calls for a Buddhist Sociology (Scripper, 2012) have long been answered and I would suggest that such calls be treated with caution and scepticism, as an overly zealous ambition could be to the detriment of both mindfulness and sociological research.

I do feel content that I attempted to present the data in a manner that was truthful to the interviewees accounts; rather than shoehorning the participant accounts into an existing theory, existing theory was shoehorned into the participant accounts. The most succinct finding from this research is that Western mindfulness is persuasive. If it was not persuasive it would not be present in our private lives, schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, work places and armed forces. Being all things to all people would be a blatant exaggeration, but mindfulness has been able to permeate our society because it is persuasive and it is persuasive because it has the characteristic of been able to be many things to many people. It can be many things to many people because of its simple and holistic presentation of what could otherwise be potentially difficult concepts. The presentation of mindfulness is a manifestation of inductive theological thought which offers an invitation and a space for your own experience and your own interpretation.

The various interpretations of what mindfulness is is not only due to the possibility and encouragement of personal experiences and interpretations, but was also a natural outcome born from the fact that the province of meaning that mindfulness directly inhabits, despite its mantras concerning the 'now', is the transcendental province. Experiences of transcendence, that is experiences of the reality beyond the immediate manifestation that we are actively social constructing, are inherently difficult to communicate because we feel the experiences to be private ones, were as communication

is dependent on a shared existing culture that you can point to. Therefore, interpretations and explanations of mindfulness and *metta-meditations* are consensual in the most part due to the degree that they differ. Explanations of mindfulness are heavily dependent on metaphors and enthymemes; they are not complete explanations because they are ciphers as there is a premise missing, and that missing premise calls for your own experience. Personal experience may not persuade everyone, but it is nevertheless persuasive, as our own empirical experiences are the most convincing demonstration of truth that we can come to know. The demonstration of truth for mindfulness, is experiential; it is through our bodily experiences in which communication of transcendence becomes consummatory rather than ineffable.

Mediators of mindfulness include many of the participants that I spoke with as it is them that will transport the pedagogy of mindfulness from a national or international level into our local communities. The work of key mediators of mindfulness which have been influential to the participants I have spoken with, is accessible directly via books, podcasts, spiritual centres, or mindfulness based programs and courses. The key mediators of mindfulness are becoming more well known, but they are not international household names. Whilst the key mediators of mindfulness have an influential presence, you will not find them trying to explicitly and directly arguing that they are credible characters. Their credibility largely stems from the fact that they do not provide heterodoxical or contentious grounds which we would need to negotiate. Instead, the key mediators of mindfulness seem benign as they appear to be the right people in the right place at the right time, thus the credibility of their character seems to be effortlessly validated. As people, they are people of medicine and science, in a place in which the scientific and medical establishment is highly valued, at time in which we believe suffering to be increasing (as we always believe). Also, the key mediators either come from Western Christian cultures and are well educated in Buddhist theology and Asian culture, or people from South Asia and Southeast Asia who are well educated in Western Christian theology and culture. Finally, as well as showing the good will to assuage our natural desire to understand and overcome suffering, the key mediators of mindfulness show culturally desirable virtues such as; honesty, patience, temperance, friendliness, wittiness and compassion.

The characters who mediate and communicate mindfulness are deemed credible and persuasive by their benignity, as they appear to seamlessly fit into our existing cultural fabric. But, mindfulness also becomes persuasive by actively connecting viscerally with our emotions. In the most general sense, it can be claimed that mindfulness can be emotionally persuasive because it requires us to engage with and feel emotions, which might provide enough persuasive excitement for those in which sentimentality has been suppressed in their everyday lives. More specifically, of particular note in this study was how mindfulness emotionally connects with our boredom and with our suffering. Mindfulness often meets people at a point in their life in which they are suffering and offers a province of meaning, a backdrop or a culture, in which there is much to learn about suffering as well as other things. As I have stated, there is also the unstated element of the unknown. The potential to learn coupled with the not been able to be completely sure beforehand what you will learn has the potential to awaken our curiosity and casts us off from our feelings of long meaningless moments as we hope to discover more.

Even when you are persuaded to conjoin your own experience with mindfulness to complete the missing piece of the jigsaw, your consciousness has not objectified and negated all there is to know on the matter as the province of mindfulness does not have narrow boundaries. The virtue and emotion of compassion is a key teaching in mindfulness, even in its most secular forms such as MBSR. Compassion is a brotherly love, an otherworldly love, and a love of relationality and a love of the complex system that binds us together. Compassion can never be efficiently and completely delineated, as it is a *'mystical altruism'* rather than a *'puritan ethic'* (Bellah, 1999). Compassion is a call to love and love is non-rational and non-knowable. The unknown is risky but also a vessel for our hope, and if we are apprehensive about taking a leap of faith and stepping into the mystic, then we may find that our curiosity might just take us there anyway.

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Appendix

1. 1 x DVD containing MP3 audio recordings of the interviews and an electronic version of this thesis.