Opening the Field

Second-Person Approaches to Contemplative Learning

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The Emerging Horizon:
Second-Person Contemplative Approaches

As a number of readers will recognize, our initial forays into the subject of contemplative education brought us our first book: *Contemplative Learning and Inquiry across Disciplines* (Gunnlaugson et al., 2014). Since the publication of this first anthology, contemplative approaches to higher education have continued to make inroads into a wide swath of disciplines and academic fields. In our age of hyper-multitasking and increasingly digitally mediated lifestyles, consensus is growing among our colleagues and students that contemplative practice indeed offers a necessary corrective and a medicine that regrounds learners and academics in the territory of our lived experience, slowing down conversations and inquiry as a means of putting us in contact with the ruminative and contemplative ethos of our world wisdom traditions as well as emerging scholarship of numerous disciplines of contemporary science. Having pushed the boundaries of traditional learning theories and practices of postsecondary instruction and learning in the first book, we uncovered an interesting development at the close of that project.

As we finished editing, a pattern became evident to us slowly, like a photographic paper developing in the stop bath of a darkroom of our collective awareness. It wasn't immediately obvious, but at some point the outline was clear: second-person contemplative practice! Noting how the first book had a number of contributions along these lines, we began to inquire further. Having extensively surveyed the literature, we came to realize that contemplative studies has until more recently emphasized a predominantly first-person standpoint—a response in part to the prevalence of third-person learning approaches that typify traditional academia. Roth (2006, p. 1805) points out that first-person approaches to contemplative experience involve exploring contemplation from a subjective position within the individual learner, while third-person approaches aspire to examine contemplative experience from an objective position that is presumed to be outside of us. But within the literature to date, insufficient attention has been given to contemplative pedagogy from second-person perspectives, which involve exploring contemplative experience from an intersubjective position that is represented spatially as *between* us, in contrast to *inside* us (subjective position) or *outside* us (objective position). To our thinking and in our research, the way forward from here was clear. And while we were not yet in a position to come out and declare this with our first book, as this project came to a close, the obvious began to slowly dawn upon us.

Initial rebalancing efforts to honor first-person forms of contemplative practice within the field of contemplative education have, for different reasons, led to an omission of second-person approaches that cultivate collaborative discernment, inspire deeper shared and coemergent contemplative states of knowing, and generally move learners and educator toward a more collective focus in their learning engagements. Unlike either third-person or first-person methods, second-person approaches offer the benefits of engagement not only within our own interiority but also between participants within the greater field of awareness and ensuing conversation. The expansion and embrace of second-person methods provide a distinctive learning milieu or context in which collective wisdom and shared learning can begin to emerge from a participatory rather than individual-centered ethos within groups, teams, and the classroom as a whole; this is what Wilber (2006) refers to as "the nexus of a we" (p. 153). As well, within the contemplative realm, the intersubjective can extend out into the more-than-human realms.

In no way denying the necessity for first- and third-person contemplative approaches or practices, the move to opening our intercon-

nections within second-person approaches represents a filling out of the learning culture that is always already present in each classroom, though to varying extents either ignored or sidelined in favor of more traditional methods that are centralized in the individual learner.

Second-person approaches to contemplative education draw from various fields, including intersubjective theory, where we find the notion of the *intersubjective field*, which forms between any two or more persons where there are always at least three points of view: mine, yours, and ours together (Orange, 1995; Sarath 2013). Support for this work has surfaced within and more broadly across the fields of leadership development (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Isaacs, 1993, 1996, 1999; Jaworski, 1996; Scharmer, 2009; Senge et al., 2004), dialogue education (Arnett, 1992; Buber, 1965; Gunnlaugson, 2006; Lord, 2007), consciousness studies (de Quincey, 2000, 2005; Hargens, 2001; Thompson, 2001), psychotherapy (Gergen, 2009; Lord, 2007; Orange & Stolorow, 1998; Stolorow & Atwood, 1996), creative arts (Kester, 2004, Walsh & Bai, chap. 13, this volume) with the collective improvisatory foundations of jazz (Sarath 2013), and collective intelligence (Atlee, 2003; Hamilton, 2004; Pór, 1995), among others.

In his proposal for a new field of contemplative studies, Roth (2006) advocates integrating critical third-person and first-person approaches to contemplative study. Yet despite these important developments, a peer-reviewed book of current scholar-practitioners' accounts of second-person contemplative approaches to learning across higher education settings has not yet been ventured. As our last book project closed, after further conversation, we saw this omission as a clear occasion and call for the present book. Whereas, in our last book, we advocated making the turn to contemplative inquiry and learning, we have come to realize that it is time to extend this turn in the direction of a second-person scholarship of intersubjective methods.

Since that moment dawned on us, and through the development of this project, we have grown to appreciate the promise of how second-person contemplative approaches to learning and teaching will contribute significantly to the field of higher education at large. In a larger educational sense, there is as well the promise of an expansion and shift to a more relational sense of being. We feel a growing need for continued engagement with the current landscape of contemplative education, pedagogy, and curriculum, only this time from the perspectives of leading second-person contemplative researchers and practitioners. Building from this epiphany, and in embarking upon and finally completing this

project, our conviction that the promise of second-person contemplative approaches can play a significant role in helping us create deeper, more meaningful, and sustainable relationships with others and with the various ecologies that surround us has grown not only in each of our reflections but in our practices and lives as scholar-practitioners.

Following that original insight, this book project has come effortlessly to fruition, bringing together an initial portrait showcasing a range of second-person contemplative approaches that draw upon diverse contexts of intersubjective contemplative practice. With this volume, emerging research is more accessible to both researchers and educators, further solidifying our intention to raise awareness of the applicability of intersubjective approaches to contemplative education as capable of informing, enriching, and sustaining the many disciplines and educational contexts currently being enriched by contemplative perspectives.

Finally, something we are all proud of, this book is the first to map out current academic voices and perspectives on second-person contemplative education through featured writings on the experiences, challenges, and promise of these approaches from scholar-practitioners across disciplines. Additionally, this book explores key theoretical aspects of contemplative instruction outlining current approaches and blind spots within various contexts and the emerging field as a whole.

We anticipate the primary readership of this book will be faculty across disciplines, teacher educators, students, researchers and practitioners in many wellness and health sectors, leaders in public and private organizations, consultants, and others with an interest in contemplative approaches to higher education. We also hope the book will act as a resource that will serve university educators and teachers looking for innovative and comprehensive solutions to curricular, pedagogical, interpersonal, or administrative challenges they face. Finally, we look forward to this book being adopted for curricula relating to innovative or contemplative approaches to higher education.

Overview

This book offers a portrait of emerging second-person approaches to contemplative instruction, pedagogy, and curriculum from a variety of perspectives across disciplines: it examines a wide cross-section of the work being done in the field and the benefits, as well as challenges, that accompany the introduction of this field into the academy. Begin-

ning with Olen Gunnlaugson's interview with Mirabai Bush, a leading pioneer in the contemplative studies movement in higher education, the course is set for the terrain to be traversed in following chapters. The vivid portrayal of the thinking and initiatives that occurred in the late 1990s at the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, which Bush founded, will likely offer inspiration, yet also a sobering reminder, to colleagues involved in this work about how delicate the relationship between the contemplative domain and mainstream academe remains. Both her interest in second-person practice, which grew out of her roots in first-person engagement, and her concurrent involvement in social justice activity are likely consistent with the experience of many readers and are particularly instructive for the sequence of the present series of essays. Exercises such as the "Just Like Me" practice she describes, done in pairs, are very much in line with much of what our authors describe in their own work.

Jorge Ferrer and Olga Sohmer introduce a radical approach to second-person contemplative education—Embodied Spiritual Inquiry (ESI)—developed by Ferrer at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco. In the context of a cooperative research paradigm (Heron, 1996), ESI applies the interactive embodied meditations of Albareda and Romero (Ferrer, 2003) to intersubjectively access different ways of knowing (e.g., bodily, vital, emotional) and mindfully inquire into collaboratively decided questions. After briefly situating ESI in the context of prevalent second-person approaches to contemplative education, this chapter describes the methodology, epistemology, and inquiry structure of ESI as a graduate course. The authors also discuss the contextual, transformational, and participatory validity of this inquiry approach, and conclude by stressing the radical nature of ESI insofar as its emphasis is on (a) intrapersonal epistemic diversity, (b) embodiment and "bodyfulness," (c) deep relationality, and (d) transpersonal morphic resonance.

The field of school counseling already provides a fertile ground for both contemplative practices (first-person) and intersubjective (second-person) approaches. In "Critical Integral Education: School Counseling," his chapter about his urban school counseling program, David Forbes reflects on his realization of the need to expand the contemplative palette to include second-person dimensions through the lens of his role as school counselor and counselor educator. He writes about how he teaches students mindfulness as a way to enhance the intersubjective skills and dispositions they already are expected to

perform as counselors. One can readily imagine how the need for individuals to "create meaning together through dialogue and interpretation, which also includes uncovering, evaluating, and challenging the often problematic, implicit cultural contexts of moral values and meanings that people share and assume," would be essential to the counseling endeavor. What is missing and needed in school counseling programs is an integral perspective that enjoins first- (internal, e.g., contemplative; external, e.g., developmental), second- (internal, e.g., group and interpersonal dynamics; external, e.g., critical multiculturalism, critical cultural analysis), and third-person (critical systemic, social, political, economic) perspectives. Appropriating principles of the Integral Theory framework, Forbes situates first-person mindfulness practice within Ken Wilber's Four Quadrant model to provide a particularly nuanced argument for the importance of second-person approaches. Forbes describes a course he teaches on integral contemplative school counseling that aims to cover some of these connections, which includes situating contemplative and intersubjective perspectives and practices within a model that employs Wilber's integral methodology.

Joanne Gozawa invites the reader into an intersubjective inquiry with her chapter "Intersubjectivity and Blended-Learning: Turning Learning Spaces to Wisdom's Place?" Can an intersubjective pedagogy evoke a wiser presence, expressed as students engaging more mutually and inclusively with each other? What might such a presence bring to learning, no matter the subject matter? And how is the intersubjective invited into learning in the first place? These and related questions underlie this chapter, which offers fresh insight as to how intersubjectivity, wisdom, and place-making play a role in constituting face-to-face and online learning spaces, particularly toward the aim of transforming these spaces into integral, enlivening, and life-sustaining places of higher learning.

In her chapter "Intersubjective Insights from Teaching Contemplative Leadership," Lyn Hartley explores how faculty at the Authentic Leadership in Action Institute (ALIA) used contemplative learning in a leadership program as a means to foster the development of an intersubjective field, shifting from the first-person "me" to an interconnected sense of "we." Each day of the weeklong summer program includes guided mindfulness instruction, small group modules related to leadership, and large plenary and dialogue sessions, all with a focus on strengthening core leadership capacities. Through meditation practice, participants gain clarity of their internal subjective experience and develop openness to

whatever arises. Contemplative art exercises, including calligraphy, movement, rhythm, and voice, are a means to access somatic or nonrational knowledge. Finally, dialogic processes provide an opportunity to integrate individual experiences into collective meaning-making.

The chapter by Peter Kaufman and Terry Murray, "From Me to We: An Experiment in Critical Second-Person Contemplative Pedagogy," describes a cross-disciplinary contemplative practice based in Marge Piercy's poem "The Low Road." Students considered and reconsidered the poem in the context of their lives, their coursework, their understanding of current events and history, and most notably, the reflections and responses they conveyed to each other, resulting in a genuinely transformative educational experience. As with many of the authors, reprieve from the information-laden nature of contemporary life was cited as an important impetus for the class, as well as the shift from "me to we." The chapter closes with important reflections on some of the challenges to also be encountered in intersubjective contemplative practice.

David Keiser, in his chapter "Teaching (and) Being We (and) Not Me: Making Room for Multiple Subjectivities in Teaching Education," offers the concept of *interbeing* as an aperture through which subjectivities within teacher education can be examined. Given that the basic building blocks of caring and compassion in classroom teaching can be augmented and framed by contemplative pedagogical practices, this chapter includes a theoretical framework of teacher education as a shared conceptual space laced with interdependence, impermanence, and equanimity, and descriptions of pedagogical practices intended to help preservice teachers more mindfully stop, look, and listen within their classrooms.

In "Per-(Me-Thou)-ability: Foundations of Intersubjective Experience in Contemplative Education," Patricia Morgan investigates the heightened second-person or intersubjective experience that can arise in contemplative education. It employs phenomenological theory to track students' movement through enhanced somatic experience to their sense of an elemental ground mirroring their second-person or interrelational awareness. This understanding of contemplative second-person experience then leads to a discussion of the ethics of care inherent in developing pedagogy that encourages intensified awareness. If at the most fundamental level we are interrelational and therefore permeable, then it is essential that reflection on ethics is paramount in the design of second-person pedagogy. Morgan reviews the work of three educational philosophers who offer direction for such an ethics, emphasizing

the educator's contemplative "presence," and they stress the need to be awake in and to the intersubjectivity of the educational relationship.

Deborah Orr's chapter, "Nature, Human Nature, Human-as-Nature: For Cecil," begins with an overview of the complex of interrelated issues—ecology, overconsumption, a destructive and divisive form of capitalism, and a delusional sense of self—which, in the most optimistic projections, threaten to radically disrupt human and other life on the earth and, in the most pessimistic, threaten to destroy all life. Orr proposes traditional Buddhist meditation as an efficacious medicine for the suffering/*dukkha* that cause and is caused by these crises. In revealing to practitioners that they are *sunya*, empty, lacking such a reified essence, and *pratitya-samutpada*, thus dependently interrelated with all else, the groundwork is laid for the unfolding of *karuna*, the compassion that grounds caring moral action for all things.

In "On Earth as It Is in Heaven," Edward W. Sarath takes on the ambitious task of tracing the roots of intersubjectivity to the inherent structure of the cosmos itself. Appropriating a nondual integral perspective, central to which is a Vedantic *advaita* lens, he draws on his work as jazz musician and integral theorist in suggesting that spontaneous improvisatory interactions, which he suggests embody intersubjective contemplative experience, are a localized manifestation of the improvisatory play—or *lila*—through which the cosmic intelligence creates the infinitely diverse creation. He takes the "hard problem" of consciousness—how consciousness emerges from a neurobiological substrate—a step further in proposing a "second-tier hard problem": How does intersubjective consciousness emerge from individual consciousness? (Hint: It doesn't: intersubjectivity is primary in the cosmic spectrum.) He also further develops his thinking about the idea that the harmonizing impact of intersubjective consciousness can be harnessed to promote a more just, peaceful, and spiritual world.

In "Bhakti Yoga as Intersubjective Contemplative Practice," Charles Scott and Heesoon Bai examine the traditions and foundations of bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion, as an intersubjective contemplative approach. Historically and across cultures, devotion has been an integral and rich part of many contemplative, religious, as well as artistic, traditions. Given that devotion exists in the relational dimension of two or more beings, it is very much an intersubjective expression of contemplation and contemplative practice; the authors also suggest it can be seen through an epistemic lens as a form of inquiry into the nature of things. Moving across cultures and spiritual traditions, they explore Martin Buber's

dialogic concept of *devotio* to see more clearly the connection between intersubjectivity and devotion. Finally, they move into an exploration of various elements of devotion as a means of developing our understanding and deepening the possibility of intersubjective connection and relational being.

Drawing on graduate training in interreligious dialogue, Judith Simmer-Brown, in her chapter " 'Listening Dangerously': The Inner Dimensions of Dialogue Training," describes how the practice of dialogue with others draws students into an introspective practice of "listening dangerously" to the inner voices of their own multiple religious identities, finding wisdom in each of them, and drawing sustenance for a sense of human personhood that transcends any of them. Her chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between experiential and contemplative learning, and how each enhances the other. She notes that the genuine power of the educational experience seems to come from the mixing of the intersubjective with the intrasubjective, the second-person and the first-person kinds of inquiry, concluding that without the intersubjective, the inner dialogue dimensions of the course would have less potency. She closes her essay by writing, "As we develop the art of contemplative teaching, it seems important to employ methods that integrate the intersubjective with the intrasubjective in order to further develop potency for contemplative education."

In their chapter entitled "Writing the Cauldron as Intersubjective Space," Susan Walsh and Heesoon Bai engage in an intimate intersubjective experiment of mixing their attuned subjectivities in the transformational container (hence, the *alchemical cauldron*) of intertextual collaborative writing. The result is, first, affirmation of the Buddhist insight into "no-self" (*annata* in Pali): that our subjectivity is radically mutable and can be recreated in cultivated ways that are conducive to well-being. Second, their piece demonstrates the creative nature of this transformational work wherein thoughts, feelings, perceptions commingle to generate new content of consciousness that expands and enriches their subjectivity. Third, their work illustrates the power of contemplative practice in supporting the transformation of self, that is, subjectivity, which is challenging work, as educators and psychotherapists would confirm. In their chapter, which builds on previous collaborative contemplative writing for a book on arts-based and contemplative practices, Walsh and Bai thematize the Buddhist concept of the Four Immeasurables (loving-kindness, compassion, empathic joy, and equanimity).

Closing Reflections

Whereas our previous book was rich in periodic incursions into the second-person realm, which of course is inevitable in any substantive inquiry into the contemplative endeavor, this volume gives further shape to those efforts as well as addressing many facets of the second-person approach that were not previously considered. The fact that this volume also includes not insignificant mention of first-person contemplative experience and practice reflects the same interconnectedness of the discipline, and the overarching reality it seeks to apprehend. Though few would deny that comprehensive engagement with any given part cannot occur without embracing its relationship with the whole, this can also render any inquiry susceptible to compromised nuance when it comes to localized concerns. We are confident that our approach to this challenge, which is to center the second-person as a realm of inquiry unto itself but not at the exclusion of first-person considerations when they might arise, provides a fertile template for subsequent investigation. Indeed, invoking the integral framework that significantly informed the work of several of our authors, the inextricable link between individual consciousness and the cosmic wholeness is at once the ultimate first-person, second-person, and—if one considers, perhaps from an Advaita Vedantic standpoint, the capacity of consciousness to observe itself as its own object—third-person phenomenon. Perhaps one of the major educational imperatives of our time is to refine understanding and approaches to this wholeness through all three lenses: first, second, and third person. At which point, the range of considerations that comes up in these pages directly embodies this quest at refinement, always with an eye toward informed practical application, which will be the focus of a subsequent volume on the intersubjective dimensions of contemplative inquiry and practice.

Interpersonal relationships and intersubjectivity are clearly important; engaging in meaning-making and developing understanding are vital to individuals, groups, organizations, and societies, particularly in a world that is ever more complex, ever more connected, ever more rapidly changing. We live in multifarious worlds of relationality where shades, tinges, gradations, and traces of difference and meaning are vital; subtleties count. Contemplative inquiry and practice in the domains of the intersubjective uniquely provide us with the nuanced forms of engaging in relational work that are now essential.

Moreover, not only does intersubjective contemplative inquiry provide us with the epistemic tools of knowledge-making, it also pro-

vides us, perhaps even more significantly, with the means of developing relational being.

While we will be the first to admit there is much more of the second-person story to be told, we are honored at this opportunity to provide the very first collection that specifically places this topic front and center.

Acknowledgments

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