

# Modes of Mindfulness: Prophetic Critique and Integral Emergence

David Forbes<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** As mindfulness becomes more secular and popular, there are more arguments about its purpose and use value. Because of its disparate uses, many proponents of any one side often talk past each other and miss their mark. This paper employs an integral meta-theory that accounts for subjective, inter-subjective, objective, inter-objective, and developmental perspectives on mindfulness. This helps categorize modes of mindfulness in order to clarify their purposes and functions within a society characterized by neoliberal principles and structures. It adopts the standpoint of a prophetic critique similar to those critiques of McM mindfulness and insists on the inseparability of both universal self-development and social justice. The approach expands on a taxonomy developed by the socially engaged Buddhist scholar, Bhikkhu Bodhi. The modes of mindfulness are classical, secular therapeutic, secular developmental, secular instrumental, secular interpersonal, and socially transformative mindfulness. It proposes that a prophetic integral mindfulness employs all modes of mindfulness in order to do justice to as many perspectives as possible and thereby contribute to human evolution.

**Keywords** Mindfulness · Integral · Prophetic · Neoliberalism · McM mindfulness

## Introduction

As mindfulness becomes more secular and popular, there are more arguments about its purpose and use value. Is mindfulness for stress reduction or enlightenment? Is it for therapeutic adjustment and ego enhancement or for radical social transformation? Should it increase personal (hedonic) happiness or promote (eudaemonic) well-being for all? Because of its disparate uses, many proponents of any one side often talk past each other and miss their mark.

As a way to remedy this, I employ an integral meta-model that categorizes the uses of mindfulness from foundational perspectives that include the personal, moral, cultural, social, scientific, and spiritual (Wilber 2006). Within this meta-model, I develop a critical taxonomy offered by the socially engaged Buddhist, Bhikkhu Bodhi, who examined mindfulness in critical and progressive terms (Bodhi 2015, May). Inspired by Bodhi's call for all of us to realize and enact the nonduality and inseparability of all aspects of life, I consider this project as a prophetic critique (Woods and Healey 2013). A prophetic critique enjoins universal, highly evolved values from religious traditions such as the demand for universal justice with critical theory that challenges the status quo of power and with a call for our highest personal development. It "is a universal human capability that draws from, and reaches toward, developmentally advanced modes of imagination, empathy, and critical reasoning... In its progressive mode, prophetic critique presses toward higher developmental stages by challenging dominant cultural narratives and value structures that are reactionary or even morally regressive" (Ibid., pp. 6, 7-8).

Prophetic critique is an integral project: its use here is unique in that it explicitly combines traditional approaches from the East (contemplative Buddhist practices) and West (the Abrahamic prophetic tradition of social justice) toward both full individual development and social liberation within

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✉ David Forbes  
dforbes@brooklyn.cuny.edu

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, Brooklyn College/CUNY and Urban Education Doctoral Program, CUNY Graduate Center, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11210, USA

present society. It is a call to let go of attachment to the ego or self which is found within both traditions. At the same time, it morally calls out practices of self-attachment that occur at the level of society: individualism, commodification, materialist greed, and maintenance of the status quo of power and privilege that benefits the few.

This approach to prophetic critique that confronts societal causes of suffering is not just a Western practice but arguably occurs within Buddhism; David Loy said that contemporary Buddhism must focus not just on individual suffering but also on its unjust institutional causes (Loy 2013), and David Brazier argued that “the Buddha was strident in his criticism of the religious, social, and personal mores of the day...” (2002, p. 35). The larger point is that a meta-integral perspective does not simply rely on canonical texts or traditions; it includes and transcends traditional perspectives—both Buddhist and Abrahamic, and both inner, personal contemplative practices and outer social action to overcome suffering. In this case, it further makes use of social theory, cultural critique, and critical analysis of dominant ideologies with an eye toward developing more liberating consciousness and practices for all.

In today’s terms, a significant cause of suffering at the societal level takes the form of neoliberalism (Giroux 2014a, December 30; Giroux 2014b; Harvey 2005; McGuigan 2014). Neoliberalism is an ideology and political rationality that promotes the private individual who competes for and purchases all of one’s needs through the market, which by means of austerity policy replaces the structures and even the concepts of social institutions and the public good. The neoliberal self is self-reliant, a risk-taker, and not dependent on or connected with others; one is motivated by personal gain as a perpetual self-entrepreneur and consumer of choice.

Neoliberalism denies that society, societal structures, and institutions exist; in Margaret Thatcher’s words, “there is no such thing as society.” This has troublesome implications for fighting social inequities such as racism. Neoliberalism dismisses racism as a social, structural, and institutional problem; since it claims that everything is a matter of individualized choice, each individual is believed to be personally responsible for one’s own success and failure (Davis 2013, May 6; Robbins 2004). Thus, although racial neoliberalism and unequal relations of structural power still exist, they are negated within public discourse and public policy and become taboo topics (Enck-Wanzer 2011). For example, neoliberals dismiss any talk of structural inequality as “political correctness.” The individualistic focus of neoliberalism contributes to a therapeutic culture, a turning inward away from societal relations, in which the solution to problems is to personally adjust and manage the self; social problems become psychologized.

A prophetic critique then names, analyzes, and opposes social injustices such as neoliberalism and racism in developmental, cultural, structural, and political terms as inseparable

parts of the mindful project to identify and overcome obstacles to universal awakening. A prophetic critique thus demands that as part of our personal practice, we envision and enact a society with others that promotes optimal human development, intrinsic love and relationships, wise compassion, democratic social justice, and universal care. This requires that we bring about this vision of society in all areas of human endeavor, not just as individual agents.

I am proposing a critical typology to evaluate mindfulness approaches that can inform the development of new integral curricula and interventions. It can serve as a corrective for some proponents of existing mindfulness programs who in light of this approach may consider expanding their own perspectives, interests, and modes. In short, as an integral practice, all modes of mindfulness can and should be engaged.

### Mindfulness: A Prophetic Critique

Secular mindfulness has been shown to provide benefits to people within many settings; at the same time, its technical, neutral definition and relativist lack of a moral foundation has opened it up to a host of dubious uses, now called out by its critics as McM mindfulness (Purser and Loy 2013; see Hyland 2015a; Hyland 2015b, June 22). McM mindfulness occurs when mindfulness aligns with neoliberalism and is used, either with intention or unwittingly, for self-serving and ego-enhancing purposes that run counter to both Buddhist and Abrahamic prophetic moral teachings to let go of ego-attachment and enact skillful compassion for everyone. McM mindfulness instead promotes self-aggrandizement; its therapeutic function is to comfort, adjust, and accommodate the self within a neoliberal, corporatized, militarized, individualistic society based on private gain. In this way, mindfulness becomes a neoliberal technology of the self (Reveley 2015a). McM mindfulness practices contribute to psychologizing social problems. Blind to the present moral, political, and cultural context of neoliberalism, these forms of mindfulness interventions are easily accommodated to an individualistic, therapized, and commodified society that is itself a major generator of social suffering and distress. Without a critical account of the social context of neoliberal individualism, mindfulness as a practice and discourse focused on the self minimizes social critique and change and contributes to keeping existing social injustices and inequitable power structures intact. With regard to those who write about mindful politics, Jeff Wilson noted “Most mindfulness authors pin their hopes on a mindful capitalism as sufficient to bring about the kinder, wiser society they envision” (Wilson 2014, p. 185).

The best McM mindfulness can then do, ironically, is to offer to sell us back an individualistic, therapeutic “cure”—mindfulness—to reduce that distress. By negating and downplaying social and political contexts and focusing on

the individual, McM mindfulness interventions ignore seeing our inseparability from all others and from inequitable cultural patterns and social structures that affect and constitute our relations. It thereby forfeits the moral demand that follows this insight: to challenge social inequities and enact universal compassion, service, and social justice in all forms of human endeavor. Challenging McM mindfulness is a prophetic critique of greed, ill-will, and delusion in concrete, historical terms at both personal and societal levels. McM mindfulness critics insist that the personal and the social are inseparable and that mindfulness should contribute to both full development and universal social justice in all areas of life.

In a like-minded prophetic voice, Bhikkhu Bodhi described four “modes of applied mindfulness” and pointed out each of their limitations with respect to advancing a universal demand to realize our inseparability with all of human society and with all beings (Bodhi 2015, May). The four modes, to which I have added two others, are situated within the four perspectives or quadrants of integral meta-theory. While the modes serve as heuristic categories and overlap occurs in their actual applications, I have also provided some examples within each mode. Seeing how mindfulness functions in integral terms in this way helps us to critically discriminate when, how, and why mindfulness gets applied. This enhances the ability to focus on and strive for more inclusive purposes of mindfulness. Through the integral framework, I will show that many mindfulness programs today are imbalanced in favor of individualist perspectives at the expense of cultural and social ones. As a result, mindfulness modes oversell personal practices and skills that adjust individuals to the dominant self-centered and inequitable relationships and structures of neoliberal and racist society. A prophetic critique instead calls for an integral, radical turn toward both personal fulfillment and universal social justice. I will include some examples from education and from my work as a counselor educator who teaches mindfulness from an integral perspective.

## Integral as a Meta-Theory

Integral is a meta-theory that is a method of inquiry, a descriptive way of seeing things, and a vision of human history that encourages us to consciously evolve toward universal goodness, truth, and beauty. Toward this end, it includes contemplative/spiritual, developmental, psychological, scientific, cultural, and systemic and structural perspectives. Meta-integral also spans the full range of human development from early to later stages of consciousness and culture.

Unlike theory, meta-integral does not have a normative dimension that prescribes particular actions; however, it can be applied in practical ways, for example, by using it to take a stand for aspects of social justice and to oppose systems that impede it such as neoliberalism (in the lower quadrants; see

below). Yet, even at the meta-level, some integral community members argued that integral is not comprehensive or explicit enough when it comes to social justice; Ken Wilber’s book on integral meditation appeared to be an example of this omission (Corbett, n.d.; Patten and Morelli 2012, February 20; Stein 2015, June 26; Wilber 2016). For this reason, I include an explicit call for social justice as part of applying integral meta-theory toward secular mindfulness (Fig. 1).

Integral meta-theory has a number of aspects; here, we focus on perspectives and developmental stages, which differ from states of consciousness (Esbjörn-Hargens 2009, March 12; Wilber 2006). Integral takes as many perspectives as possible, depicted as quadrants, on any phenomenon. There are four foundational quadrants and all co-occur at any given time: subjective—first person or I, which includes personal experience; inter-subjective—second person or We which takes the perspective between people in relationships and cultures that form meaning together; objective—third person singular or It, scientific, objective, observable facts about an individual; and inter-objective—third person plural or Its, from the perspective of objective physical and social systems, networks, and structures. An advanced perspective itself is to include as many of these viewpoints or worldviews at once. This serves as a corrective to quadrant bias.

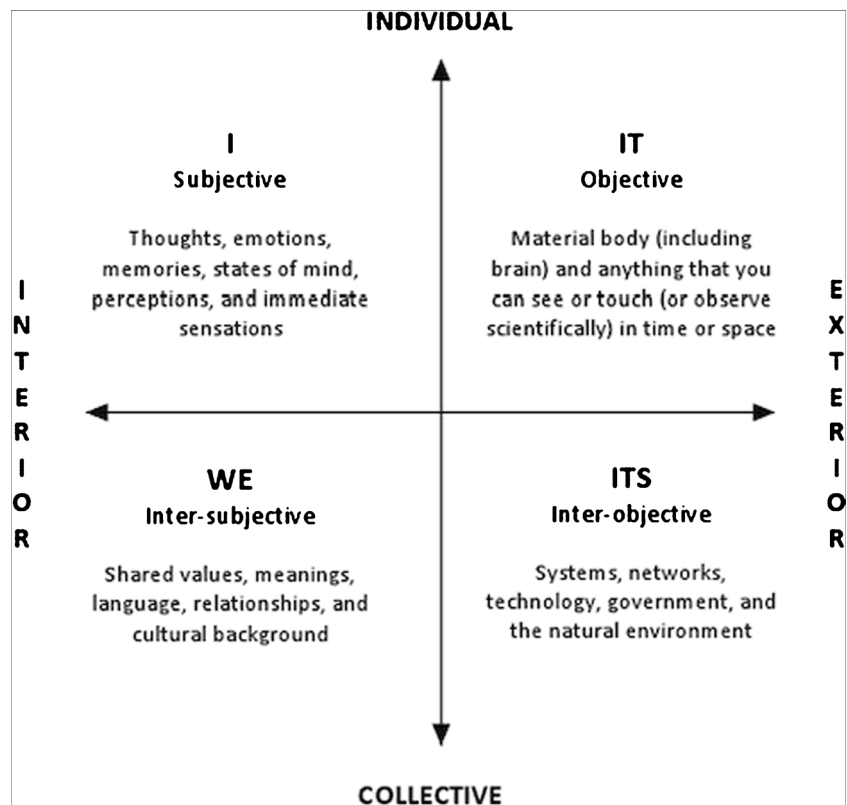
Quadrant bias is the mistaken tendency to reduce experience to just one viewpoint, which says only one favored perspective by itself represents the whole truth. A subjective (first person or I) bias is to say that my will, wishes, beliefs, and vision are what determine reality: reality is entirely what I make of it, visualize, or wish for.

The objective (third person, individual or It) bias is to claim that only observable, measurable entities or data, in particular, behavior, count as reality. This view predominates in social science and education and often leads to scientism. Materialist ideologues believe that only the brain is real and that unobservable consciousness can be reduced to brain phenomena.

An inter-subjective (second person or We) bias is to think that everything is just socially constructed; because there are infinite contexts of contexts of meanings formed between people, everything therefore is relative. Accordingly, there are no truths; there are at best multiple versions of truth from everyone’s viewpoint, and so, through language interpretation, we can construct any truth we want (an extreme postmodern position). A variant of this is to claim that there is no self or interior experience since we are all just a web or network of interpersonal relationships.

Last, an inter-objective or systems bias (Its) is to think that everything, including consciousness and cultural development, is determined by the structures and systems of institutions, technology, society, or the political economy. From this biased perspective, subjective and cultural consciousness and relationships take a back seat to environmental systems or social structures. Over-attachment to any one perspective then

Fig. 1 Integral framework



is a problem, and we seek as many perspectives (partial truths) as possible.

### Quadrant Bias in Modes of Mindfulness

There is quadrant bias, or a lack of integral balance, within the field of mindfulness. Olen Gunnlaugson pointed out that contemplatives tend to focus on first person, or subjective (I) and third person, or objective (It) perspectives to the exclusion of second-person, or inter-subjective (We) realms that have to do with cultural meanings and relationships (Gunnlaugson 2009, June). Overall, mindfulness programs tend to pay little to no critical attention to both of the collective oriented quadrants that address culture (we) and society (its) and which include issues of social justice.

Contemplative studies restricts its focus to the first person realm (I), the personal experience of feelings, values, and intentions—in this case the practice of mindfulness, the experience of coming to know things from a contemplative state, including one's mind, and establishing a new relationship with its patterns. From this biased, individualist perspective, some mindfulness proponents believe that mindfulness can transform not only one's own consciousness but that of society and its institutions, without considering cultural and structural perspectives.

In an attempt to remedy this subjective focus with some kind of objectivity, mindfulness practitioners, scholars, and researchers take an interest in some third person, individual perspectives (It), in particular, neural correlates and brain activity, some behaviors, and physiological measures of health and stress. They also employ mindfulness as an objective behavioral skill, to help individuals perform better with less stress, better focus, and greater emotional self-regulation in various social roles, for example, as student, teacher, employee, executive, athlete, soldier, and parent.

In both of these perspectives, first and third person, knowledge is directly perceived rather than arrived at through dialogue about moral or evaluative meaning (second person)—these are two ways of knowing, just not the only ones. Looking at just these two perspectives overrides recognizing that the gestalt of cultural (inter-subjective) and societal (inter-objective) perspectives exist in their own right and require their own level of analyses and types of practices and interventions. The two individual quadrant biases are compatible with the neoliberal ideology of individualism: through mindful consciousness, it is believed that one personally can separate from, or adjust to, or even change the social and structural inequities of the world. In objective terms, each individual is just an observable atomized individual freely pursuing one's goals.

Another way to frame the problem of taking only first and third perspectives (I and It quadrants) without the second

perspective (We) of cultural meanings is that it leads to the insidious Myth of the Given. This is the mistaken belief that everyday life is objectively, directly perceived rather than realizing that it occurs within a culturally, socially, and historically constructed background by and through which people discuss, interpret, and actively create meanings and moral values of shared experiences, which change and can be changed over time. It is not sufficient to say that in secular mindfulness, everyday things are directly given or perceived “as they are”—with the exception of objective scientific knowledge, which begs the question and requires arguable interpretation and reference to the cultural and social context of “what they are.” From a Buddhist perspective, seeing things “as they are” means something quite different from its use in secular mindfulness: it is to see at an ontological level that all things are characterized by impermanence or change, unsatisfactoriness, or suffering of conditioned existence, and not-self or insubstantiality. Perspectives then are filtered through a background of cultural and social meanings: to perceive an object, person, social situation, or to experience a mindful or other conscious state depends on an interpreted background that is part of an implicit culture and/or society of shared meanings. Meanings also are impacted by the ideology, relationships, and system of those in power that often need to be resisted.

**Development** Each quadrant has a structure of developmental orders, or stages, that reflects a hierarchy of growth. Developmental structures within the subjective or I quadrant are another significant feature of an integral perspective because they filter experience, for our purposes the experience or state of mindfulness. A critical distinction is between a person’s state of consciousness and one’s stage of self-development; for example, one can attain an advanced meditative state and still remain at an early stage of moral or social development. Developmental orders or stages are “outside,” structural aspects that filter what we see; Robert Kegan saw them as akin to our operating system rather than the inside content (or files) of our thoughts. Tom Murray noted that “If every perspective is like a lens or filter which distorts perception and inference, then we can correct for these distortions to the extent that we understand something about the lens or filter itself (turning subject into object, as Kegan frames it)” (Murray 2009, p. 105).

At each later order, we include and transcend the previous ones. In our own self-development, we grow by making our previous subjectivity (“what one is subject to”) a new object of our awareness (“what can be seen as object”) (Kegan 1994). We are able to step outside and witness what we used to experience or identify with in terms of our feelings, opinions, values, and perspectives and now see them as part of an earlier object, a belief system, rather than as an absolute truth. We now include

and transcend our earlier stage and have a more encompassing perspective or worldview that takes more and more perspectives into account.

As seen in Fig. 2, orders or stages of self-development in Kegan’s model are as follows: early impulsivity (first order), egocentric (it is all about me; I can only see things from my perspective; second order), conventional (I go along to get along, loyalty to my group; we are right versus the “other”; third order), post-conventional (I can think for myself and for the good of others; fourth order), and unitive or universal (I have let go of attachment to a self or ego and to any conceptual or social systems and identify with the well-being of all; Kegan’s fifth order) (Cook-Greuter 2005; Kegan 1994; Wilber 2006). Integralists recognize that development is not linear, mechanistic, or inevitable. Healthy early and middle orders or worldviews are normal aspects of development; until one reaches later integral, universal, or “second tier” orders, over-attachment to one worldview, like quadrant bias, also occurs at each of these levels of self-development. At the latest developmental stages (integral or unitive), people come to see and understand the relative merit of all previous worldviews.


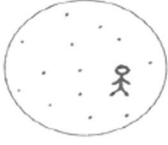

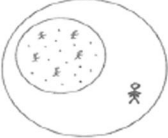

Integralists seek and strive for universal, optimal human development—the conscious grasp and practical embodiment of as many perspectives as possible could contribute to human evolution, toward that which is beautiful (first person), good (second person), and true (third person) (McIntosh 2012; Wilber 2006). At later levels of self-development, the advanced contemplative state of experiencing non-duality becomes a stable stage: one lets go of attachment to the ego and identifies with the universal. Depending on how it is experienced, this is arguably the non-dual ground/groundlessness (Buddhism); or a divine, mystical relationship or union with a loving God (the Abrahamic traditions); or some form of humanist universal morality (atheism). Cook-Greuter said that at this stage, one can even “perceive the concrete, limited, and temporal aspects of an entity simultaneously with its eternal and symbolic meaning”; the infinite is seen within the finite (Cook-Greuter 2005, pp. 32–33).

The distinction between a post-conventional order, Kegan’s fourth order, and a later, unitive, fifth order of self-development is crucial when we evaluate mindfulness practices and programs. Tom Murray described the qualitative difference between the fourth and fifth order, the move from progressive education programs, for example, contemplative ones that employ mindfulness (fourth), to a later integral perspective and pedagogy (fifth):

The progressive, alternative, reform, and holistic pedagogies...are associated with [Kegan’s] fourth order (and



**Fig. 2** Robert Kegan’s orders of self-development

Developmental Stage/ Order of Mind (typical ages)	What can be seen as <i>object</i> (the content of one’s knowing)	What one is <i>subject</i> to (the structure of one’s knowing)	Underlying Structure of Meaning-Making
<b>1st Order: Impulsive Mind</b> (~2-6 years-old)	one’s reflexes	one’s impulses, perceptions	Single Point 
<b>2nd Order: Instrumental Mind</b> (~6 years-old through adolescence)	one’s impulses, perceptions	one’s needs, interests, desires	Categories 
<b>3rd Order: Socialized Mind</b> (post-adolescence)	one’s needs, interests, desires	interpersonal relationships, mutuality	Across Categories 
<b>4th Order: Self-Authoring Mind</b> (variable, if achieved)	interpersonal relationships, mutuality	self-authorship, identity, ideology	Systemic 
<b>5th Order: Self-Transforming Mind</b> (typically > ~40, if achieved)	self-authorship, identity, ideology	the dialectic between ideologies	System of Systems 

reach into his fifth order.) Integral approaches are more centrally fifth order. Applied to the domain of education, learners at Kegan’s fourth order are self-directed (or self-authoring, co-creative) learners who can examine themselves and their culture, develop critical thinking and individual initiative, and take responsibility for their learning and productivity. At full fourth-order consciousness, individuals have mastered skills such as these, and in the process of doing so, likely became advocates of such skills and identified with them believing this level of skill superior to others. Typically, they have practiced and identified with one or a small number of progressive schools of thought... At Kegan’s fifth-order individuals begin to reflect upon whole belief systems, even their own fourth-order beliefs, as limited and indeterminate systems. They begin to dis-identify with any particular belief system, and experience themselves as embodying a variety of evolving belief systems, surfacing in different contexts (Murray 2009, pp. 112- 113).

A progressive integral approach to mindfulness at the fifth order allows one to reflect on whole belief systems, including one’s own, and to see them arise within varying contexts. Thus, mindfulness programs and practices themselves can be reflected on from a fifth-order or integral developmental perspective which by itself mindfulness as a state cannot

provide. This is important not just in seeing how developmental stages filter mindfulness states and practices but in evaluating mindfulness programs themselves.

### Modes of Mindfulness in Need of Integral Prophetic Critique

Many mindfulness approaches and programs in education appear to be at the fourth order of development: proponents are still attached to or invested in their own belief system and are often unable to step outside and critically regard them as objects of contemplation or reflection themselves. Jeff Wilson argued that mindfulness operates in a religious or quasi-religious fashion, as a type of “American Buddhist civil religion”; mindfulness proponents “are convinced” that mindfulness can alleviate suffering in many ways for many people (Wilson, p. 161). Some contemplative-based programs tend to fall prey to a “universalizing rhetoric” that sees suffering and compassion in an individual-focused approach; Brooke Dodson-Lavelle argued “that our Buddhist and modern frame of the individual is so deep, so often unconscious, that we are unaware of the extent of this bias” (Dodson-Lavelle 2015, pp. 162; 171).

Even when proponents evaluated mindfulness programs in schools, they appeared to be unable to step outside of the

educational system in which mindfulness operates and provide any critical perspective on what is problematic about schools and how mindfulness functioned. It is again a matter of faith that the “learning” and “schooling outcomes” to which mindfulness ostensibly contributed were themselves unquestioned variables of a presumed benign, objective, neoliberal education system (Jennings 2015; Maloney et al. 2016; Waters et al. 2015). Proponents who researched mindfulness program outcomes tended to favor citing only those programs they regarded as having positive effects (Nowogrodzki 2016, April 21).

Identification with one’s belief system is the case in particular with some programs that arguably are not reflective about their own tendencies toward McM mindfulness values and practices and that are supportive of, for example, corporatist individualism, neoliberalism, white privilege, and/or militarism. A number of us who have raised critical questions about the social context and function of mindfulness programs in writings and forums have been met with defensiveness by some mindfulness proponents, some of whom mistakenly conflate concern over how mindfulness is employed with an attack on mindfulness itself and on their own investment in it (R. Purser, personal communication, May 21, 2016).

The aim here is to critically examine the following modes of mindfulness from a fifth order perspective, to show the need for integral balance, and to establish a practical foundation for enacting integral mindfulness programs that incorporate critical developmental, cultural, and social perspectives (Fig. 3).

**In the Subjective Quadrant (I)**

**Classical Mindfulness (Bodhi)** The purposes of Buddhist mindfulness are to facilitate insight into the nature of things, to relieve one’s suffering, and to attain a state of enlightenment or awakening. Awakening includes the realization that one’s self or identity is not a solid entity, and that there is no difference

between the self and all others and the universe. Bodhi called out one of its problems, and that of all mindfulness modes within the subjective quadrant that focus on individual experience in a limited way: it may lead to both “narcissistic self-absorption” and an “indifference to inequities of social-economic institutions” (Bodhi 2015, May) (Its). It also leads to an indifference to culturally constructed contexts that occur among and between people (We). Within a socially engaged Buddhist context, David Loy also identified the problem of social dukkha, institutional poisons, or Wego, which are as insidious as the individual ego (Loy n.d.). That is, Bodhi and Loy see a quadrant bias in Buddhism when it only emphasizes the privatized individual and personal awakening or enlightenment and does not follow through on the notion of inseparability of each of us with others, which includes the enactment of this truth within actual cultural relations and societal institutions.

Many mindfulness practitioners working in corporate and medical sites, schools, universities, and the military come from Buddhist traditions yet do not convey mindfulness as having anything to do with a Buddhist practice or as part of a particular set of religious precepts. The McM mindfulness critique, however, is not that secular mindfulness proponents should return to some supposedly pure Buddhism, as a number of them mistakenly argue back. The charge by critics of McM mindfulness is that by abandoning its complex Buddhist roots, secular mindfulness is devoid of any explicit moral foundation. It is reduced to an oversimplified, superficial, or “not-worked-through Metaphysics” and instead prefers “affect management” and scientific reductionism to deep inquiry into the basic nature of the self and to a commitment to moral and social enactment (Bazzano 2013).

**Secular Therapeutic Mindfulness (Bodhi)** Secular therapeutic mindfulness functions to help individuals deal with psychological problems, traumas, stress, addictions and conflicts, alienation, and hopelessness (Bodhi 2015, May). This is

**Fig. 3** Integral prophetic critique of modes of mindfulness (after Bhikkhu Bodhi)

<b>I Subjective</b>	<b>It Objective</b>
Classical (Bodhi)  Secular Therapeutic (Bodhi)  Secular Developmental (Forbes)	Secular Instrumental (Bodhi)
<b>We Inter-subjective</b>	<b>Its Inter-objective/Systems</b>
Secular Interpersonal (Forbes)  (Social justice)	Social Transformative (Bodhi)  (Social Justice)

the function of most psychotherapy and medicine that use mindfulness, getting people to better cope with and adjust to everyday society (e.g., Germer et al. 2013). To reduce personal stress and suffering, to learn to sit with and work through discomfort and pain, to work with and become aware of that which is unconscious and to regulate emotions in healthier ways toward healthier ends are good and needed therapeutic activities (Forman 2010; Wilber 2006).

The problem here as well, Bodhi pointed out, is that in many cases, people learn to only deal with their personal issues and thereby adjust to the larger structures of social and economic injustice and patterns of troublesome cultural relationships that contribute to the stress, pain, and suffering in the first place. They are unlikely to question the neoliberal cultural milieu that contributes to and reinforces individualist values and beliefs, such as blaming oneself when one is not successful. In mindfulness counseling in schools, the onus is put on the students to regulate themselves through acquiring emotional dispositions such as resilience and flexibility (Forbes 2015, November 8). Without distinguishing these personal needs from their cultural and social milieu or as means to resist aspects of that milieu, these become qualities of “cognitive capitalism,” in which value is now produced for the system through these cognitive skills that mindfulness is intended to promote (Reveley 2013). From a systems (Its) perspective of neoliberal austerity, therapeutic mindfulness further serves as a preventative, cost-cutting measure (less remedial therapy needed, more self-regulation) which makes it popular with health care providers, for example, the National Health Service in the United Kingdom (Mindful Nation UK 2015, January).

By themselves, secular mindful therapy and counseling tend to show quadrant bias. They adjust individuals to a conventional and individualistic neoliberal society that needs to be critically questioned, resisted, and transformed in cultural and social as well as personal ways. The conventional therapeutic approach is to improve interior dispositions, adjust individuals to stress, patch them up after suffering, and help the self to gain greater coping skills and strengths; this mode predominates over assessing and transforming problems at structural levels such as corporate neoliberalism, racism, and sexism (see Martin 2014). Without a critical integral awareness, secular mindful therapy reinforces the therapeutic and wellness culture that sees the self as both the problem and the solution for society’s illnesses (Ilouz 2008; Rakow 2013).

In similar ways, mindfulness goes along with cultivating “positive human characteristics” that are central to positive psychology; mindfulness helps positive psychology achieve its aims through self-regulation by having people come to first accept their negative or undesirable emotions (Baer and Lykins 2011). But, the ideology of positive psychology is individualistic and conventional (Ecclestone 2011). It favors positive emotions and avoids negative ones which serves corporate workplace interests; it props up and blames the individual by

overselling the potential of individuals to transcend their difficult circumstances (Coyne 2013, August 21; Ehrenreich 2010); and under the guise of health promotion, it seeks to further corporate control in the name of workplace harmony (Hedges 2009).

Secular therapeutic mindfulness misses other aspects of the subjective quadrant as well. After therapeutically patching up the self, Manu Bazzano argued, there is often a missed opening to work with individuals in deeper terms of questioning and exploring the nature of the self, to which Buddhist approaches to therapy have much to offer (Bazzano 2015, November 25; Purser 2014). Integral-oriented therapists consider all quadrants of a person’s life, the person’s physical and health, network of relationships, and the social systems that impact them and have an understanding of the full range and aspects of the client’s self-development, including spiritual areas (e.g., Forman 2010; Ingersoll and Zeitlin 2010).

**Secular Developmental Mindfulness (Forbes)** Mindfulness meditation is an active practice that arguably can follow the developmental pattern of making one’s subjectivity an object of awareness. Once we bring in knowledge of this outside or structural aspect of subjectivity, we can then deliberately employ mindfulness, the practice of being with and noticing one’s thoughts and feelings, as a developmental tool. But, we need the developmental models of stages such as those of Cook-Greuter or Kegan, as well as models of moral development of Kohlberg and Gilligan that, as Wilber pointed out, meditative states by themselves will not ever uncover (Cook-Greuter and Soulen 2007, April; Gilligan 1993; Kegan 1994; Kohlberg 1984; Wilber 2006). Witt, a therapist, described integral mindfulness in which through intentional mindfulness one can develop toward later stages of unity consciousness and non-dual awareness (Witt 2014). The aim is to continue to let go of attachments to one’s own perspective and to take more perspectives into account, to be more and more inclusive, expansive, and universal with respect to insight and moral compassion into others’ worldviews.

In doing mindfulness meditation from an integral perspective with an urban high school football team, I framed mindfulness practice in part as a tool for self and moral development, as a means for the young men to let go of their attachment to an egocentric or conventional worldview about masculinity and other aspects of the self, to witness their own assumptions and beliefs, and to envision later, more expansive perspectives (Forbes 2004). In a school counseling program, I invited students to consider mindfulness as a way to reflect on unexamined assumptions and conditioned patterns of thought—biases, opinions, assumptions—and to then disengage from being mired in their own subjectivity of which they can gently let go and move toward a more inclusive, later developmental perspective. With knowledge of developmental models, the students could gauge where they stand in terms of their own self-development and considered becoming more self-aware at the level where they are or choose to move to the next order. Some were inspired to



attain a more integral stage along the lines of Kegan's fifth order described earlier in which they could position themselves in terms of unity consciousness and embody universalist values.

While developmental mindfulness serves as a structural check on pure subjectivity, it too by itself is limited and promotes excessive self-absorption to the extent it precludes critically examining other quadrant perspectives, in particular the inter-subjective (We) or cultural biases, and the inter-objective realm (Its), awareness of structural inequities. With the high school football team and in school counseling classes, developmental awareness occurred within a critical integral framework of knowledge and practice (Forbes 2004). The young men examined both the norms and beliefs and the political and social structure of schooling, professional football, and consumerism. They looked at ways they could use mindfulness together to skillfully resist and challenge both harmful thinking and exploitative systems and situations including racism and ethnic prejudices. In school counseling, students considered how mindfulness could help them arrive at later orders of moral and self-development and better challenge and resist neoliberal, racist, and sexist beliefs, relationships, and practices in schools while contributing to healthier ways of being.

Given that mindfulness is also a state of awareness or an end itself, it is unwise to employ it purely as an instrument to further an end-goal such as self-development. Since we live in a culture in which we experience lack we often feel we have to accomplish something for ourselves or it is not worthwhile, Ajahn Sumedho said, and poked fun at this: "You don't just come in here and sit, you come in here and develop (Sumedho 2001, p. 24)!" A related caveat is that it is necessary but not sufficient to help people evolve to Kegan's fourth order of self-development, which he rightly argues is needed to meet the complexities of postmodern society. This stage reflects an evolutionary move from conventional/sociocentric consciousness to a later autonomous, post-conventional order. But remaining at this level without an integral balance can yield stagnant, self-contained individualists who do not experience or share deeper connectedness with others. A culture of self-satisfied, fourth order selves risks ending up as an unhealthy collection of autonomous, atomized egos that live to compete and succeed in a market-based society and who are blind to cultural and social injustices. If mindfulness can contribute to helping people evolve to a healthy fourth-order or even fifth-order consciousness as described earlier, so much the better.

### **In the Objective (Third Person) Quadrant (It): Secular Instrumental Mindfulness (Bodhi)**

Most secular mindfulness programs fall within this objective realm of individualist skill building, learning better conventional social roles, and/or adjusting to them in behavioral therapeutic terms. Bodhi saw the function of this mode is "to help people become more effective in their roles and assignments,"

for example, as corporate executives or workers, athletes, soldiers, teachers, and students (Bodhi 2015, May).

Much of mindfulness in K-12 schools as well as in higher education falls into this instrumental mode (see Hassed and Chambers 2015; Jennings 2015; Rechtstaffen 2014). Rather than serve as a practice for students to explore, enrich, and develop the landscape of one's interiority and to critically interrogate conditioned mistaken thoughts and cravings, mindfulness is used for individualist behavioral skill building and normative social role improvement, for students to be better students and for teachers to be better teachers. Mindfulness is often paired with social emotional learning, or SEL, a set of skills that are taught to students in order to reduce emotional and behavioral reactivity, resolve conflicts, and develop compassion to better get along with others (Casel 2015). Despite some claims that social emotional learning is a universal secular ethics, it is organized as an individualistic, standardized set of behavioral practices based on positive psychology that ignores the cultural and structural contexts of race and class (Ecclestone 2011; Forbes 2012; Slaten et al. 2015; Zakrzewski 2016, March 31).

Mindfulness unintentionally becomes part of the neoliberal tendency to psychologize difficult social and structural problems. It functions as a self-technology, a means of internal self-regulation toward adjusting students to socially acceptable behavior. The focus and onus of responsibility is on the individual student—it is the student who needs to change while the stressful and inequitable conditions in school remain hidden and unaddressed. Mindfulness educators tend not to acknowledge the neoliberal context of their work in the schools and how their work unwittingly contributes to it (Forbes 2015, November 8; Holford 2015, November 21). Neoliberal education policy makers meanwhile are happy when mindfulness contributes to student self-management. It is a way to get students and teachers to bear the burden of taking on greater responsibility to regulate themselves instead of the school officials. Improved student behavior and higher test scores resulting from mindful adjustment to stress and increased concentration make the schools and administrators look even better.

An inordinate number of mindfulness programs concentrate on schools with lower income African-American populations. These focus on self-regulation, anger management, and stress reduction rather than embedding mindfulness within a critical pedagogy that employs students' and their community's cultural strengths and helps them question, resist, and change unjust school and community policies and structures such as the high number of suspensions that feed the school-to-prison pipeline (Cannon, 2016; Forbes 2015, November 8; Hsu 2013).

With considerable bureaucratic demands, micro-management, and imposition of high-stakes testing placed on them, more teachers, most of whom are women, are stressed and

demoralized and seek out mindfulness. Mindfulness was taught to teachers so they can remain calm, be more present, work better with students, improve their “productivity,” have a more “peaceful” (better managed) classroom, and adjust to the stressful demands of the job (Jennings 2015). Yet, mindfulness programs often end up helping teachers learn to manage and adjust to the stress without also helping them acknowledge, question, and challenge the very policies and conditions that are responsible for their stress and demoralization.

Bodhi pointed out that in many cases, the instrumental use of mindfulness adjusts people to unwholesome roles and “sustain[s] corporatist, militaristic, and consumerist programs” (Bodhi 2015, May). Mindfulness proponents in education often believe that just by practicing mindfulness, along with SEL skills, students will naturally come to skillfully act with compassion toward others—and in ways that teachers approve. This belief leaves unaddressed implicit neoliberal worldviews and values, conventional developmental stages, a culture of individualism, consumerism, competitiveness, and inequitable class, gender, heterosexual, and racial privileges. To the extent mindfulness educators identify with, uncritically support, and remain within the neoliberal paradigm of education, they appear at best to be at a fourth order of self-development (Kegan 1994).

### In the Interobjective (Third Person) Quadrant (Its)

**Socially Transformative Mindfulness (Bodhi)** The interobjective (Its) perspective is the first of two overlooked realms in secular mindfulness. It is crucial with respect to the prophetic demand for social justice and takes the perspective of political, economic, and social structures and systems themselves. The interobjective sees things from the standpoint of systems, both environmental (the natural world as an interlocking system of relations—at present threatened by destructive, human-caused climate change) and social (societal institutions such as corporations, nations, and schools that evolve, function, and outlive their use through historical periods). So, in terms of social systems of meaning, this perspective also contributes to how mindfulness is interpreted and even evolves by seeing mindfulness within broader socially constructed systems of power arrangements, technologies, institutions, political economies, and societies. Social systems can be regarded historically as evolving from agrarian through industrial to post-industrial or service-oriented societies, and through more complex networks—from tribes, villages, empires, nation/states, and toward more inclusive planetary systems (Wilber 2006).

An integral mindfulness program brings critical awareness of the interobjective quadrant (for example, social structures and institutions that maintain income inequality, militarism, male, heterosexist, and white privilege) to any endeavor. It can contribute to structural transformation toward a more

just and peaceful society. Bodhi (2015) wanted to reconcile socially transformative mindfulness with Buddhist texts. There are activist Buddhist groups that engage in anti-racist, climate change, and other social justice work in communities and with youth in schools (see the Web sites for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland CA, and the Brooklyn Zen Center in New York). Loy (n.d.) saw insidious patterns that Buddhists seek to overcome in individual terms (ego) as also being on institutional levels (Wego): greed (corporations), ill-will (militarism), and delusion (corporate media), and Lee (2015) along similar lines proposed a contemplative sociology that addresses institutional suffering. Secular activist groups that fight for social justice also benefit from employing mindfulness practices. Community members practiced mindfulness against systemic racism in the face of police murders of African Americans and meditators sat as part of Occupy Wall Street and in anti-corporate social actions (Magee 2015b; Rowe 2015a, 2015b).

Critical integral mindfulness practices differ from individualistic ones that reinforce neoliberal relationships and structures. Integral school-based mindfulness, for example, can develop an awareness of social systems and policies, in particular, those that reflect neoliberalism, white privilege, sexism, and heterosexism, and engage in social justice advocacy. When critical integral contexts are illuminated, mindfulness becomes a means to resist through political action structural, political, and policy inequities in schools; mindfulness also gains liberating potential to transform education and school policies when it contributes to anti-oppressive pedagogies and creates integral change in student learning and development (Berila 2015; Cannon, 2016; Forbes 2004; Hsu 2013, November 4; Hyland 2011; Orr 2002, 2014; Stanley et al. 2015). School-based mindfulness programs contribute to structural change by helping students connect their experience with social conditions; students “dissolve” the ego by analyzing and stripping it of those cultural, social, and psychological conditionings in their lives that lead to cravings and delusions (Saari and Pulkki 2012). Reveley saw the potential for school-based mindfulness, when not just an individualized pursuit, to be a resource that supports collective resistance to neoliberal structures and policies; techniques of emotional self-management, he argued, could provide students with the “emotional skillset to resist the governance regime” and “release the resistant potential of the educational subject as a creative, socially transformative force” (Reveley 2015a, p. 90).

The McMindfulness critics have challenged and aroused a number of secular mindfulness programs that appear not to have thought about the inseparable relationship between mindfulness and the institutions in which they work that are part of an inequitable, consumerist, corporatized, militaristic, and racist social structure (Purser and Loy 2013). The critique of secular mindfulness in corporations, the military, and education

has led to a defensive backlash in support of its use. The backlash includes the dubious claim that individuals that practice mindfulness can by themselves transform the structures of corporations, the military, and neoliberal education institutions without a critical analysis of and social strategy at institutional and structural levels.

At later developmental stages, we experience inseparability between ourselves and social structures and work to bring this connectedness about in skillful, creative ways. Mindful, informed dialogue, collaboration, and political work, in particular around opposing structural problems of racism and white privilege, working on policy measures to prevent global disasters from climate change, stabilizing the Middle East and stopping terrorism, and democratically transforming the globalized, neoliberal economy are much needed.

### **In the Intersubjective (Second Person) Quadrant (We)**

The second key missing angle in mindfulness programs is the second person perspective (We or intersubjectivity). We are all social beings, born into cultures and live within relationships, interconnected with others. Within these networks, people create and share meaning, norms, and rules together through dialogue and interpretation. The task is to uncover, evaluate, and challenge the often problematic, implicit, unacknowledged cultural contexts of moral values, norms, and meanings hidden in the background that people share and assume and to create more caring, inclusive connections.

As we have seen, contemplatives tend to focus on first and third person perspectives and ignore these second-person (intersubjective) ones that have to do with cultural meanings and relationships. This has at least two consequences for mindfulness. First, it downgrades the importance of relationship as one of three primary foundations. For example, while the universal level of relationship in Buddhism entails infinite compassion for all sentient beings, addressing actual relationships in the sangha, or community (second-person perspective), arguably, may not always be equally valued along with the Buddha, the awakened individual (first person), and the Dharma or truth of nonduality (third person). The quality of relationships in some sanghas is overlooked; for example, some underwent unmindful and hurtful patterns of white privilege and sexism (Ferguson 2006; Gross 2006; hooks 2006). Relationship itself by definition appears more in the forefront of the dualist Abrahamic traditions. Their essence is a personal, loving relationship with Jesus, God, or Allah whose love is morally demanding yet unconditional, forgiving, infinite, mysterious, and sacred; at a later, universal level, it can be seen as a divine, mystical union. For atheists or secular humanists, a later stage of relationship may involve personal love for individuals and selfless, universal love of humanity.

Second, without recognizing relationship, mindfulness falls prey to the Myth of the Given described earlier, the belief

that meditative (and all) meaningful experiences are not culturally (relationally) constructed and interpreted through dialogue but appear as objective facts, directly perceived. This has the effect of obscuring harmful norms that implicitly operate, for example, ideologies such as white privilege, sexism, heterosexism, consumerism, and competitive individualism that need to be brought to light.

We can broadly assess the historical development of cultures in terms of stages, moving from traditional (reliance on authority, there is only one handed-down, absolute truth), to modernist (actions, values, are based on science, reason, and the material world), to postmodern (there are multi-perspectives on truth; rules and authority are de-centralized), with overlaps co-occurring. Cultures of institutions such as schools and bureaucracies move along similar developmental lines; for example, does a school culture reflect early egocentric power dynamics (everyone out for themselves, might makes right)? Is it conventional (we must follow the rules and the hierarchy of authority)? Or is it post-conventional—individual initiative, competition, and achievement are rewarded, or a later order that insists on collaboration and consensus (Wilber 2006)?

At still later stages, a planetary We could emerge; the world is perceived and experienced as one dynamic organism. Attachment to the belief that one's worldview is the only right one dissolves. Differences are acknowledged and celebrated while at the same time, realization of an underlying depth of unity and commonality occurs; the self is both unique and an inseparable part of a larger, caring whole.

**Secular Interpersonal Mindfulness (Forbes)** Mindfulness meditation is often thought of and represented as a private, individualized endeavor—a solitary person meditating in a jail cell, a student sitting disconnected from others, a stressed out worker practicing at home—when instead it often occurs within troublesome cultural contexts of norms, meanings, and lives that require critical interrogation, dialogue, and action. In examining mindfulness from an intersubjective or second person perspective, both inside and outside aspects are important, and both are seldom addressed. The inside perspective of intersubjective mindfulness begins with our conscious, mindful experience of already and always being part of a network of relationships, hopefully ones that are loving, caring, healthy, and mutual, marked by I-Thou rather than I-It qualities, whether within partnerships, friendships, families, and/or social media or other groups. Mindful programs would be relevant to the cultural meanings of the community in which they practice and democratically respect and employ the community's cultural capital, strengths, and values. Mindful programs such as in schools can consciously form inclusive cultures themselves that are trusting, safe, caring, honest, and healing, and based on respectful dialogue and

relationships, what Gunnlaugson calls a “we-space” (Gunnlaugson 2009).

There are particular Buddhist contemplative approaches to mindful interactive dialogue that bring contemplative practice to second person relationships (for example, Hamilton 2013; Kramer 2007). An example in secular counseling is a student who describes her experience within a contemplative we-space after practicing mindfulness in a counseling course: “I am better able to work in collaborative, dialogical relationships, to engage in an I/Thou connection about which Buber wrote so eloquently. Being fully present with another human being is a profoundly intimate experience. For some clients, the combined intimacy and spaciousness in and of themselves seem to function as change agents” (Maris 2009, p. 234).

Mindful, careful, second person practices in groups provide an opportunity to de-socialize, de-condition, dis-attach ourselves, and heal from racism, white privilege, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices as part of an anti-oppressive pedagogy (Berila 2015; Magee 2015a; Ng and Purser 2015, October 2). Along with making practices culturally relevant, accounting for stages of self and moral development, while moving to recognize our universal commonality, are also important in seeing how people filter their experience.

A critical look at inter subjectivity from the outside means we uncover, examine, and act to change those unacknowledged problematic norms, values, and assumptions hidden in our interpersonal relations and within our particular everyday culture. Examining the discourse of culture in this way serves as an “anti-virus protection” against implicit, psychological patterns and worldviews that are problematic or unhealthy and that lurk in the silent background and infect mindful practices. Some hegemonic patterns that need to be called out, sat with, questioned, discussed, and challenged, and which can be done in a healing, mindful we-space, are conformist thinking, individualism, consumerism, white privilege, and many other “isms” such as racism, sexism, and homophobia that show up in interpersonal relations.

The discourse of mindfulness as it stands inadvertently perpetuates individualist hegemony, the dominant form of social meaning under neoliberalism. Without integral awareness, individual mindfulness practice obscures and reinforces the neoliberal ideology and the therapeutic culture that claims the self is both the problem and the solution for all social ills. A number of critics identified the problematic therapeutic culture of wellness and self-help that takes an individualistic, therapized, neoliberal approach to which mindfulness contributes (Cederstrom and Spicer 2015; Davies 2015; Ilouz 2008; Moloney 2013; Wilson 2014). The therapeutic culture and industry regard stress itself as an individual, privatized problem instead of seeing it as embedded in problematic social relations and social conditions of people’s lives. As noted earlier, the everyday culture of white privilege becomes obscured by the neoliberal belief that personal individual

behaviors and personal experiences are the source and locus of the problem rather than structural inequities and systemic discrimination.

Other insidious cultures operate everyday. Loy (2002) described our western society as a culture of lack; people adopt the implicit message that we are always incomplete without a consumer item, or another person, or a better job that leaves us feeling empty, dissatisfied, and craving more. We often take for granted a culture of violence in which guns, violent images, and violent means to resolve local and global conflicts are part of the norm. The neoliberal austerity culture depletes the public good and throws the burden of resources and measurable accountability back on individuals who are expected to do more with less. In education, teachers and students are encouraged to adjust to the “audit culture” and a “culture of evidence,” a term that the national accrediting body for schools of education strongly urged our school to adopt (Taubman 2009). These are some of the implicit problematic cultural contexts in which mindfulness is used, which frame its meaning, and which can and should be challenged.

At the same time, we can hold forth a vision of how things could be. Within we-spaces, educators and students in schools can identify implicit, insidious qualities of their school culture such as those discussed above and together work to change them toward more mindful, supportive, socially just, healing, and fulfilling relationships. We can imagine, discuss, and enact inclusive, mindful cultures of optimal human development and loving relationships for everyone. A prophetic integral mindfulness could empower and contribute to fulfillment and connectedness beyond a culture of lack, empty work, racial and ethnic discrimination, bullying, and competitive egos in search of personal brands (see Reveley 2015b).

## Conclusion: Prophetic Integral Mindfulness

The prophetic seeks a level of contemplative self-awareness and transformative practice that critiques and transcends technocratic and neoliberal modes of mindfulness that reproduce conventional, individual, therapeutic adjustment, egocentric greed, and cultural and structural injustices. In an integral mindful practice, we step outside the normative systems of current mindfulness modes and critically examine them from more encompassing, transcendent perspectives. Starting at whatever developmental level one is we can help bring about more inclusive relationships of social justice, care, connectedness, healing, fulfillment, and well-being (eudaemonia) for all. A prophetic integral mindfulness furthers conscious agency in which people develop themselves as social beings and global citizens, part of a democratic, civic mindfulness that creates an equitable and shared meaning of the common good (Giroux 2014a; Healey 2015a; 2015b). This requires what Bodhi called a fiercely “conscientious compassion” in which



together we uncover, challenge, and transcend how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are conditioned and colonized by unhealthy cultural practices and social institutions that (re)produce greed, meanness, and delusion (Lam 2015, August 20). Mindfulness can be transformative and contribute to resistance against oppression, as part of an anti-oppression pedagogy that tackles, among other patterns, economic exploitation, racism, white privilege, sexism, and homophobia. It requires that we critically and consciously act from all possible perspectives and levels of development. Our modes of mindfulness are inseparable parts of an integral whole. In developmental terms, they include early spiritual roots from both eastern and western traditions; modernist science, methods, and rationality; postmodern inclusion and multiple perspectives; and integral awareness and enactment of optimal, transcendent worldviews. This critical model not only contributes to theory but has practical use value: it supplements and expands existing applied mindfulness programs by including more perspectives and approaches. It enables us to critically step back from, dis-identify with, and further develop our belief systems and mindfulness modes themselves. A prophetic integral mindfulness enables us to participate in and contribute to the evolution of human development, to reach out with love, healing, and discernment toward the good, true, and beautiful, toward more encompassing, universal ways of relating and being.

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