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THE ‘UNIVERSAL DHARMA FOUNDATION’ OF MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION: NON-DUALITY AND MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHIST INFLUENCES IN THE WORK OF JON KABAT-ZINN

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ABSTRACT

The discussion on the Buddhist roots of contemporary mindfulness practices is dominated by a narrative which considers the Theravāda tradition and Theravāda-based ‘neo-vipassanā movement’ as the principal source of Buddhist influences in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and related mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs). This Theravāda bias fails to acknowledge the significant Mahāyāna Buddhist influences that have informed the pioneering work of Jon Kabat-Zinn in the formation of the MBSR programme. In Kabat-Zinn’s texts, the ‘universal dharma foundation’ of mindfulness practice is grounded in pan-Buddhist teachings on the origins and cessation of suffering. While MBSR methods derive from both Theravāda-based *vipassanā* and non-dual Mahāyāna approaches, the philosophical foundation of MBSR differs significantly from Theravāda views. Instead, the characteristic principles and insights of MBSR practice indicate significant similarities and historical continuities with contemporary Zen/Sōn/Thiền and Tibetan Dzogchen teachings based on doctrinal developments within Indian and East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Introduction

The scholarly discussion on the Buddhist roots of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and related mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs) has not reached consensus on the degree of continuity between Buddhist teachings and contemporary mindfulness practices.¹ Depending on the perspective, MBSR and MBPs may represent ‘the original teachings of the Buddha’ in a secular form (Cullen 2011, 189–192), a characteristically American form of socially engaged Buddhism ‘streamlined for a secular clientele’ (Seager 1999, 214; see also Wilson 2014), or ‘stealth Buddhism’ with possible covert religious agendas (Brown 2016, 84). Still, another common narrative depicts MBSR and related contemporary forms of mindfulness practice as privatised, de-ethicised therapeutic techniques, which do not resemble any authentic forms of Buddhist practice (Plank 2011;

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Purser and Loy 2013; Purser and Milillo 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon, and Griffiths 2013). Similarly, there are significant difficulties in fitting contemporary forms of mindfulness training into dominant post-enlightenment conceptual matrices, which dichotomise 'religion' and 'secular' into distinct binary categories. While scientific research literature often presents mindfulness practices as axiomatically secular (Baer 2015; Didonna 2009; Lutz et al. 2008; see also Sun 2014), some scholars argue that they possess characteristically religious content (Brown 2016; Purser 2015). Others see them as transcending the binary model altogether through sacralising the secular (Arat 2017), enchanting the natural world (Braun 2017), or forming cultural hybrids which are open for both religious and secular interpretations (Frisk 2012).²

It is not my aim here to argue for or against any particular definition. Instead, I agree with Jeff Wilson (2014, 9) that in the discussion around contemporary mindfulness, labels like 'religious', 'secular', 'Buddhist' and 'non-Buddhist' are above all

markers of value employed strategically by agents in ways that reveal further patterns of value and preference. Thus when an author speaks of the scientific, nonreligious practice of mindfulness, he or she is not stating a fact: he or she is making an argument, one impacted by such variables as race, education, cultural background, professional training, intended audience, and more. The same is true for the author who insists on the religious, Buddhist, or other nature of mindfulness.

Nevertheless, the arguments supporting each definition are based on particular premises in which perceived continuities and similarities between Buddhist practices and contemporary mindfulness training play a central role. While a discursive aspect is unavoidable in the use of abstract value-laden concepts, such as 'religion' or 'Buddhism', a careful analysis of historical influences is essential in preventing the argumentation from turning into unempirical rhetoric. This study contributes to the discussion by focusing on foundational, but often overlooked, Buddhist elements in MBSR practice as envisioned by its founder Jon Kabat-Zinn (1944–), and by identifying important Buddhist sources in the historical transmission of these ideas.

In the vast majority of studies, the plurality of Kabat-Zinn's Buddhist influences receives only anecdotal attention. Despite the explicit and significant impact of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna teachers (Husgafvel 2016, 102–104; Kabat-Zinn 2011, 291), there is still a persistent scholarly narrative which considers the Theravāda tradition and Theravāda-based 'neo-vipassanā movement' as the principal or exclusive source of Buddhist influences in MBSR and related MBPs (see Bodhi 2016; Braun 2013; Caring-Lobel 2016; Ditrich 2016; Dorjee 2010; Fronsdal 1998; Gethin 2011; Gilpin 2008; Huxter 2015; King 2016; Monteiro, Musten, and Compson 2015; Murphy 2016; Nilsson and Kazemi 2016; Olendzki 2014; Plank 2011; Purser and Milillo 2015; Rapgay and Bystrisky 2009; Samuel

2015, 2016; Schlieter 2017; Sharf 2015; Stanley 2015; Sun 2014). This narrative emphasises the impact of those Theravāda Buddhist lineages which trace back from Insight Meditation Society (IMS) teachers and the German-born monk Nyanaponika Thera (1901–1994) to the South Asian reformers Mahāsi Sayadaw (1904–1982), U Ba Khin (1899–1971) and Ajahn Chah (1918–1992) (see Husgafvel 2016, 101–102). As a result, historical and phenomenological comparisons between MBSR and Buddhist practices focus almost exclusively on canonical Pāli sources, early Abhidharma (P. *Abhidhamma*) commentaries, and the views of contemporary Theravāda teachers. In some studies, this may represent a pragmatic strategy of simplifying a complex subject matter. In others, the choice of sources may derive from sectarian or essentialist notions of ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’ Buddhism (Husgafvel 2016). Sometimes, it merely shows a lack of familiarity with historical developments within Buddhism and contemporary mindfulness. Whatever the reasons may be, this dominant Theravāda bias distorts historical discussion on the Buddhist roots of MBSR and other MBPs, as it fails to acknowledge the significant Mahāyāna (including Vajrayāna) Buddhist influences that informed Jon Kabat-Zinn’s view of mindfulness practice from early on.

My study challenges the dominant narrative and focuses on foundational non-Theravāda Buddhist elements in MBSR practice. So far, only a limited number of scholars have demonstrated a similar research interest. John Dunne (2011) is the first to suggest the ‘non-dual’ or ‘Innateist’ Mahāyāna approaches, like Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā, to be important Buddhist points of comparison for MBSR training. However, he does not substantiate his argumentation with a comprehensive and detailed analysis of MBSR and Kabat-Zinn’s work, but focuses on practical and theoretical differences between ‘Classical’ and ‘Non-dual’ approaches to meditation in the history of Buddhism (Dunne 2011, 2015; Harrington and Dunne 2015). Tessa Watt (2017) and Brooke Dodson-Lavelle (2015) both build their arguments on Dunne’s work. In her article, Watt discusses the notions of ‘non-doing’ and ‘spacious awareness’ as important features in both MBSR and non-dual Mahāyāna approaches. The PhD thesis of Dodson-Lavelle, in turn, connects the notion of ‘innate compassion’ in MBSR to non-dual Mahāyāna influences. Moreover, Erik Braun’s (2017) recent work recognises further Mahāyāna Buddhist features in Kabat-Zinn’s texts, such as the ‘moral instincts’ implied in the notion of universal interconnectedness. Braun’s article is one of the rare studies to pursue an extensive analysis of Kabat-Zinn’s work, but rather than examining historical continuities and the transmission of Buddhist ideas, his focus is on Kabat-Zinn’s ‘enchanted’ view of reality.

In this article, I examine explicit Buddhist elements in Jon Kabat-Zinn’s ‘universal dharma understanding’, which informs the methods, insights and ethical foundations of the MBSR programme. My primary sources include (1) Kabat-Zinn’s books *Full Catastrophe Living* ([1990] 2005), *Wherever You Go, There You Are* ([1994] 2005), and *Coming to Our Senses* (2005); (2) his relevant academic articles

(Kabat-Zinn 1982, 2003, 2011, 2017); and (3) a research interview that I conducted with him in Helsinki on 1 July 2017. As Kabat-Zinn explained in the interview, his books may be considered the ‘root texts’ of MBSR, which capture the rationale and theoretical ground of mindfulness practice:

For MBSR teachers ... and also MBCT [mindfulness-based cognitive therapy] teachers and many other kinds of mindfulness-based interventions, if they want to know what Jon Kabat-Zinn’s view is about this, and how he languages it, and what he thinks is important, and what he thinks is not important, it’s all in the books, and it’s in the books exactly as I meant it to be. So, if there’s any question of, like, what the ground of this is, those are meant to be in some sense – I don’t like to use this term, but I don’t know how else to do it – the root texts for this new lineage. And I don’t speak of it as a lineage and I don’t even think of it as a lineage, but many people do, and many of my closest, oldest colleagues say it is a lineage. And so, they’re like the kind of root text, so that you can check, and see, and try to stay with a certain kind of fidelity to the structure. (author’s interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

Based on systematic reconstruction and analysis of Kabat-Zinn’s thought, I argue that the rationale of the MBSR programme is not limited to psychosomatic symptom relief and coping with everyday stressors. Instead, it addresses existential forms of suffering, which are rooted in emotional clinging and misguided views on reality. In this broader view, ‘healing’ represents a profound change in one’s outlook on life. Crucial elements in this ‘transformation of view’ (Kabat-Zinn (1990) 2005, 168, 184), which echoes common Buddhist ideals of meditation practice, are experiential insights into (1) the dependent origination of suffering, (2) impermanence, (3) the illusion of a separate self, (4) emptiness and interconnectedness, and (5) the ‘spacious, knowing, and compassionate’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 465) essence of mind. Besides being foundational for individual healing, these realisations have significant social-ethical implications. By comparing Kabat-Zinn’s views with the characteristic concepts and ideas held by his contemporary Buddhist influences (see Husgafvel 2016, 101–104), I demonstrate that foundational principles and insights in Kabat-Zinn’s understanding of mindfulness practice diverge from Theravāda teachings but are aligned with non-dual Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna approaches, as expressed in the texts of influential Zen/Sōn/Thiền and Tibetan Buddhist Dzogchen teachers. Finally, I trace the doctrinal foundations of these teachings back to developments in Indian and East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

‘Universal dharma’ and the nature of suffering

According to many claims, MBSR training does not have a philosophical and ethical basis, or at least none that resembles Buddhist teachings (Plank 2011; Purser and Loy 2013; Purser and Milillo 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon, and Griffiths 2013). However, a thorough analysis of Jon Kabat-Zinn’s work reveals

a very different picture. Here, mindfulness training forms an existential and ethical path, which shares many foundational Buddhist elements and sets a trajectory towards liberation from human suffering and self-centred unethical action. Similar to Buddhist forms of meditation, which put into practice a particular Buddhist understanding of the world (Gregory 1986, 6), for Kabat-Zinn MBSR represents a transformative practice that embodies and 'brings into being' a particular view of reality and oneself. The characteristics of this personal transformation are captured in Kabat-Zinn's 'universal dharma understanding',³ which forms the theoretical ground of MBSR practice (Kabat-Zinn 2003, 2005, 134–138, 2011, 2017, 1129).

In his first book, *Full Catastrophe Living* ([1990] 2005), Kabat-Zinn wanted to 'articulate the dharma that underlies the [MBSR] curriculum, but without ever using the word "Dharma" or invoking Buddhist thought or authority' (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 282).⁴ However, in later works, the term is explicitly used and defined in four different but closely related ways: (1) 'the teachings of the Buddha' (or '*Buddhadharma*'); (2) 'the lawfulness of the universe'; (3) 'the lawfulness of things in relationship to suffering and the nature of the mind'; and (4) 'the way things are, as in the Chinese notion of Tao' (Kabat-Zinn 2003, 145, 2005, 53, 136–137, 2011, 283, 290). All these notions represent common Buddhist understandings of the polysemous Sanskrit term *dharma* (P. *dharmma*) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 242–243; Gethin 1998, 35–39; Willemen 2004). The close alignment with foundational Buddhist teachings is further emphasised by the representation of the 'Four Foundations of Mindfulness' (P. *satipaṭṭhāna*, S. *smṛtyupasthāna*) and the 'Four Noble Truths' (P. *ariyasaccāni*, S. *āryasatyāni*) as the original articulation of dharma and 'the bedrock of MBSR' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 136, 2017, 1133):

Coming back to dharma as the teachings of the Buddha, the first of the Four Noble Truths he articulated after his intensive inquiry into the nature of mind was the universal prevalence of dukkha, the fundamental dis-ease of the human condition. The second was the cause of dukkha, which the Buddha attributed directly to attachment, clinging, and unexamined desire. The third was the assertion, based on his experience as the experimenter in the laboratory of his own meditation practice, that cessation of dukkha is possible, in other words, that it is possible to be completely cured of the dis-ease caused by attachment and clinging. And the fourth Noble Truth outlines a systematic approach, known as the Noble Eightfold Path, to the cessation of dukkha, the dispelling of ignorance, and, thus, to liberation. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 138)⁵

Thus, as Kabat-Zinn states, 'the entire *raison d'être* of the dharma is to elucidate the nature of suffering and its root causes, as well as provide a practical path to liberation from suffering' (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 288). Despite its central position in the history of Buddhist religiosity, he considers this essence of the dharma to be universal. Instead of metaphysical speculation or devotional beliefs, it captures

universally shared and empirically testable phenomenological patterns in human experiences of suffering and happiness, in a way that resembles scientific knowledge or the grammar of language (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 134–138; see also Braun 2017, 182–187; Wilson 2014, 86–88):

One might think of dharma as a sort of universal generative grammar (Chomsky 1965), an innate set of empirically testable rules that govern and describe the generation of the inward, first-person experiences of suffering and happiness in human beings. In that sense, dharma is at its core truly universal, not exclusively Buddhist. It is neither a belief, an ideology, nor a philosophy. Rather, it is a coherent phenomenological description of the nature of mind, emotion, and suffering and its potential release, based on highly refined practices aimed at systematically training and cultivating various aspects of mind and heart via the faculty of mindful attention. (Kabat-Zinn 2003, 145, citation in original)

The notion of ‘empirically testable rules’ and related scientific research on the efficacy of mindfulness practice are crucial for the claims of universal validity and the spread of mindfulness applications beyond traditional Buddhist contexts. However, the degree of similarity between the ‘universal dharma foundation’ of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn 2017, 1125) and the ‘Buddhadharma’ is a topic of ongoing debate, as is the breadth and depth of scientific evidence on its health benefits.

The nature of suffering

Even if both MBSR and Buddhist practices address the problems of human suffering and dissatisfaction, some scholars suggest that this ‘commonality is nominal and at the surface-level only’ (Purser 2015, 35; see also Lewis and Rozelle 2016). According to Purser, the aims and intentions of ‘contemporary and traditional mindfulness’ diverge substantively and they ‘address suffering and the nature of mind at qualitatively different levels of depth and ontology’ (Purser 2015, 35). In this comparison, ‘contemporary mindfulness’ is ‘oriented towards the alleviation of [a] mundane and superficial level of dukkha’, such as ordinary physical and mental pain, whereas ‘traditional mindfulness’ addresses ‘deeper strata of suffering’ caused by the transitory and conditioned nature of all phenomena and the ‘fundamental delusion’ of a continuous self or personhood (Purser 2015, 33–35).⁶ Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths (2013, 2) express similar views by emphasising that within Buddhism, ‘rather than psychosomatic symptom relief, mindfulness is generally practised for the primary purpose of long-term spiritual development’. Purser and Milillo (2015, 5) summarise the differences between Buddhist practice and contemporary MBPs by saying that ‘the aim of Buddhist mindfulness is not merely to enhance the quality of attention or the reduction of stress but to transform the human mind by lessening, and ultimately eliminating, toxic mental states rooted in greed, ill will, and delusion’. However,

regarding Kabat-Zinn's views, drawing such dichotomies would seem to be erroneous, as all the characteristically Buddhist elements described above do actually belong to his vision of mindfulness practice in the MBSR programme.

The positioning of the Four Noble Truths as 'the bedrock' of MBSR should already caution one not to draw too clear-cut distinctions between MBSR and Buddhist contexts in the understanding of suffering. For many, 'ordinary' physical or mental pain may provide the first motivation to engage in mindfulness practice, and in clinical contexts, MBPs are therapeutic interventions for clearly defined medical conditions. However, in the broader framing envisioned by Kabat-Zinn, MBSR training addresses existential suffering and dissatisfaction inherent in the 'old age, illness, and death' of the human condition itself (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, xxviii). This form of 'innate suffering of dis-ease', which 'colours and conditions the deep structure of our very lives', is explicitly associated with the Buddhist concept and Pāli term *dukkha* (S. *duḥkha*) and presented, 'as the Buddha taught, ubiquitous – a fact of life' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 127, 133).

While immediate pain is inevitable in life, the degree of suffering is dependent on the ways of perceiving, framing and reacting to painful experiences through thoughts and emotions (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 285–286).⁷ Accordingly, there is a difference between 'skilful' views and responses and 'unskilful' ones, which contribute to suffering and dissatisfaction. In conformity with foundational Buddhist teachings (Bodhi 2000, 1143; Gombrich [1996] 2006, 65–66), Kabat-Zinn sees 'unskilful' views and responses as having origins in mental states dominated by emotional clinging and the root afflictions of greed, aversion (or ill will), and ignorance (or delusion).⁸ Thus, 'in the words of the Diamond Sutra',⁹ what is most important in mindfulness practice is to 'develop a mind that clings to nothing', for only then 'will we be able to see things as they actually are and respond with the full range of our emotional capacity and our wisdom' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 119).

In Kabat-Zinn's vocabulary, 'clinging' refers to excessive attachment to (1) sensual experiences, which are bound to change due to their impermanent nature (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 54, 2005, 460, 480); (2) unexamined views, thoughts, opinions and attitudes (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 440, [1994] 2005, 223, 2005, 17, 465, 480, 504); and (3) the idea of a separate, individual self (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 167, 2005, 54, 175, 376, 490). Thus, 'clinging' represents both an unhealthy emotional dependency on particular kinds of experiences and fixed views about oneself and reality, which generate and sustain this dependency. This understanding follows widespread Buddhist views, as found already in the early Nikāyas, in which the four kinds of 'clinging' (*upādāna*) are '[c]linging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and observances, and clinging to a doctrine of self' (MN11, in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2009, 161).

The notions of 'greed' and 'hatred' signify two main causes of clinging; they are basic forms of unhealthy craving based on disproportionate attraction

towards pleasurable experiences and aversion towards unpleasant ones (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 345–346, 2005, 519–520). The third root affliction of ‘ignorance’ (or ‘delusion’), in turn, denotes a general state of unawareness and misperception of reality, which is often presented as the ultimate cause of suffering and all other afflictions (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 345–346, [1994] 2005, 223, 2005, 126). The fact that MBSR is meant to address these root causes of suffering, on both individual and societal levels, is consistently emphasised by Kabat-Zinn throughout his work:

To be explicit, I mean that the underlying motive force for this work is the intuition, the longing, and the very real possibility of liberation from greed, aversion, and delusion on the individual, institutional, and global level, nothing less. (Kabat-Zinn 2017, 1129; see also Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 223, 2005, 56, 507–508, 519–520, 560, 2017, 1126)

In conformity with the view that ignorance and misguided cognitive-emotional patterns are the basic causes of suffering, Kabat-Zinn defines ‘healing’ as a ‘transformation of view’ and ‘*coming to terms with things as they are*’ (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 168, 184, 2011, 292, italics in original). In more detail, it signifies ‘a perceptual shift away from fragmentation and isolation toward wholeness and connectedness’ (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 168). Thus, while ‘uncoupling’ and ‘decentring’¹⁰ skills, often emphasised as significant therapeutic elements of mindfulness practice, may provide temporal or symptomatic relief, in Kabat-Zinn’s thinking only a profound personal transformation is capable of addressing the ultimate root causes of suffering. The actual practice methods that set in motion this transformation of view form the curriculum of the MBSR programme.

The methods and principles of MBSR practice

MBSR is commonly taught as an eight-week group programme with weekly two-and-a-half-hour sessions and one retreat day of silent practice.¹¹ Between the sessions, participants are instructed to do 45 minutes of formal meditation for six days of the week. The techniques of formal meditation include different types of sitting meditation (mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of sounds, mindfulness of thoughts and feelings, and ‘choiceless awareness’), walking meditation, ‘body-scan’ meditation and simple postural yoga (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 47–119, 2005, 243–284). On the retreat day, ‘loving-kindness’ practice is also introduced (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 120–131, 182–184, [1994] 2005, 164–168, 2005, 285–294). Besides formal meditation, the curriculum includes informal mindfulness training in everyday life. This refers to various ways of developing non-judgemental awareness in the present moment and recognising habitual patterns of thought, reaction and value judgement (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 132–139). Both the formal and informal mindfulness practices are based on a foundation of specific attitudes and

orientations, which include 'non-judging', 'patience', 'beginner's mind', 'trust', 'non-striving', 'acceptance' and 'letting go' (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 31–46).

There are elements in MBSR methods and principles which could warrant the common scholarly narrative of Theravāda origins. The influence of Nyanaponika Thera's work is consistently emphasised by Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 34, 46 n. 7, 2005, 108–110, 2011, 290–291). The instructions on cultivation of 'loving-kindness' (or 'friendliness'; P. *mettā-bhāvanā*) resemble descriptions in the *Karaṇīyamettā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* (Sn 1:8, in Norman [1992] 2001, 19) and *Visuddhimagga* (Vsm 9:1–13, in Ñānamoli 2010, 291–293). In addition, Kabat-Zinn explicitly introduces *mettā* as a Pāli term (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 287). However, due to its auxiliary role in the curriculum, loving-kindness practice does not tell much about MBSR as a whole.¹² The 'body scan', in turn, is an aspect of practice lineages tracing back to the Burmese lay Theravāda teacher U Ba Khin. Even if now embedded in a different theoretical frame, as we shall see, its inclusion in MBSR programme is a clear indication of historical influences mediated via Robert Hover and IMS teachers (Braun 2013, 164–167; Husgafvel 2016, 101–102). Furthermore, the basic instructions for 'mindfulness of breathing' share many characteristic features with Mahasi Sayadaw's 'bare insight' (P. *sukkha-vipassanā*) practice, which indicates influences from another significant Burmese *vipassanā* lineage (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 58; Mahasi 1965, 3; see also Braun 2013, 166–167; Husgafvel 2016, 101–102; Wilson 2014, 92). Finally, the argument for Theravāda origins of MBSR also has grounds in the authority of particular canonical texts, such as the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* describing the 'Four Foundations of Mindfulness' and found in various versions in the Pāli, Sanskrit and Chinese Buddhist canons (e.g. MN10, in Ñānamoli and Bodhi 2009, 145–155; see also Kuan 2008). Both of the above-mentioned Burmese lineages ground their methods in this early canonical text, which represents a foundational source for the MBSR programme (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 2003, 2011, 2017; Ba Khin et al. (1999) 2013; Mahasi 1971; see also Braun 2013; Husgafvel 2016; Murphy 2016; Watt 2017).

Despite these factors, the studies focusing solely or principally on the Theravāda origins of MBSR training are unavoidably one-sided. They fail to recognise the strong input in Kabat-Zinn's work from East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist practice lineages, which represent 'non-dual approaches' to meditation (Dunne 2011, 2015; Husgafvel 2016; Watt 2017). In the transmission of Buddhist ideas, these non-dual influences reached Kabat-Zinn mainly through (1) his early practice as a student and 'Dharma teacher in training' with the Korean Sōn master Seung Sahn (1927–2004); (2) popular books by Philip Kapleau (1912–2004), Shunryū Suzuki (1904–1971), Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–) and Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987); (3) shorter retreats and meetings with Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna teachers (including Thich Nhat Hanh and the 14th Dalai Lama); and (4) his later training with the Tibetan Dzogchen (Tib. *rdzogs chen*) masters Tsoknyi Rinpoche (1966–) and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (1951–) (Husgafvel 2016, 101–104; Kabat-

Zinn 2011, 287–292; author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017). The formative role of non-Theravāda influences is confirmed in Kabat-Zinn's first academic articles, where he names 'Mahāyāna Buddhism' and 'Soto Zen practices' as important historical sources for MBSR practice, alongside Theravāda-based *vipassanā* meditation and the contemporary yogic traditions of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), Vimila Thakar (1921–2009), and Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897–1981) (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 34).¹³

As a shared characteristic, non-dual Buddhist approaches emphasise the need to transcend the distinction between the subject and object of attention (the 'knower' and the 'known') in advanced states of meditation. In practice, conceptual thoughts, judgements and goal-oriented efforts are often suspended because they are seen as maintaining dualistic cognitive structures. These patterns of 'ordinary cognition' represent subtle forms of ignorance, which obscure non-dual awareness and one's innate Buddha nature (Dunne 2011, 73–79, 2015, 259–266). Similar principles of non-duality are foundational to Kabat-Zinn's view of MBSR practice:

[T]here was from the very beginning of MBSR an emphasis on non-duality and the non-instrumental dimension of practice, and thus, on non-doing, non-striving, not-knowing, non-attachment to outcomes, even to positive health outcomes, and on investigating beneath name and form and the world of appearances, as per the teachings of the Heart Sutra. (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 292)

Besides the foundational Mahāyāna text of *The Heart (of the Perfection of Wisdom) Sutra* (*S. Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*),¹⁴ Kabat-Zinn connects this aspect of MBSR to his early Zen/Sōn training, which 'consistently emphasised non-dual awareness transcending subject and object', (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 291–292). In Kabat-Zinn's own descriptions of mindfulness practice, this emphasis on non-dual experiences is explicit:

When we begin the practice of mindfulness, that invariable sense of separation, expressed as the separation between the observer and what is being observed, continues. We feel as if we are watching our breath as if it is separate from whoever is doing the observing. We watch our thoughts. We watch our feelings, as if there were a real entity in here, a 'me' who is carrying out the instructions, doing the watching, and experiencing the results. We never dream that there may be observation without an observer, that is until we naturally, without any forcing, fall into observing, attending, apprehending, knowing. In other words, until we fall into awareness. When we do, even for the briefest of moments, there can be an experience of all separation between subject and object evaporating. There is knowing without a knower, seeing without a seer, thinking without a thinker, more like impersonal phenomena merely unfolding in awareness. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 168; see also Kabat-Zinn 2005, 169, 284)

In the methods and principles of MBSR practice, direct influences from non-dual Buddhist approaches are most evident in the practice of 'choiceless

awareness', which can be seen as the culmination of MBSR methods (see Watt 2017). As Kabat-Zinn himself explains, this method is akin to 'the practice of *shikan-taza*, or "just sitting – nothing more" in Zen, and to Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 262). Shared characteristics include the lack of specific objects of attention; openness and acceptance towards all experiences in the present moment; and an emphasis on the inherent liberative quality of spacious, non-conceptual awareness (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 71, 2005, 247, 261–262; see also Watt 2017). The Japanese Soto Zen practice of 'just sitting' continues Chinese Chán traditions of 'silent illumination', and Dzogchen is especially associated with the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism (Bielefeldt 1988; Dumoulin [1959] 1963; Harvey 2013; McRae 2003).

The foundational principles of 'non-striving' and 'non-judging' represent other, more general non-dual features of MBSR practice. As mentioned earlier, the suspension of cognitive effort and judgemental thoughts is a typical way in Buddhist non-dual approaches to calm the activity of dualistic cognitive patterns which obscure innate Buddhahood and pure awareness. Accordingly, Kabat-Zinn grounds the principle of 'non-judging' in a view that one's usual 'likes and dislikes and opinions' distort 'direct experience' and obscure the 'intrinsic liberative quality of pure awareness' (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 291–292). While suspension of judgement belongs also to Nyanaponika Thera's idea of mindful 'bare attention' (Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 30; see also Bodhi 2011; Sharf 2015), Kabat-Zinn's way of linking it to the cultivation of 'subjectless, objectless, non-dual awareness' reflects characteristic non-dual Mahāyāna ideas (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 169). In the notions of 'non-striving' and 'non-doing', the non-dual Mahāyāna roots are even more explicit, as Kabat-Zinn connects them to the teachings of *The Heart Sutra* and the Chinese Chán patriarchs Sengcan (?–606) and Huineng (638–713) (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 292, 299; see also McRae 2003). Thus, the attitudes of 'non-striving' and 'non-judging' do not indicate 'critical differences' with 'traditional Buddhist' practices in general, as proposed in many scholarly accounts based on canonical Pāli texts, Theravāda teachings or early Abhidharma commentaries (Dreyfus 2011; Plank 2011; Purser and Milillo 2015; Rapgay and Bystrisky 2009). Instead, together with the practice of 'choiceless awareness', they point towards a close affinity between MBSR and non-dual Mahāyāna traditions of meditation (Dunne 2011, 2015). As we shall see, this affinity with non-dual approaches is not limited to the methods and principles of MBSR practice, but also guides healing insights into the nature of mind and reality.

'Seeing things as they are': insights and realisations in MBSR practice

The 'transformation of view', which represents a long-term goal of MBSR training, is a process of replacing various unexamined preconceptions and

misperceptions with more accurate or functional understandings of reality and oneself. As Kabat-Zinn describes it: 'We can say the goal would be to see things as they actually are, not how we would like them to be or fear them to be, or only what we are socially conditioned to see or feel' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 196). This goal of 'seeing things as they are' is a central objective of Buddhist meditation practice already in the earliest layers of texts, and is closely related to the concept of awakening (Gombrich [1996] 2006, 117–118, 1988, 65–66; Kuan 2008, 13–40; Williams 2009, 122). It is also ubiquitous among contemporary Buddhist teachers influential to Kabat-Zinn (Ba Khin 1991, 30–31; Chah 2011, 248; Kapleau [1965] 1972, 11; Nhat Hanh [1975] 1987, 52; Sahn [1976] 1994, xi; Suzuki [1970] 1973, 33; Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 32–33, 88; Chögyam 1969, 60).¹⁵ Despite this apparent similarity, however, some scholars see it as a mere 'linguistic conflation' without any actual shared content:

When words and phrases such as 'insight', 'wisdom', 'witnessing', '*dukkha*', 'seeing things as they are', and 'direct perception' are lifted out of a Buddhist context and reused in Western therapeutic mindfulness discourse, their meanings change significantly. Perhaps the most conflated term and overused phrase in usage in a therapeutic mindfulness context is 'insight' and 'seeing things as they really are'. (Purser 2015, 32)

According to critics, MBSR and contemporary mindfulness do not include any 'advanced levels of mind-training', which in Theravāda contexts aim at the 'dissolution of the subtle sense of "I, me or mine" and a deep insight into [the] nature of the codependent origination' and in Tibetan practices at the arising of luminous, clear, non-dual awareness (Purser 2015, 31; Dorjee 2010, 157). Consequently, in the context of MBSR, the term 'insight' merely indicates a therapeutically beneficial 'decentred perspective' on thoughts and feelings, whereas in (Theravāda) Buddhism it points towards 'a penetrating insight into the three characteristics of impermanence (*annica* [sic]), not-self (*anattā*), and all conditioned phenomena as suffering (*dukkha*)' (Purser 2015, 32). Similarly, the Buddhist notion of 'seeing things as they are' refers to insights into these three characteristics of existence or 'a complete dissolution of the "observer–observed" dichotomy', but in a 'contemporary mindfulness context it is spoken of in a more generalised and therapeutic sense, describing a basic recognition and ability to detach from the contents of mental events' (Dorjee 2010, 157; Purser 2015, 32). While these characterisations may fit some forms and contexts of contemporary mindfulness, they find no support in Kabat-Zinn's view of MBSR. Instead, his understanding of 'seeing things as they are' follows many Buddhist notions on the nature of mind and reality. This is evident in his emphasis on the dependent origination of suffering and insights into impermanence, the illusion of a separate

self, emptiness and interconnectedness, and the ‘spacious, knowing and compassionate’ essence of mind (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 465).

The dependent origination of suffering

Dependent origination (P. *paṭicca-samuppāda*, S. *pratītya-samutpāda*) is a basic Buddhist doctrine which describes the conditioned nature of reality and the causal links leading from ignorance to suffering and from past lives to future rebirths (Gethin 1998, 140–159). It receives much attention in the early Buddhist texts as a crucial insight in Buddha’s awakening and belongs to the theoretical foundation of both early *satipatṭhāna* (‘establishment of mindfulness’) practice and contemporary *vipassanā* meditation (e.g. SN12:1, in Bodhi 2000, 533; Ba Khin 1991, 29–32; Goldstein [1976] 1987, 117–122; Kuan 2008, 140; Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 68–69). In MBSR, the understanding of dependent origination does not include notions of past lives or future rebirths. Thus, it is limited in comparison to canonical Buddhist ideas. However, the causal links between particular psychological processes described in this Buddhist teaching are foundational for MBSR. By these, I mean the causal links between (1) contact (P. *phassa*, S. *sparśa*) – the arising of any bodily sensation or mental impression; (2) feeling (*vedanā*) – the ‘hedonic tone’ of any thought or sense-experience as pleasant, painful or neutral; (3) craving (P. *taṇhā*, S. *trṣṇā*) – the tendency to ‘enjoy, prolong or get rid of’ particular feelings; and (4) clinging (*upādāna*) – a strong attachment to the objects of craving (Harvey 2013, 65–73; Batchelor 2018, 10–11). In *vipassanā* practice, the link between a particular ‘feeling’ and consequent arising of ‘craving’ and ‘clinging’ represents a crucial point. As explained by Nyanaponika Thera, it is here that the causal chain of suffering can be broken by the application of mindfulness (P. *sati*, S. *smṛti*) in the form of ‘bare attention’:

If, in receiving a sense impression, one is able to pause and stop at the phase of Feeling, and make it, in its very first stage of manifestation, the object of Bare Attention, Feeling will not be able to originate Craving or other passions. It will stop at the bare statements of ‘pleasant’, ‘unpleasant’ or ‘indifferent’, giving Clear Comprehension time to enter and to decide about the attitude or action to be taken. Furthermore, if one notices, in Bare Attention, the conditioned arising of feeling, its gradual fading away and giving room to another feeling, one will find from one’s own experience that there is no necessity at all for being carried away by passionate reaction, which will start a new concatenation of suffering. (Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 69)

This view of dependent origination is directly linked to the foundational goals of the MBSR programme: ‘to stop the unconscious, prereflective reactions to stimuli that cause stress’ and to find ‘liberation from clinging’ (Braun 2013, 167; Kabat-Zinn 2005, 57, 181, 480). The impact of Nyanaponika’s views and related Buddhist thought is visible in the shared Buddhist

terminology and in Kabat-Zinn's emphasis on observing pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experiences mindfully without getting caught in cognitive or emotional reactivity:

The object or situation is just what it is. Can we see it with open bare attention in the very moment of seeing, and then bring our awareness to see the triggering of the cascade of thoughts and feelings ...? If we are able ... to simply rest in the seeing of what is here to be seen, and vigilantly apply mindfulness to the moment of contact, we can become alerted through mindfulness to the cascade as it begins as a result of the experience in that moment being either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – and choose not to be caught up in it, ... but instead, to allow it to just unfold as it is, without pursuit if it is pleasant or rejection if it is unpleasant. In that very moment, the vexations actually can be seen to dissolve because they are simply recognised as mental phenomena arising in the mind With mindfulness applied in that moment and in that way, ... we are free from harm, free from all conceptualising, and from all vestiges of clinging. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 56–57)

The dependent origination of suffering serves as a theoretical frame for both short-term therapeutic goals and more profound forms of personal transformation in MBSR practice. By mindful attention to sensations and mental impressions, one can prevent, or abstain from identifying with, the escalation of discursive and emotional reactions in the midst of acute pain or stress. With practice, the recognition and letting-go of reoccurring reactive patterns may develop self-knowledge, skilful responses, and 'new degrees of freedom' (e.g. Kabat-Zinn 2005, 10–11). Accordingly, enquiry into the mind's 'conditioning' and habitual patterns of attraction and aversion belongs to the core practices of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 345–346, [1994] 2005, 223, 2005, 129, 257–259, 281, 294, 306, 319, 349, 371, 460). However, if one's underlying assumptions about the nature of reality and oneself are illusory and maintain emotional dependencies, moments of mindfulness may provide only temporary and limited relief. A more permanent form of healing is only possible through insights into the existential condition of being a human in the world.

The law of impermanence

In line with the earliest descriptions of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice (SN 47:40, in Bodhi 2000, 1659–1660; MN10, in Nāṇamoli and Bodhi 2009, 145–155; DN22, in Walshe 1995, 335–350; see also Anālayo 2015, 77; Kuan 2008, 119), the 'arising and passing' of phenomena forms an important area of observation and enquiry in MBSR training:

Dwelling here, in awareness, fully awake to the entire field of experience ..., we readily observe that every aspect of experience comes and goes. No arising is permanent, no arising endures. Sights, sounds, sensations in the body ..., smells, tastes, perceptions, impulses, thoughts, emotions, moods, opinions, preferences, aversions, more opinions, all come and go, fluxing, changing constantly, offering

us countless and rich opportunities to see into impermanence and our own habits of wanting and clinging. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 234; see also Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 74, [1994] 2005, 221, 2005, 259, 278, 280, 465)

Through the mindful observation of sense experiences and mental processes, 'profoundly healing insights may arise' and according to Kabat-Zinn, 'One major realisation you might come to is the inevitability of change, the direct perception that, whether we like it or not, *impermanence is in the very nature of things and relationships*' (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 323, italics in original). This insight is not limited to cognitive and emotional processes but covers all aspects of reality, from the continual change of 'stars and galaxies' to the temporal nature of one's own individual existence (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 6, 242, 244, [1994] 2005, 214–215, 2005, 476, 482–485). Thus, 'the law of impermanence' represents a fundamental aspect of Kabat-Zinn's understanding of the dharma:

[A]ll things change in ways that are uncertain ... and ... we are all subject to the law of impermanence. Such a simple, elegant realisation. It could readily, if kept in mind, counterbalance our natural tendencies toward arrogance and self-importance, and help us to learn how to live more in line with the dharma, the tao, with the lawfulness of all things, especially in the face of hardships, of dukkha, of anguish. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 478)

Accepting the impermanence of all things is crucial in the existential challenge of coming to terms with one's mortality and death (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 482–485). However, for Kabat-Zinn, this realisation does not diminish the value of human experiences and mundane reality in any way, but instead it guides one to appreciate the beauty and preciousness of life in each moment (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 214–215, 2005, 484).

The illusion of a separate self

The nature of personal identity forms another key area of enquiry in Kabat-Zinn's vision of mindfulness practice. This is evident in the instructions on the 'mindfulness of thoughts and feelings':

Note that an individual thought does not last long. It is impermanent. If it comes, it will go. Be aware of this Note those thoughts that are 'I', 'me', or 'mine' thoughts, observing carefully how 'you', the non-judging observer, feel about them Note it when the mind creates a 'self' to be preoccupied with how well or how badly your life is going. (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 74)

Based on the findings of cognitive neuroscience and neurobiology, Kabat-Zinn treats the individual sense of 'I' as an emergent phenomenon, which comes into being out of complex interconnected networks of cellular and neurological processes (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 175–179, 315–320, 331–335, 585–586). As implied in the practice instructions, he holds the 'reified notion of a permanent self' fundamentally as a construct of the 'thinking mind', which is maintained by

cognitive conventions, such as personal narratives and self-referential language (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 282, 2005, 54, 174, 510). These views are explicitly linked to foundational Buddhist notions about the illusory nature of a separate self:

[H]ow is it that we feel that there is a self . . . , that when I wake up in the morning, it is the same me waking up and recognising myself in the mirror? Both modern biology (cognitive neuroscience) and Buddhism would say that it is something of a mis-perception that has built itself into an enduring individual and cultural habit. Nevertheless, if you go through the process of systematically searching for it, they hold that you will not find a permanent, independent, enduring self, whether you look for it in 'your' body, . . . 'your' emotions, 'your' beliefs, 'your' thoughts, 'your' relationships, or anyplace else. And the reason you will not be able to locate anywhere a permanent, isolated, self-existing self that is 'you' is that it is a mirage, a holographic emergence, a phantom, a product of the habit-bound, emotionally turbulent, thinking mind. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 326)

For Kabat-Zinn, the illusion of a separate self is ultimately 'imprisoning' and the source of much grasping and clinging, which cause suffering for oneself and others (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 165–166, 2005, 53–54, 175). It distracts one from 'the purity of direct experience' and forms a great impediment to 'seeing things as they are' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 260–261, 2005, 328–329). He considers liberation from thought habits that maintain the illusion of separateness to be profoundly healing (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 165–167), and again he aligns his views with Buddhist teachings:

[T]he Buddha once famously said that all of his teachings could be condensed into one sentence, 'Nothing is to be clung to as "I", "me", or "mine"'. It brings up the immediate question of identity and self-identification, and our habit of reifying . . . the personal pronoun into an absolute and unexamined 'self' and then living inside that 'story of me' for a lifetime without examining its accuracy or completeness. In Buddhism, this reification is seen as the root of all suffering and afflictive emotion, a mis-identifying of the totality of one's being with the limited story line we heap on the personal pronoun. This identification occurs without us realising it or questioning its accuracy. But we can learn to see it and see behind it to a deeper truth, a greater wisdom that is available to us at all times. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 175)¹⁶

These passages clearly contradict arguments which claim that MBSR practice omits 'the central Buddhist philosophical emphasis on the deconstruction of the self' (Samuel 2015, 485), does not 'question the self and its central role in experience' (Petranker 2016, 96), and adheres 'to a therapeutic culture and discourse of self-help that is premised on a highly privatised sense of self' (Purser 2015, 37). Instead, according to Kabat-Zinn, realising the illusion of one's separateness through insight into emptiness and interconnectedness is fundamental in the process of healing and 'seeing things as they are' cultivated through MBSR practice.

Emptiness and interconnectedness

For Kabat-Zinn, interconnectedness represents another ‘fundamental principle of nature’, and mindfulness practice is ‘simply the ongoing discovery of the thread of interconnectedness’ (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 208, 215). Accordingly, his books are filled with analyses of interconnectedness and interdependence, extending from body–mind processes to various social, ecological and physical aspects of reality (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 20, 149–198, 219–241, 410–422, [1994] 2005, 208, 213–216, 2005, 172–184, 321–330, 347–352, 501–512, 528–550, 583–590). Besides scientific argumentation and first-person experiences, Kabat-Zinn expresses this view in explicitly Buddhist terms and associates it with the concept of emptiness (S. *śūnyatā*), as found in *The Heart Sutra* (see also Braun 2017). In *Coming to Our Senses* (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 179–182), this *sūtra* is quoted at length and accompanied by a personal commentary, which shows the profound ontological and ethical implications of universal interconnectedness:

The Heart Sutra, chanted by Mahayana Buddhists around the world, intones:

Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. That which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness, form. The same is true for feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness.

Emptiness means empty of inherent self-existence, in other words, that nothing, no person, no business, no nation, no atom, exists in and of itself as an enduring entity, isolated, absolute, independent of everything else. Nothing! Everything emerges out of the complex play of particular causes and conditions that are themselves always changing. This is a tremendous insight into the nature of reality If we realise the emptiness of things, then we will simultaneously realise their gravity, their fullness, their interconnectedness In fact, it is helpful to recognise the intrinsic emptiness of what may seem like an enduring self-existence in any and all phenomena, and at all times. It could free us, individually and collectively, of our clinging to small-minded self-serving interests and desires, and ultimately to all clinging, and also from small-minded self-serving actions so often driven by unwise perceptions or outright mis-perception of what is occurring in either inner or outer landscapes. ... Emptiness points to the interconnectedness of all things, processes and phenomena. Emptiness allows for a true ethics, based on reverence for life and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all things and the folly of forcing things to fit one’s own small-minded and shortsighted models for maximising one’s own advantage when there is no fixed enduring you to benefit from it, whether ‘you’ is referring to an individual or a country. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 179–181)

In this non-dual view of interconnected reality, any ontological boundary between individual and cosmos is fundamentally an illusion, as explained by Kabat-Zinn in the interview:

In some sense, you can say that MBSR ... or mindfulness is a re-education to life, where you are, in some sense, pointing towards the possibility of dissolving the

subject–object duality. Because, as long as you think you are a subject, everything else is outside of you and an object. But the actuality of life unfolding is that there's no separation. (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

In the actual mindfulness practice, interconnectedness and non-duality are not analysed intellectually, but realised 'directly' and 'non-conceptually' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 70, 346). This embodied experience of 'wholeness' represents another fundamental insight in the process of healing and 'coming to terms with things as they are':

When we are in touch with being whole, we feel at one with everything. When we feel at one with everything, we feel whole ourselves. Sitting still or lying still, in any moment we can reconnect with our body, transcend the body, merge with the breath, with the universe, experience ourselves as whole and folded into larger and larger wholes. A taste of interconnectedness brings deep knowledge of belonging, a sense of being an intimate part of things, a sense of being at home wherever we are. We may taste and wonder at an ancient timelessness beyond birth and death, and simultaneously experience the fleeting brevity of this life as we pass through it, the impermanence of our ties to our body, to this moment, to each other. Knowing our wholeness directly in the meditation practice, we may find ourselves coming to terms with things as they are, a deepening of understanding and compassion, a lessening of anguish and despair. (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 226; see also Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 166–167, 2005, 70, 328–329)

Kabat-Zinn's texts and comments show that the characteristic 'non-dual' methods and principles of MBSR practice form a coherent whole with the intended objectives of mindfulness training and the underlying view of interconnected reality. As a secular-scientific authority for this theoretical framing, Kabat-Zinn often cites a quote from Albert Einstein:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation, and a foundation for inner security. (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 165, 2005, 338, 2011, 284)¹⁷

Despite the emphasis on perceiving the wholeness and non-duality of existence, Kabat-Zinn gives great value to individuality and the distinct characteristics of things. In the light of his texts, the aim of MBSR practice is not to focus on one aspect of reality at the expense of others, but to keep the value of both 'wholeness' and 'particulars' in mind in skilful responses to the changing conditions of life. As Kabat-Zinn states, 'it is in the unique qualities of this and that, their particular individuality and properties – in their eachness and their suchness, if you will – that all poetry and art, science and life, wonder,

grace, and richness reside' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 230). This view of a non-dual universe, in which totality and particulars co-exist and interpenetrate each other completely, is captured in the symbol of 'the Hindu goddess [sic] Indra's net ... , which has jewels at all the vertices, each one capturing the reflections of the entire net and so containing the whole' Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 230).

Kabat-Zinn describes the realisation of interconnectedness and non-duality as a 'rotation in consciousness' into an 'orthogonal' view of reality, which is closely associated with Buddhist notions of ultimate or absolute reality (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 347–352). This transcending of the 'conventional subject-object view of the world' and 'small-minded self-interest' helps one to face problems with 'possibilities of freedom, resolution, acceptance, creativity, compassion, and wisdom that were literally inconceivable – unable to arise and sustain – within the conventional mind set' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 167, 351). Since the conventional view of things emerges from the 'thinking and judging mind' and the more fundamental view of reality from non-conceptual and non-dual awareness, the nature of mind and awareness forms another significant area of investigation in his view of mindfulness practice.

The 'spacious, knowing, and compassionate' essence of mind

According to Kabat-Zinn, conscious awareness represents the 'true nature' of sentient beings and it is ultimately a property of the universe itself (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 316–320, 460–461, 599–601):

If consciousness, at least chemistry-based consciousness, is built in as potentially possible or even inevitable in an evolving universe given the correct initial conditions and enough time, one might say, as we have noted already, that consciousness in living organisms is a way for the universe to know itself, to see itself, even to understand itself. We could say that in this local neighbourhood of the vastness of it all, that gift has fallen to us, to *Homo sapiens sapiens*, apparently more so than to any other species on this infinitesimally small speck we inhabit in the unimaginable vastness of the expanding universe. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 324)¹⁸

In ontological discussions on the nature of awareness, Kabat-Zinn draws from physicalist 'emergent' views of natural sciences, but he also mentions (Tibetan) Buddhist viewpoints which consider mind or consciousness to be ontologically prior (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 316–320, 599–601). He does not take a definitive stand on either side, but emphasises the lack of understanding surrounding the 'hard problem of consciousness' and the need for dialogue between these 'two vital ways of exploring the nature of reality and the nature of mind' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 316, 601).

In Kabat-Zinn's vocabulary, 'original mind' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 40, 65–66, 78, 203, 282, 441, 549), 'don't know mind' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 447, 494–495, 497), 'pure awareness' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 89, 65, 169), 'mind essence' (Kabat-Zinn

2005, 119, 170, 493), ‘mind itself’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 77, 262, 351) and ‘beginner’s mind’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 67, 85) are synonyms for the pure, natural state of awareness. Following views that he explicitly identifies as Tibetan Buddhist, Kabat-Zinn considers this essence of mind to have three main characteristics: ‘emptiness’, ‘non-conceptual knowing quality’ and ‘boundlessness’.¹⁹

Awareness is our nature and is in our nature. It is in our bodies, in our species. It could be said, as the Tibetans do, that cognisance, the non-conceptual knowing quality, is the essence of what we call mind, along with emptiness and boundlessness, which Tibetan Buddhism sees as complementary aspects of the very same essence. The capacity for awareness appears to be built into us. We can’t help but be aware. It is the defining characteristic of our species. Grounded in our biology, it extends far beyond the merely biological. It is what and who we actually are. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 319–320; see also Kabat-Zinn 2005, 170)

Other characterisations of pure awareness include ‘spaciousness’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 57, 67, 234, 465, 471; see also Watt 2017); ‘radiance’ or ‘luminosity’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 67, 78); ‘compassion’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 67, 235, 465); ‘wakefulness’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 100, 446); ‘non-duality’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 70, 168–169, 203, 383–384); and ‘non-fabrication’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 464–465). Besides compassion, the potential for other important virtues, such as loving kindness (P. *mettā*, S. *maitrī*) and sympathetic joy (*muditā*),²⁰ is also ‘folded into our deepest truest nature’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 297, 554).

Through the inherent capacity for compassion and other ethically constructive qualities, pure awareness is naturally inclined towards ethical action (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 103, 169, 320, 509). Through its capacity for direct non-conceptual knowing, it is the basis for insight and wisdom (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 438, 2005, 70, 77–78, 465–466). Both these core qualities of awareness are embedded in Kabat-Zinn’s concept of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 2017, 1127, 2005, 77), which may be described as a fundamental expression and activity of our ‘original mind’ and ‘true nature’:

Mindfulness discerns the breath as deep when it is deep. It discerns the breath as shallow when it is shallow. It knows the coming in and it knows the going out. It knows its impersonal nature Mindfulness knows the impermanent nature of each breath. It knows any and all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and impulses as they arise in and around and outside each and any breath. For mindfulness is the knowing quality of awareness, the core property of mind itself Mindfulness is the field of knowing. When that field is stabilised by calmness and one-pointedness, the arising of the knowing itself is sustained, and the quality of the knowing strengthened. That knowing of things as they are is called wisdom. It comes from trusting your original mind, which is nothing other than a stable, infinite, open awareness. It is a field of knowing that apprehends instantly when something appears or moves or disappears within its vastness. Like the field of the sun’s radiance, it is always present, but it is often obscured by cloud cover, in this case, the self-generated cloudiness of the mind’s habits of distraction, its

endless proliferating of images, thoughts, stories, and feelings, many of them not quite accurate. The more we practise aiming and sustaining our attention, the more we learn to rest effortlessly in the sustain The more we rest effortlessly in the sustain, the more the natural radiance of our very nature as simultaneously a localised and an infinite expression of wisdom and love reveals itself, no longer obscured from others or, more importantly, from ourselves. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 77–78)

As this passage indicates, the ‘spacious, knowing, and compassionate’ essence of mind is always present, but it is often obscured by the mental stream of thoughts, images, feelings and emotions (see also Kabat-Zinn 2005, 465–466). For Kabat-Zinn, this clouding veil of ‘thinking mind’ and the conventional view of reality it produces are characterised by subject–object dualism, fragmentation, conceptual knowledge, conditioning, judgementality and a tendency towards constant mental proliferation (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 53–54, 93–94, 2005, 167, 206–207, 327, 347–350, 383, 462–464). While discursive and evaluative thinking has many benefits in everyday life and scientific discoveries, this conventional mind-set is often plagued by greed, hatred, unskillful conditioning, and misperceptions of reality, which lead to clinging and suffering (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 36, 345–346, [1994] 2005, 57, 206, 274, 2005, 200, 261, 327, 348–349, 464). In order to be liberated from the ‘tyranny of the thinking mind’ and the ‘confining prison of the conventional thought world’ (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 70, 2005, 349), one needs to cultivate the ‘rotation in consciousness’ through the practice of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 347–352). Through this, conventional thinking may be completed with the wisdom and compassion of our ‘original mind’ and everyday life infused with a deep sense of spaciousness, interconnectedness and freedom (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 9, 62, 70, 235, 347–352, 480–481, 506–508).

Universal ‘Buddha nature’ and meditation as ‘non-doing’

The teaching of innate and universal Buddha nature (S. *tathāgatagarbha/buddhadhātu*)²¹ is a shared feature of most non-dual Mahāyāna approaches to meditation (Dunne 2011, 75–77). It is also part of Kabat-Zinn’s vocabulary and represents one important source for his views on the ‘natural radiance of our very nature’ and the ‘intrinsic wholeness of being’ (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 191, 2005, 78, 249). As noted by Tessa Watt (2017, 463) and Richard Seager (1999, 214), this notion informs Kabat-Zinn’s emphasis on the uniqueness and ‘genius’ of each practitioner. In fact, Kabat-Zinn considers the need to honour everyone’s ‘intrinsic Buddha nature’ to be the ‘marrow’ of teaching MBPs (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 300). In public talks, Kabat-Zinn has sometimes explained how he is not teaching ‘with the aim of people becoming Buddhists, but with the aim of them realising that they’re Buddhas’ (Seager 1999, 214). In its full extent, however, this notion of Buddha nature is not limited to persons, or even sentient beings. Instead, it describes the wondrous, incomprehensible, non-

dual nature of all reality just the way it is. As Kabat-Zinn explains, ‘with eyes of wholeness and a heart of kindness’, it is possible to understand ‘that literally everything and everybody is already the Buddha’ (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 300).

The notion of Buddha nature as the underlying perfection of reality forms the basis for seeing meditation as ‘non-doing’, which complements instrumental, goal-orientated views of MBSR training (see also Watt 2017). In the interview, Kabat-Zinn explained how this view of meditation practice differs from both common ideas on ‘enlightenment’ and typical medical discourses:

If you’re attached to an outcome and you meditate to get someplace else, you are getting off on the wrong foot to begin with. Thirty years later, you can still be meditating to achieve something that you already are. So this is the paradox of, quote unquote ‘enlightenment’. I try to never use the word, or I will say... I found myself saying recently: ‘Maybe there are no enlightened people, there are only enlightening moments’. And the more enlightening moments, the more you can see beyond ... the veil of form and appearance, to selflessness and to the emptiness of self-existing actuality. Then you see that everything is change, everything is flux. All the physicists say that anyway, [that is] certainly true on the quantum level. ... There’s a disease in a lot of meditation centres that people with enormous suffering and enormous problems come looking for the teacher to, in some sense, be enlightened and to help you become enlightened and take all your problems away. This, in some sense, undermines the notion that you are already a Buddha. As it says in *The Heart Sutra*: ‘There’s no place to go, nothing to do, nothing to attain’. That doesn’t mean that you can’t grow, that you can’t heal, that you can’t learn and everything. But how you frame it makes all the difference in whether people understand it or if they just go into some kind of cognitive-behavioural machinations that are always attempting to fix. Medicine is big on fixing. Psychology is big on fixing. The dharma is big on the recognition of non-brokenness, wholeness. (author’s interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

From the instrumental (or ‘conventional’) point of view, meditation practice is a skill that ‘develops as you work at it’ and sets a progressive trajectory towards ‘wisdom, compassion, and clarity’. However, from the non-instrumental (or ‘absolute’) perspective, there is ‘nothing to practise’ and ‘nothing to attain’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 64–68, 296–299). Instead, ‘on a deeper level, beyond appearances and time, whatever needs to be attained is already here’ and ‘there is no improving the self – only knowing its true nature as both empty and full’ (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 329). In other words, the perfect Buddha nature of reality, which unfolds according to its own laws, is always present in everyone and everything and needs only to be realised in each moment.

In the interview, Kabat-Zinn associated the non-instrumental view of meditation and mindfulness practice with Dzogchen and Mahāyāna perspectives:

This is the paradox of the instrumental and the non-instrumental, and different meditative traditions approach this differently. So, from the Dzogchen perspective and from the *Mahāyāna* perspective – say, *The Heart Sutra* or *The*

Platform Sutra or *The Diamond Sutra* – there is no place to go. (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

This importance of *The Heart Sutra* as a philosophical ground for non-instrumental views is also evident in the quotes and commentary that appeared in *Coming to Our Senses* (see earlier discussion on emptiness):

Once we recognise, remember, and embody in the way we hold the moment and the way we live our lives that there is no attainment and nothing to attain, the sutra is saying all attainment is possible. This is the gift of emptiness, the practice of the non-dual, the manifestation of prajna paramita, of supreme perfect wisdom. And we already have it. All that is required is to be it. When we are, then form is form, and emptiness is emptiness. And the mind is no longer caught, in anything. It is no longer self-centred. It is free. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 182)

Historically, Kabat-Zinn's distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental views on meditation follow the main outline of 'gradual' and 'sudden' approaches to awakening, which represent a topic of many debates within Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism. In brief, the 'sudden' positions usually emphasise the immediate realisation of one's innate Buddha nature, contrary to the 'gradual' cultivation of insights and virtues. For scholars, these concepts have heuristic value as ideal types, such as Dunne's (2011, 2015) Classical/Constructivist ('gradual') and Non-dual/Innateist ('sudden'), which allow one to locate different meditative approaches on a continuum between two opposites, based on their characteristic features. However, despite the common rhetoric of mutual exclusiveness, both scholars and Buddhist teachers often present these as complementary aspects of (Mahāyāna) Buddhist practice, neither of which alone is philosophically or practically self-sufficient (Broughton 2009; Gómez [1987] 1991; Gregory [1987] 1991; McRae 2003). In Kabat-Zinn's view of MBSR, the non-instrumental or 'sudden' aspects of practice are balanced with the 'gradual' cultivation of mindful awareness on a 'lifelong journey' of 'self-development, self-discovery, learning, and healing' (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 1, 423, 429, 441–443, 2005, 8). Here, 'the eight weeks [of an MBSR course] is just to get us launched or to redirect the trajectory we are on' (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 423). This idea of a lifelong existential path is captured in his frequent references to mindfulness practice as a 'way of being', 'way of mindfulness', 'way of awareness' and 'art of conscious living' (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 19, 379, 440–444, [1994] 2005, 6, 2005, 58–59, 2011, 284; Mindful Nation UK 2015). Fundamentally, it is about living in harmony with the dharma, or Tao, as the 'universal law of being':

In our culture we are not so familiar with the notion of ways or paths. It is a concept that comes from China, the notion of a universal law of being, called the *Tao*, or simply 'the way'. The Tao is the world unfolding according to its own laws. Nothing is done or forced, everything just comes about. To live in accord with the Tao is to understand non-doing and non-striving. Your life is already doing itself. The challenge is whether you can see in this way and live in

accordance with the way things are, to come into harmony with all things and all moments. This is the path of insight, of wisdom, and of healing. It is the path of acceptance and peace. It is the path of the mind-body looking deeply into itself and knowing itself. It is the art of conscious living, of knowing your inner resources and your outer resources and knowing also that, fundamentally, there is neither inner nor outer. (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 440, *italics in original*)

As a 'way of being', mindfulness practice has profound ethical dimensions. In fact, Kabat-Zinn considers these foundational, as 'you cannot have harmony without a commitment to ethical behaviour' and '[w]ithout the ethical foundation, neither transformation nor healing is likely to take root' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 47, 2005, 105).

The ethical dimensions of MBSR practice

Some scholars represent MBSR and related MBPs as 'de-ethicised' and 'privatised' self-help methods, which separate meditation and yoga practices 'not just from their doctrinal contexts, but from their moral frameworks' (Hickey 2010, 173). This perceived lack of ethical grounding is often considered one key factor that separates contemporary forms of mindfulness from Buddhist practices (Dorjee 2010; Hickey 2010; Loy 2016; Plank 2011; Purser 2015; Purser and Loy 2013; Purser and Milillo 2015). However, in light of Kabat-Zinn's texts, the picture is much more complex, as ethical questions form an integral part of his main works on MBSR. For him, the 'exploration of the possibility of liberation from suffering, from dukkha, and the living of a more authentic and satisfying life is not undertaken merely for ourselves ... but in very real and nonromantic ways, for the benefit of all beings with whom our lives are inextricably entwined' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 128; see also Kabat-Zinn 2011, 281).

The basic ethical principle of MBSR teachers and practitioners 'to first do no harm' is grounded in the Hippocratic Oath, which guides all clinical practices (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 295, 301 n. 5, 2017, 1125, 1130). According to Kabat-Zinn, this emphasis on non-harming is relevant to mindfulness training in a very practical manner:

The foundation for mindfulness practice, for all meditative inquiry and exploration, lies in ethics and morality, and above all, the motivation of non-harming. Why? Because you cannot possibly hope to know stillness and calmness within your own mind and body – to say nothing of perceiving the actuality of things beneath their surface appearances using your own mind as the instrument for knowing – or embody and enact those qualities in the world, if your actions are continually clouding, agitating, and destabilising the very instrument through which you are looking, namely, your own mind. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 102)

This perspective resembles common Buddhist views, which hold ethical conduct (P. *sīla*, S. *śīla*) as a prerequisite for calmness in meditation

(*samādhi*), which in turn, is conducive to wisdom (P. *paññā*, S. *prajñā*) of understanding things as they are. In Buddhist traditions, these ‘three practices’ are often seen as the summarisation of the Eightfold Path (e.g. Gethin 1998, 83–84). According to Kabat-Zinn, all three are also included in ‘the practice of mindfulness meditation writ large’ (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 298) and the ethical aspects of the Eightfold Path are foundational for MBSR training, even if not always explicit:

[T]he mainstreaming of mindfulness in the world has always been anchored in the ethical framework that lies at the very heart of the original teachings of the Buddha. *Sīla*, meaning ‘virtue’ or ‘moral conduct’ in the Pali language, is represented by the third, fourth, and fifth factors of the Eightfold Path (the fourth of the Four Noble Truths): wise/right speech, wise/right action, and wise/right livelihood. While MBSR does not, nor should it, explicitly address these classical foundations in a clinical context with patients, the Four Noble Truths have always been the soil in which the cultivation of mindfulness via MBSR and other mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs) is rooted, and out of which, it grows through ongoing practice. (Kabat-Zinn 2017, 1125)

In Buddhist contexts, the fundamental virtue of generosity (*dāna*) and a commitment to moral precepts, ranging from the five basic lay precepts to detailed and manifold monastic rules of conduct, form the foundations of ethical conduct (Gethin 1998, 169–174; Harvey 2013, 268–269). Not surprisingly, the importance of generosity, as an obvious countermeasure to emotional clinging and self-centredness, is also emphasised in Kabat-Zinn’s texts (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 61–64, 2005, 103). Besides generosity, other foundational Buddhist virtues, such as the ‘Four Immeasurables’, are highly valued (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 183, [1994] 2005, 78, 2011, 299, 2005, 102–107, 287, 297, 554). In addition, the discussions on ethics sometimes draw directly from the content of the five basic Buddhist precepts by examining the destructive consequences of violence and killing, lying and harmful speech, stealing, sexual misconduct and the use of intoxicants (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 102–103). However, Kabat-Zinn never encourages commitment to normative moral rules, as for him, the ‘inner qualities which support meditation practise cannot be imposed, legislated, or decreed’ (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 47). Instead, the ethics of MBSR emphasise the embodied example of MBSR teachers (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 295, 2005, 106–107), the personal motivation of practitioners (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 47), enquiry into the characteristics and consequences of different mind-states and actions (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 47, 2005, 102–107, 298), cultivation of loving kindness and compassionate awareness, and non-dual insight into emptiness and interconnectedness.

The direct ethical implications of emptiness, interconnectedness and non-duality are based on the idea that ‘[f]rom the non-dual perspective, the infinite number of beings and oneself are not separate, and never were’ (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 295). This foundation of ‘true ethics’ can ‘free us,

individually and collectively, of our clinging to small-minded self-serving interests and desires' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 181). Thus, any dualistic distinction between the well-being of 'oneself' and 'others' is ultimately false or meaningless. This radical view is evident in Kabat-Zinn's encouragement of generosity:

Initiate giving. Don't wait for someone to ask. You may find that, rather than exhausting yourself or your resources, you will replenish them. Such is the power of mindful, selfless generosity. At the deepest level, there is no giver, no gift, and no recipient ... only the universe rearranging itself. (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 64)

This formulation resembles Mahāyāna Buddhist ideals on the 'perfection of giving' (*S. dānapārami*) as described in *Prajñāpāramitā* texts: 'The supramundane perfection of giving, on the other hand, consists in the threefold purity. What is the threefold purity? Here a Bodhisattva gives a gift, and he does not apprehend a self, nor a recipient, nor a gift' (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* 263–264, in Conze et al. [1954] 1964, 136–137).

The notions of interconnectedness and non-duality are also significant when Kabat-Zinn addresses the destructive consequences of greed, hatred and delusion in social, political and ecological spheres of life (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 410–419, 2005, 499–580, 2017; see also Braun 2017). He sees the health and well-being of individuals, nations, animals, plants and the planet itself to be deeply connected and dependent on each other. As an example, in the context of pollution and environmental hazards, he identifies various feedback loops that connect individuals to the planetary ecosystem, and he calls for mindful action towards sustainable ways of life. These include both small-scale decisions, such as recycling, and commitment to structural changes through political activity, as many of the problems are beyond individual, direct solutions (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 410–419). Thus, for Kabat-Zinn, the cultivation of mindfulness is inseparable from wider social-political concerns:

Our state of mind and everything that flows from it affect the world. When our doing comes out of being, out of awareness, it is likely to be a wiser, freer, more creative and caring doing, a doing that can promote greater wisdom and compassion and healing in the world. The intentional engagement in mindfulness within various strata of society, and within the body politic, even in the tiniest of ways, has the potential, because we are all cells of the body of the world, to lead to a true flowering, a veritable renaissance of human creativity and potential, an expression of our profound health as a species, and as a world. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 509)

Due to his emphasis on social and political engagement, Kabat-Zinn's views are sometimes associated with 'socially concerned' Buddhist teachers, such as Thich Nhat Hanh, and socially engaged Buddhism in general (Seager 1999, 213–214; Wilson 2014, 186).

This brief overview shows that in Kabat-Zinn's texts, mindfulness training is explicitly and thoroughly embedded in ethical considerations, even if in the actual MBSR courses teachers are advised to let ethical conversations 'arise naturally' out of practitioners' own initiatives and experiences (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 106–107). It also confirms that the notion of non-duality is a distinct characteristic of all 'three practices' of MBSR; it guides the principles and methods of meditation, represents a key insight into the nature of reality and serves as the foundation for 'true ethics'. In order to better understand the historical roots for this non-dual 'dharma foundation' of MBSR practice, we must examine Kabat-Zinn's Buddhist influences and the historical transmission of Buddhist ideas in more detail.

The Mahāyāna Buddhist roots of Jon Kabat-Zinn's 'dharma understanding'

There is no question that the modernisation of Theravāda-based *vipassanā* meditation forms a significant social-historical background for the emergence of the MBSR programme (see Braun 2013; McMahan 2008; Sharf 1995, 2015). Some practical and theoretical elements are also shared with Theravāda-based *vipassanā* practices and, to a degree, Kabat-Zinn's concept of mindfulness is grounded on Nyanaponika Thera's notions of 'bare attention' and 'clear comprehension' (P. *sampajañña*, S. *samprajanya*) (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 108–110, 2011, 290–291, 2017, 1133, 1134 n. 31; see also Bodhi 2011; Gethin 2011). Nevertheless, the common scholarly narrative of Theravāda origins is far from complete and many things speak in favour of significant Mahāyāna influences on Kabat-Zinn's configuration of Buddhist ideas.

At the outset, we should note that Mahāyāna authorities hold a dominant position in Kabat-Zinn's use of Buddhist sources. His books are full of quotes from Zen/Chán/Sōn/Thiền and Tibetan masters,²² while only a few are from Theravāda or Theravāda-affiliated IMS teachers.²³ Further, while MBSR methods are influenced by canonical Pāli texts, such as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* and (*Mahā*)*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 2003, 146, 2011), the principles of practice and the underlying view of reality are grounded in *The Heart Sutra* and *Prajñāpāramitā* texts of the Mahāyāna canon.²⁴ *The Heart Sutra* is also the only canonical Buddhist text quoted and commented on at considerable length in Kabat-Zinn's texts. This use of authoritative sources reflects Kabat-Zinn's personal history of Buddhist practice, which is based on early Sōn training with Seung Sahn, *vipassanā* practice with IMS teachers, and later training with Tibetan Dzogchen teachers. He never practised regularly in an explicitly Theravāda lineage, as IMS teachers already fuse *vipassanā* meditation with elements from other Buddhist traditions (Bodhi 2016; Fronsdal 1998; Goldstein [1976] 1987). Against this background, it is understandable that Kabat-Zinn's views on reality and mindfulness

practice differ significantly from contemporary Theravāda approaches. In fact, he explicitly distinguishes the ‘non-dual perspective’ of MBSR from Theravāda views:

Joseph Goldstein wrote a whole book, called *One Dharma*, where he actually uses the analogy of building from below. So, you’re gradually building up towards realisation, and some practices are like that, especially in the Theravāda tradition. And then, he calls it ‘soaring from above’, you take the non-dual perspective from the beginning, and then you see emptiness and fullness as co-extensive, and the emptiness including of the observer, who you are, or think you are. MBSR is really meant to be from the non-dual perspective, but grounded in real people and real life. And I think a lot of MBSR teachers don’t realise that, because the people who are teaching them don’t emphasise non-duality. And that’s really hard to emphasise, because ‘if you open your mouth you’re wrong’, as one of my Zen masters said.²⁵ If you put it into words, you’ve already killed it. (author’s interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)²⁶

From a canonical Theravāda perspective, these differences are not only found in the means but also in the goals and underlying rationale of meditation practice. In Theravāda orthodoxy, ‘any quest for the discovery of selfhood, whether as a permanent individual self or as an absolute universal self, would have to be dismissed as a delusion’, since the ‘teaching of the Buddha as found in the Pali canon does not endorse a philosophy of non-dualism of any variety’ (Bodhi [1998] 2011). Thus, while MBSR and contemporary Theravāda-based *vipassanā* practices share the goal of liberation from suffering through ‘uprooting’ emotional clinging and the three basic afflictions of greed, hatred and ignorance, their solutions to the problem and the underlying assumptions regarding the nature of reality are very different.

Whereas popular Burmese *vipassanā* techniques aim at the deconstruction of experiential reality into its constituent parts (Ba Khin 1991, 2012; Braun 2013; Mahasi 1965, 1971), one of the main goals of MBSR practice is to see oneself and the universe as an interconnected whole. The Theravāda approaches are based on Abhidharma analysis of the ultimate building blocks (P. *dhmma*) of experiential reality, but MBSR is grounded in the predominantly Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings on ‘emptiness’ (S. *śūnyatā*) and universal interconnectedness, which represent radical expansions of the early Abhidharma views. Contemporary Theravāda teachers emphasise the fundamental unsatisfactoriness of sensual joys and imperfect mundane existence in order to develop longing towards a ‘supramundane’ escape into a transcendental state of final liberation (P. *nibbāna*) (Ba Khin 1991, 26–27; Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 51; see also Braun 2013; Sharf 2015, 471). In contrast, Kabat-Zinn displays a deep sense of appreciation for the wondrous and ultimately incomprehensible nature of worldly existence and everyday

life (see also Braun 2017). Finally, the liberative insights of contemporary Theravāda approaches are concerned with the three characteristic marks of existence (P. *tilakkhaṇa*) – impermanence (P. *anicca*), suffering (P. *dukkha*) and lack of permanent self (P. *anattā*) – as taught, for example, in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (Ba Khin 2012, 12–22; Ñāṇamoli 2010; Mahasi 1965, I, 9, 1971, 18–23, 31; Nyanaponika (1962) 1969, 36–37, 43–44). While these insights are significant in Kabat-Zinn's understanding of the dharma, for him the realisations of interconnectedness, wholeness and non-duality represent fundamental aspects of 'seeing things as they are'. Thus, the impermanence of things is a natural part of their perfect 'Buddha nature' and a source of appreciation for life; the lack of an individual self points towards identification with the interconnected universe, and suffering is only a result of emotional clinging, not a 'value judgment'²⁷ on the nature of impermanent worldly existence.

Based on my analysis of Kabat-Zinn's texts and contemporary Buddhist sources, it is clear that Theravāda-based *vipassanā* meditation does not provide the primary theoretical ground for Kabat-Zinn's view of MBSR practice, even if contemporary Theravāda teachings have influenced the concept of mindfulness and MBSR practice methods. Instead, I argue that the fundamental principles and insights of MBSR practice derive from Kabat-Zinn's early training with the Korean Sōn master Seung Sahn and influences from contemporary Zen/Thiền and Tibetan Buddhist teachers. In the 'universal dharma foundation' of MBSR, these characteristic Mahāyāna Buddhist features include the notions of: (1) emptiness, interconnectedness and non-duality; (2) spacious, knowing and compassionate pure awareness as one's true nature; (3) identification with the universe and universal Buddha nature; (4) deep appreciation of the mundane world, sensual experiences and everyday life; and (5) 'non-judging' and 'non-striving' as practical non-dual features of meditation.²⁸

The Sōn teachings of Seung Sahn

The continuities between Seung Sahn's Sōn practice and Kabat-Zinn's views on mindfulness training are clear and manifold. Similar to the work of Kabat-Zinn, Sahn's teaching is formed around the *Prajñāpāramitā* notion of 'emptiness', non-duality, Buddha nature, identification with the universe, 'original mind' and an enchanted view of mundane reality. Also, the practical principles of non-striving, non-judging and transcending the 'thinking mind' are emphasised.

In Sahn's view, Sōn practice must avoid all goal-oriented motivation, as 'the idea that you want to achieve something in Zen meditation is basically selfish' (Sahn [1976] 1994, 91). 'Wanting enlightenment' enforces dualistic thinking and a sense of ego, and thus it obscures the underlying sense of unity with the universe:

But be very careful about wanting enlightenment. This is a bad Zen sickness. When you keep a clear mind, the whole universe is you, you are the universe. So you have already attained enlightenment. Wanting enlightenment is only thinking. It is something extra, like painting legs on the picture of a snake. Already the snake is complete as it is. Already the truth is right before your eyes. (Sahn [1976] 1994, 15; see also 91–92, 95)

The emphasis on ‘non-judging’ stems from the same ideal of keeping ‘clear mind’ and recognising the underlying unity of existence. Following the characteristic features of non-dual Buddhist approaches, Sahn considers evaluations and judgements to be rooted in dualistic thinking. They obscure the mirror-like awareness, which sees things ‘as they are’:

If you cut off thinking, all opposites disappear. This is the Absolute. So there is no good and no bad, no dark and no light, no cold and no hot. But before thinking, there are no words and no speech So in true emptiness before thinking, you only keep a clear mind. All things are just as they are. It is like a clear mirror. Red comes and the mirror is red; white comes and the mirror is white. (Sahn [1976] 1994, 210)

In addition to the principles of ‘non-striving’ and ‘non-judging’, the notions of ‘thinking mind’ and ‘original mind’ show Kabat-Zinn’s direct influence from Seung Sahn. In Sahn’s teaching, the discursive ‘thinking mind’ is the source of dualistic views plagued by desire, anger and ignorance, which are the root causes of suffering. Beneath the thinking mind, there is the emptiness of the ‘clear mind’, ‘original mind’, ‘don’t know mind’ or ‘beginner’s mind’, which represents one’s ‘true self’ and the universal Buddha nature of all existence (Sahn [1976] 1994, 14–15, 18–19, 24, 30–31, 67, 93, 119–120, 156):

[T]he Sutra says, ‘Form is emptiness, emptiness is form’. So all names and all forms are emptiness The Sutra says, ‘All beings are already Buddha’. ... But we don’t know ourselves. Desire, anger, and ignorance cover up our clear mind. If we cut off all thinking and return to empty mind, then your mind, my mind, and all people’s minds are the same. We become one with the whole universe. (Sahn [1976] 1994, 30–31)

Like Kabat-Zinn, Sahn emphasises awakening into an enchanted view of everyday reality, instead of escaping it into some transcendental realm. Here, a direct experience of emptiness and non-duality represents a ‘first enlightenment’, but not a complete one. Whereas the basic state of ignorance is characterised by ‘attachment to name and form’, a one-sided non-dual view indicates ‘attachment to emptiness’ (Sahn [1976] 1994, 6, 67, 194). In complete enlightenment, everything is seen as an expression of Buddha nature, and things are both same and different – and neither – at the same time, because the reality of things transcends all binary concepts (Sahn [1976] 1994, 13). As in Kabat-Zinn’s commentary on *The Heart Sutra*, this final stage of realisation is captured in the expression ‘form is form,

emptiness is emptiness' (Sahn [1976] 1994, xxii, 18, 27, 47, 69, 151). Here, all reality may be experienced as a manifestation of one universal Buddha nature, which is perfect 'just like this'. In activity, this realisation is embodied as complete oneness and immersion with the experience of the present moment:

If you are thinking, your mind wanders away from your action, and the flow of your painting or writing will be blocked, your tea-ceremony will be stiff or clumsy. If you are not thinking, you are one with your action. You are the tea that you're drinking. You are the brush that you're painting with. Not-thinking is before thinking. You are the whole universe; the universe is you. This is Zen mind, absolute mind. It is beyond space and time, beyond the dualities of self and other, good and bad, life and death. The truth is just like this. So when a Zen person is painting, the whole universe is present in the tip of his brush. (Sahn [1976] 1994, 119–120)

In this enchanted and world-affirming view of existence, 'The sounds of rivers and birds are the sutras; earth and sky are the very body of the Buddha' (Sahn [1976] 1994, 104). This and many other elements in Seung Sahn's teaching represent general themes in East Asian Buddhism deriving from the Chinese Chán tradition.²⁹ Thus, the characteristic Mahāyāna aspects of Kabat-Zinn's dharma understanding can also be traced to direct influences from the Zen/Thiền teachings of Shunryū Suzuki, Philip Kapleau and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Contemporary Zen and Thiền influences

As discussed in an earlier paper (Husgafvel 2016), contemporary non-dual Zen/Thiền/Sōn teachings often show deep appreciation for mundane reality and everyday life. Shunryū Suzuki teaches that 'everything is Buddha nature' and 'mountains, trees, flowing water, flowers, and plants – everything as it is – is the way Buddha is' (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 131). For Kapleau, 'the world is one interdependent Whole' and this 'world of Perfection' is 'no different from that in which we eat and excrete, laugh and weep' (Kapleau [1965] 1972, 64). According to Thich Nhat Hanh, 'the impermanent, selfless, and interdependent nature of all that is doesn't lead us to feel aversion for life', but 'helps us see the preciousness of all that lives' (Nhat Hanh [1990] 2006, 56). In these views, which are echoed in Kabat-Zinn's writings, the impermanence of things is part of their perfect Buddha nature, and suffering is only caused by ignorance, attachment and one's 'non-acceptance' of the truth of impermanence (Nhat Hanh [1990] 2006, 57–58; Suzuki [1970] 1973, 32, 131).

In Shunryū Suzuki's teaching, the attitude of 'non-striving', which later forms an important principle of MBSR practice, is especially dominant. For Suzuki, the most important thing in Zen practice is not to have any 'gaining ideas' or expectations of outcomes (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 41). Goal-orientation

represents a major obstacle for practice, because it maintains dualistic, self-centred views and value judgements belonging to the 'small self'³⁰ (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 29, 41, 59–60, 71–72). These obscure one's true 'universal nature, or Buddha nature' (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 29, 47). In Suzuki's Soto teaching, Zen practice is not about achieving anything, but rather a direct embodiment and expression of one's true nature by being fully awake and aware in the present moment:

Just keeping the right posture and being concentrated on sitting is how we express the universal nature. Then we become Buddha, and we express Buddha nature. So instead of having some object of worship, we just concentrate on the activity which we do in each moment. When you bow, you should just bow; when you sit, you should just sit; when you eat, you should just eat. If you do this, the universal nature is there. (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 75–76)

Like Seung Sahn and Kabat-Zinn, Suzuki teaches that 'emptiness', 'beginner's mind', 'original mind', 'Buddha nature' and 'essence of mind' are all different names for the true nature of beings beneath the thinking mind (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 21–22, 37, 128–130). This essence of mind is described as 'boundless' and 'compassionate', and by keeping it 'the precepts will keep themselves' (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 21–22). As further similarities, Suzuki grounds his teaching in the notions of interdependence and appreciation of everyday life:

Each existence depends on something else. Strictly speaking, there are no separate individual existences. There are just many names for one existence. Sometimes people put stress on oneness, but this is not our understanding. ... Oneness is valuable, but variety is also wonderful. Ignoring variety, people emphasise the one absolute existence, but this is a one-sided understanding. In this understanding there is a gap between variety and oneness. But oneness and variety are the same thing, so oneness should be appreciated in each existence. That is why we emphasise everyday life rather than some particular state of mind. We should find the reality in each moment, and in each phenomenon. (Suzuki [1970] 1973, 119)

In Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching, interconnectedness and interdependence are foundational, as 'the great body of reality is indivisible' (Nhat Hanh [1975] 1987, 47). For him, a 'student of Buddhism who doesn't practise the mindful observation of interdependence hasn't yet arrived at the quintessence of the Buddhist path' (Nhat Hanh [1990] 2006, 99). Like Kabat-Zinn, he uses the image of 'Indra's jewelled net' to illustrate 'the infinite variety of interactions and intersections of all things' (Nhat Hanh 1988, 68). Thich Nhat Hahn is also among the foremost contemporary Buddhist teachers to underline interconnectedness and interdependence as the ethical foundation for socially and ecologically engaged Buddhism (King 2009).

According to Nhat Hanh, the aim of meditation practice is to see ‘that your own life and the life of the universe are one’ (Nhat Hanh [1975] 1987, 48). Here, as in Kabat-Zinn’s texts, the separate sense of self is an illusion grounded in conceptual thinking, whereas ‘true mind’ or universal Buddha nature is our ‘real self’ and a source of both understanding and compassion (Nhat Hanh [1987] 2005, 88). This ‘pure one-ness’ can be experienced directly in the non-dual awareness of a calm mind:

Once you are able to quiet your mind, once your feelings and thoughts no longer disturb you, at that point your mind will begin to dwell in mind. Your mind will take hold of mind in a direct and wondrous way which no longer differentiates between subject and object Drinking a cup of tea becomes a direct and wondrous experience in which the distinction between subject and object no longer exists. ... When mind has taken hold of mind, deluded mind becomes true mind. True mind is our real self, is the Buddha: the pure one-ness which cannot be cut up by the illusory divisions of separate selves, created by concepts and language. (Nhat Hanh [1975] 1987, 42)

For Thich Nhat Hanh, the ‘mindful observation’ of things is a way to ‘bring out the light which exists in true mind, so that life can be revealed in its reality’ (Nhat Hanh [1990] 2006, 122). This is an example of a contemporary Mahāyāna conception, which does not follow orthodox Theravāda or early Abhidharma teachings, but comes close to Kabat-Zinn’s notions of mindfulness, as a compassionate, knowing quality of awareness, which reveals ‘the natural radiance of our very nature’.

Tibetan Dzogchen teachings of Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche

The Sōn/Zen/Thiền teachings of Seung Sahn, Philip Kapleau, Shunryū Suzuki and Thich Nhat Hanh influenced Kabat-Zinn’s work already in the 1970s. Thus, they can be considered formative sources in the development of the MBSR programme. Tibetan Buddhist influences, such as Chögyam Trungpa’s book *Meditation in Action* (1969) (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 289; Husgafvel 2016, 103), were also present from early on, but only after Kabat-Zinn’s more recent personal practice with the Dzogchen teachers Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (from the Tibetan Kagyü and Nyingma schools) did the impact of Vajrayāna teachings become more explicit in his work:

Interviewer: When did you start to practise Dzogchen and with Tibetan teachers [in general]?

Kabat-Zinn: Well, very early on, because I read *Meditation in Action*, which was Chögyam Trungpa’s book. I read it on top of Half Dome in Yosemite in 1970 when it first came out and it ... was mind-blowing. I was never a student of Trungpa’s, although I met him and I watched him lecture ..., but his books were extraordinary. ... What he was teaching had as strong effect on me as

everything else. ... I think in 2000 and 2001, I sat my first Dzogchen retreat with Tsoknyi Rinpoche and then I sat a number of retreats with ... his older brother, Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, or the half-brother. ... The Tibetan thing, the way I thought about it when I started MBSR, is way too complicated: too much iconography, too much complex language, too much everything ... But once I started training with some of these teachers and actually just hanging out more with Tibetans in the Mind and Life community, I realised that it was a slightly different way of articulating what felt to me like very much the same thing, especially the Dzogchen perspective. (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

The presence of Tibetan influences is evident in the reoccurring references to 'Tibetan' views in *Coming to Our Senses* (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 81, 100, 170, 183, 262, 279–80, 320, 464). However, due to the many similarities between Chán and Dzogchen approaches to meditation (Van Schaik 2012; Sharf 2015), it is not always easy to distinguish particular Tibetan teachings in more detail. However, Kabat-Zinn himself identifies a certain use of terminology and the pronounced emphasis on pure awareness as a signature Tibetan impact in his work:

Interviewer: So this [practice with the Tibetan Dzogchen teachers] changed a bit the way you...?

Kabat-Zinn: The language. The way I language'd it. And it helped me to see something that I think was very, very important, that I hope people teaching MBSR emphasise from the class one. And that is – and I did not at first but then... it got clearer to me – that it is never about the objects of the attention, it's about the attending. So, more of an emphasis on pure awareness as opposed to the objects, breathing or sensations in the body with the body-scan. It is a very, very subtle shift, because the objects are still the objects. You're still attending. But you don't get caught in a narrative about breathing, for instance, or a narrative about anything. (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

My study of Tsoknyi and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche's teachings and Kabat-Zinn's texts confirms this view of the Dzogchen impact. As an example of shared language and terminology, many characteristic attributes of pure awareness in Kabat-Zinn's later work (such as *Coming to Our Senses*; see earlier discussion on the nature of awareness) come directly from Dzogchen teachers.

Interviewer: I get an impression that the teaching of a 'Buddha nature', that the profound quality of awareness, is itself compassionate, wise, and kind...

Kabat-Zinn: Exactly. There is no separation between awareness and compassion, and that is a Dzogchen teaching, by the way. I mean, they all say: 'Empty essence, cognitive by nature, infinite capacity'. The infinite capacity is compassion. It embraces everything with kindness.

Interviewer: Do you think this Mahāyāna teaching is important in the way MBSR – or mindfulness – is [taught and practised]?

Kabat-Zinn: No, it is not important, it is essential. It is absolutely essential. (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)

In Dzogchen practice, the ‘essence’, ‘nature’ and ‘capacity’ of pure awareness are linked to the three bodies (S. *trikāya*) of the primordial cosmic Buddha, which forms the unifying ground of all existence (see Williams 2009, 179–184; *Ratnagotravibhāga*, in Conze et al. [1954] 1964, 216–217). As Tsoknyi Rinpoche explains,

Our buddha nature – our ground composed of essence, nature, and capacity – is in fact the actuality of the three kayas. Specifically, the empty essence is *dharmakaya* [‘dharma-body’], the cognizant nature is *sambhogakaya* [‘enjoyment-body’], and the unconfined capacity is *nirmanakaya* [‘emanation-body’]. This indivisible unity of the three kayas is already present in a very real way as our basic nature. (Schmidt and Tsoknyi Rinpoche 2004, 14; see also Tsoknyi 1998, 23–24, 37–38, Chökyi Nyima 2002, 46–47, 111)

From the perspective of Dzogchen, ‘Buddha nature’, or the ‘primordial Buddha Samantabhadra’, represents a ‘self-existing wakefulness that is empty and cognizant’ (Chökyi Nyima 2002, 111). Usually, this ‘mind itself’ (Tib. *sems nyid*)³¹ is covered by the confusion, dualism and conceptual thinking of the ‘ordinary mind’ (Tib. *sems*), but through practice its ‘threefold identity’ may be realised in ‘non-dual awareness’ (Tib. *rig pa*) (Chökyi Nyima 2002, 118–119, 188, Tsoknyi 1998, 46). In the Dzogchen view, this realisation forms the key insight of Buddhist *vipassanā* (S. *vipaśyanā*) practice, which is ‘simply letting the mind be in equanimity, free of forming concepts, in thought-free wakefulness’ (Chökyi Nyima 2002, 39, 116). In this form of insight meditation (which is clearly different from that presented in Theravāda-based accounts), all forms of judgement and conceptual thinking must be transcended:

[I]n Dzogchen, the main practice is to separate dualistic mind and rigpa. Dualistic mind means the state of being involved in the three spheres of concept: subject, object, and action. Dualistic mind continually judges and analyses Rigpa, on the other hand, is not caught up in judging. It is wide open. The identity of rigpa, the moment of rigpa, is free from both coarse and subtle judging. (Chökyi Nyima 2002, 118–119)

Each moment of realisation, or *rigpa*, is a ‘small liberation’, in which one is free from clinging, ‘dualistic fixations’, and ‘all types of disturbing emotions and thoughts’. These small liberations, while being short term in the early stages of practice, form the basis for ‘vast liberation’, the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice and the Bodhisattva path (Chökyi Nyima 2002, 105–108, 114).

This analysis shows that Kabat-Zinn’s views have many similarities with Dzogchen teachings. Besides the characteristic terminology, the emphasis on non-dual awareness and the foundational notion of a universal Buddha nature, this is evident in the practical principles and goals of meditation

practice. The connections are explicit and clear, even if ontological assumptions regarding the nature of mind and reality may differ in Kabat-Zinn's texts. Thus, the Tibetan Dzogchen tradition, as expressed in the teachings of Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, represent another significant, though later, source of Buddhist influences on Kabat-Zinn's work on MBSR practice, alongside contemporary Sön/Zen/Thiền teachers and Theravāda-based *vipassanā* lineages.

The theoretical and practical similarities of Kabat-Zinn's contemporary Mahāyāna influences point towards shared doctrinal foundations in the history of Buddhist thought. By identifying some philosophical developments within Indian and East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, which have significantly contributed to non-dual Buddhist approaches and Kabat-Zinn's dharma understanding, it is possible to construct a more comprehensive picture of the Buddhist roots of the MBSR programme and contemporary mindfulness practice.

The doctrinal foundations of non-dual approaches in Indian and East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism

The fundamental teaching of 'emptiness' is rooted in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, the philosophy of Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 CE), and the related Mādhyamaka school. This 'second turning of the Wheel of Dharma' and the authority of *Prajñāpāramitā* texts is emphasised by all of the contemporary Zen/Sön/Thiền and Tibetan teachers influential for Kabat-Zinn, and it forms the philosophical foundation for all forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism, even if exact interpretations may vary considerably (Williams 2009; Conze [1960] 1978). In the Indian Yogācāra school (from the fourth century CE), Mādhyamaka ideas on emptiness were contrasted with ontologically positive notions of emptiness as absolute reality and the self-existing ground of being (S. *dharmadhātu*) or 'suchness' (S. *tathatā*), associated with a non-dual, luminous and non-conceptual flow of consciousness. Accordingly, 'seeing things as they are' implied a conscious, non-dual state of experience,³² while subject-object dualism (S. *grāhyagrāhakadvaya*) was seen as entailing a subtle form of ignorance. As part of these insights, new concepts were formed, such as 'non-conceptual knowing' (S. *nirvikalpajñāna*), 'direct perception' (S. *pratyakṣajñāna*), and 'reflexive awareness' (S. *svasaṃvitti*). These doctrinal developments form the early theoretical basis for all subsequent non-dual approaches to Buddhist meditation in Northern India, East Asia and Tibet (Dunne 2011, 2015; Sharf 2015; Williams 2009, 84–102; see also Anālayo 2017; Broughton 2009; Van Schaik 2004).³³

The notion of 'Buddha nature' is a shared characteristic of most non-dual Buddhist approaches and a key feature in the texts of all Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna teachers influential to Kabat-Zinn, even if the exact interpretations

may vary. The early canonical Mahāyāna sources (by the fifth century CE) for this teaching are found in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa mahāsūtra*, *Śrīmālādevīśimhanādasūtra* and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, as well as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Williams 2009, 103–109; King 1991; Radich 2015; Zimmermann 2002). Especially in the *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* and *Śrīmālādevīśimhanādasūtra*, Buddha nature represents the permanent (S. *nitya*), blissful (S. *sukha*) and pure (S. *śuddha*) true self (S. *ātman*) of all beings, which is identified with ‘intrinsically pure, radiant consciousness’, as described in Yogācāra discussions on the ultimate nature of reality. This radical shift epitomises the complete inversion of Theravāda and early ‘mainstream’ Buddhist teachings on the characteristic marks of existence and the nature of self (Gregory 1986, 6–8; Jones 2016; Radich 2015; Williams 2009, 103–128; Zapart 2017). The fact that the *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* is quoted by each of the contemporary Sōn/Zen/Thiền teachers influential for Kabat-Zinn underlines its significance as an early Mahāyāna source for their shared notions of Buddha nature and ‘true self’ (Kapleau [1965] 1972, 73, 341; Nhat Hanh 1974, 78; Sahn [1976] 1994, 72, 150; Suzuki [1970] 1973, 48). The ‘cosmological theory’ of Buddha nature as the ground of all reality is expanded further in the Chinese *sūtra* *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (Ch. *Dàshéng Qìxín Lùn*; fifth century CE), which is foundational for distinctly Chinese and East Asian ‘world-affirming’ forms of Buddhism in Huáyán (‘Flower Garland’) and Chán schools (Hsieh 2004; Tokuno 2004; Williams 2009, 116–119). According to Hsieh (2004, 38–39), it ‘explains how ordinary, deluded beings can attain enlightenment without renouncing this worldly life’, ‘affirms the sanctity of life in this world’, and ‘provides an ontological basis for the Chán school’s doctrine of “seeing one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood”’.

The vast *Avatamsakasūtra* and its final book, the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, represent a *locus classicus* for the Buddhist ‘non-dual cosmology’ of interconnect-edness and all-pervading Buddhahood, which comprises both sentient beings and inanimate nature (Cleary 1983, 1993; McMahan 2008, 158–160). Together with the commentaries of the related Huáyán School, it holds great authority within the Chinese Chán tradition and East Asian Buddhism in general (Broughton 2009; Cleary 1983, 11, 17–18; Cook 1983; Williams 2009, 129–143). The writings of Fazang (643–712) and other Huáyán masters are among the most important Mahāyāna sources to remove ‘the other-worldly, utterly transcendent connotations that had hitherto clung to enlightenment and nirvāṇa’ and replace these with ‘demystified’ and ‘humanised’ notions of awakening (Cook 1983, 23). Huáyán sources are also foundational for contemporary Buddhist notions which emphasise one’s identification with the cosmos as a whole (McMahan 2008, 158–160). As an obvious indication of a historical transmission of ideas, we can notice the image of ‘Indra’s jewelled net’ (mentioned by both Thich Nhat Hanh and Kabat-Zinn), which is a famous Huáyán metaphor for the interconnection and interpenetration of the universe (or rather

multiverse) (Cleary 1983, 1993). The historical significance of the *Avatamsakasūtra* in the study of contemporary mindfulness is further supported by its authoritative status for Seung Sahn, Philip Kapleau and Thich Nhat Hanh (Kapleau [1965] 1972, 28–29; Nhat Hanh 1988, 64–65, 78–79; Sahn [1976] 1994, 72, 156) and the specific role of the Huáyán School as the philosophical foundation of the Korean Sŏn tradition, in which Kabat-Zinn practised with Seung Sahn as a ‘Dharma teacher in training’ (Buswell 1992; Chinul and Buswell 1983).

The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (Ch. *Liùzū Tánjīng*; c. 780) represents another root text of Korean Sŏn and the modern Chogye order due to its great significance for Chinul, the ‘founder of the native Korean Zen tradition’ (Chinul and Buswell 1983, ix, 23–24, 90 n. 180). This ‘greatest masterpiece’ of early Chán Buddhism (McRae 2003, 60), which depicts the life and teachings of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, is explicitly mentioned by Kabat-Zinn as a source for his ‘non-instrumental’ views on meditation practice. The text itself is open to many interpretations, but general features include the emphasis on non-duality, the ‘sudden’ approach to awakening, purity of the ‘original mind’, universal Buddha nature, and legitimization of lay practice (Gregory 2012; McRae 2003, 60–67; Yampolsky and Huineng 1967). On the basis of *The Platform Sutra*, Huáyán teachings and the writings of Huáyán/Chán master Guifeng Zongmi (780–841), Chinul established a ‘distinctively Korean style of Sŏn practice’, which combines the idea of an initial ‘sudden’ awakening to one’s unconditioned ‘mind-nature’ with a ‘gradual’ cultivation of alertness, calmness and wisdom (Chinul and Buswell 1983, 23, 61–71; Broughton 2009, 59; Buswell 1992, 39–58). I find Chinul’s view an interesting early historical predecessor for the combination of ‘sudden’ and ‘gradual’ elements found in Kabat-Zinn’s work. A more explicit indication of the historical relevance of Chinul’s teachings (Chinul and Buswell 1991) is their inclusion in the suggested further reading list on ‘mindfulness meditation’ in Kabat-Zinn’s *Coming to Our Senses*, which also includes two quotes from Chinul’s texts on the topics of ‘original mind’ and Buddha nature:

What is capable of seeing, hearing, moving, acting has to be your original mind. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 187; Chinul and Buswell 1983, 146)

Although we know that a frozen pond is entirely water, the sun’s heat is necessary to melt it. Although we awaken to the fact that an ordinary person is Buddha, the power of dharma is necessary to make it permeate our cultivation. When the pond has melted, the water flows freely and can be used for irrigation and cleaning. (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 461; Chinul and Buswell 1983, 102, 143)³⁴

Considering both the well-established channel of historical influence and the similarities in content and terminology, I argue that *The Platform Sutra*

and Chinul's teachings should be included in any list of early historical Buddhist sources which have contributed to Kabat-Zinn's dharma understanding and vision of mindfulness practice.

Finally, this overview would not be complete without discussing Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the founder of the Japanese Soto Zen School. From early on, Kabat-Zinn underlines 'Soto Zen practice' as the root of 'mindfulness meditation' and emphasises the connections to the Soto practice of 'just sitting' (*J. shikan taza*) (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 34, 2005, 262). Historically, the principal Soto influences on Kabat-Zinn come from the contemporary Soto master Shunryū Suzuki and from Philip Kapleau, whose Sanbōkyōdan lineage combines teachings from the Soto and Rinzai schools of Zen Buddhism (Husgafvel 2016, 102–103; Kabat-Zinn 1982, 34, 46 n. 8). Kabat-Zinn's book *Wherever You Go, There You Are* also includes one direct quote by Dōgen: 'Midnight. No waves, no wind, the empty boat is flooded with moonlight' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 232; see also Mitchell [1989] 1993, 49).

For Dōgen, the practice of *zazen* meditation 'was not simply an important aid to, nor even a necessary condition for, enlightenment and liberation; it was in itself sufficient: it was enough, as he said, "just to sit" (*shikan taza*), without resort to the myriad subsidiary exercises of Buddhist spiritual life' (Bielefeldt 1988, 2).³⁵ This ideal questions those views that insist that 'authentic' Buddhist practice always focuses on a variety of ritual and devotional elements besides meditation. Similar to Kabat-Zinn, Dōgen's practical instructions on meditation emphasise non-judging, non-striving, non-conceptual awareness, and the simple act of noticing and letting go of thoughts (or 'wishes'):

Free yourself from all attachments, and bring to rest the ten thousand things. Think of neither good nor evil and judge not right or wrong. Maintain the flow of mind, of will, and of consciousness; bring to an end all desires, all concepts and judgments. Do not think about how to become a Buddha If a wish arises, take note of it and then dismiss it. In practising thus persistently you will forget all attachments and concentration will come of itself. That is the art of *zazen*. *Zazen* is the Dharma gate of great rest and joy. (*Fukanzazengi*, in Dumoulin [1959] 1963, 161)

These principles are based on Dōgen's notion of the universal Buddha nature and the non-separation between everyday practice and awakening in his radically 'demythologised' view of enlightenment, which is 'stripped of the mystical-transcendental, the supernatural, the extraordinary' (Cook 1983, 24–28; Dumoulin [1959] 1963, 159–170; Bielefeldt 1988). Paul Williams summarises this as follows:

Enlightenment for Dōgen is (as for all Buddhists) seeing things the way they really are. Since all things and all times are the Buddha nature, Dōgen's

enlightenment is seeing perfectly as it is the present moment 'a profound at-one-ness with the event at hand, in total openness to its wonder and perfection as manifesting absolute reality' (Cook 1983, 24–25). It is as simple as that. (Williams 2009, 122, citation in original)

Here, nothing is seen as 'less worthy or holy than some other aspect of life ... nor as defiled, nor as mere "things", but, rather, as complete and perfect just as they are, which is Buddha' (Cook 1983, 24). Rather than being a permanent state, enlightenment may be seen as a process of 'moment to moment' realisations, in which 'the at-one-ness or immediate experience must be repeated over and over as each new event occurs, and consequently there can never be an end to practice as a conscious commitment to realisation' (Cook 1983, 25). According to Cook (1983, 28), this notion of enlightenment reassures both monks and lay practitioners of their 'innate dignity and perfection' and makes it possible to connect the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice to the 'mundane structures and demands of daily life'. With their emphasis on non-dualism, present-moment awareness, 'enlightened moments', naturalistic framing and the validation of everyday life, Dōgen's views on the 'ultimate goals' of meditation practice are strikingly similar to many key characteristics of Kabat-Zinn's dharma understanding.

This brief examination of Mahāyāna teachings is unavoidably simple and general, especially considering the vast amount of literature and number of philosophical discussions within the traditions of Indian, Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism, as well as the detailed debates within each particular school and practice lineage (see Broughton 2009; Harvey 2013; McRae 2003; Williams 2009). Nevertheless, it is enough to show that the specific views on meditation practice and the nature of reality shared by Kabat-Zinn and his contemporary Sōn/Zen/Thiền and Tibetan teachers are based on canonical sources and a long history of doctrinal developments within Mahāyāna Buddhism.³⁶

Conclusion

For Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness practice is anything but a de-ethicised 'quick fix' serving self-centred individualistic interests. Instead, an eight-week MBSR course represents the starting point for a life-long existential path towards personal transformation and the collective flourishing of humankind. As a 'way of being', MBSR is based on a 'universal dharma foundation' and pan-Buddhist teachings on the origins and cessation of suffering. While its practice methods derive from both Theravāda-based *vipassanā* and non-dual Mahāyāna approaches, the philosophical foundation of MBSR differs significantly from Theravāda views. In Kabat-Zinn's

texts, the principles of practice, main insights and ethics of MBSR are grounded in characteristically Mahāyāna notions of emptiness, interconnectedness, non-duality, universal Buddha nature and the spacious, knowing and compassionate essence of mind. These elements of MBSR indicate significant similarities and historical continuities with contemporary Sōn/Zen/Thiền and Tibetan Dzogchen teachings based on the canonical texts and philosophical schools of Indian and East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The conclusions of this study must be carefully contextualised in order to avoid misleading generalisations. While Kabat-Zinn's work is informed by many philosophical and practical elements from Buddhist teachings, none of these can be taken as characteristic features of 'contemporary mindfulness' or the 'mindfulness movement' in general. Instead, each mindfulness-based approach is unique in its methods, aims, vocabulary and historical background. Already, the closely related mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) displays a different configuration and emphasis of ideas (see Gilpin 2008). Based on my preliminary understanding from texts, discussions and teacher training retreats, the notion of 'non-duality' between the subject and object of attention, for example, seems to be absent in MBCT contexts, while many other aspects of practice are shared with the MBSR programme.

Another remark concerns the characteristics of the MBSR programme itself. My analysis is based on a selective, mainly textual representation of MBSR practice as envisioned by its founder. In many ways, this representation is an idealisation, which is likely to differ from the lived experiences and motivations of MBSR practitioners, similar to the way that authoritative Buddhist texts differ from lived Buddhism (see Dunne 2015; Sharf 1995). Thus, finding relief from headaches or work-oriented stress is as valid (and probable) motivation for MBSR practice as seeking liberation from greed, hatred and ignorance. In the end, each practitioner frames the meaning of mindfulness practice according to his or her individual needs, goals and beliefs. In this framing, the institutional and social context of practice plays a significant role. Clinical, educational, commercial, corporate and socially engaged applications of MBSR now co-exist side by side, and in each context, the practice is embedded in different ethical and professional guidelines, social norms and context-sensitive objectives. Thus, a comprehensive picture of the MBSR programme as a unique contemporary tradition of meditation practice is only possible through the combination of textual, historical, ethnographic and social scientific research perspectives.

There is also much more to Buddhist traditions than the ideas and practices examined here. Many common aspects of Buddhist thought are completely absent in Kabat-Zinn's work on MBSR. These include, for

example, the notions of rebirth, an ethically determined law of cause and effect (S. *karma*, P. *kamma*),³⁷ numinous (or 'counter-intuitive') agents and abilities, devotional and magical practices, the Buddha as belonging to a separate ontological category of beings, the non-negotiable authority of Buddhist textual canons, and the institutional importance given to the community of Buddhist practitioners (S. *saṃgha*, P. *saṅgha*).³⁸ Thus, Kabat-Zinn's 'universal dharma understanding' represents a highly selective filtering and adaptation of Buddhist ideas, which seeks a delicate balance between Buddhist insights and scientific/rational thought. As such, however, it does not represent an exclusively 'Western' or 'secular' development but continues the 'demythologisation', 'detraditionalisation' and 'psychologisation' of Buddhist teachings which have been characteristic of Buddhist modernism since the late nineteenth century (Braun 2013; McMahan 2008; Sharf 1995).

If the theory and methods of Buddhist meditation did in fact remain unchanged through history, the choice of Buddhist sources would not be such a critical issue in the research on MBSR and contemporary mindfulness. However, since the variety of teachings over time is enormous, this choice plays a crucial role in all historical comparisons. With the exclusive use of canonical Pāli texts and Theravāda authorities, many principles and insights of MBSR training may seem very different from 'authentic forms' of Buddhist practice. However, when contemporary Sōn/Zen/Thiền and Tibetan Dzogchen teachings are recognised as well-established Buddhist points of comparison, the picture changes significantly and MBSR practice appears to be closely aligned with these non-dual Mahāyāna approaches to Buddhist meditation. This shows the distortive effects of focusing exclusively on Theravāda-based accounts and the necessity of studying Buddhist sources beyond the Pāli canon and early Abhidharma texts in attempts to understand the complex Buddhist roots of the MBSR programme and related forms of contemporary mindfulness practice.

Notes

1. I want to thank Professors Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ulrich Pagel, Teemu Taira, and Terhi Utriainen for their valuable comments on the manuscript and Dr Albion Butters for going beyond the call of duty in the language revision.
2. See also the notion of 'secular mindful religion' in Wilson (2014, 185).
3. In Kabat-Zinn's vocabulary, the Sanskrit word *dharma* is generally spelled with a lower-case 'd' in order 'to recognise the universal character and applicability of the dharma', except in 'those very specific circumstances where it signifies the traditional Buddhist teachings within an explicitly Buddhist context' (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 300 n. 1).

4. Still, the term is used in the preface by Thich Nhat Hanh, which Kabat-Zinn included in the book after careful consideration (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, xiii, 2011, 282–283; author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017).
5. For early canonical Buddhist formulations, see the *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN56:11, in Bodhi 2000, 1843–1847) and *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN141, in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2009, 1097–1101).
6. Purser's three-fold typology (suffering of pain, suffering of change, and suffering of conditions) may be traced back to the *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN38:14, in Bodhi 2000, 1299) and orthodox Theravāda commentaries, such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (5th century CE) (Vsm16:33–35, in Ñāṇamoli 2010, 510–511).
7. For similar early canonical views, see the *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN 4:13, 36:4, 36:6, in Bodhi 2000, 203–204, 1262–1265).
8. There are several descriptions for the root causes of 'dukkha' in the early *Nikāyas*. In the context of the Four Noble Truths, suffering is derived from 'thirst' (P. *taṇhā*, S. *trṣṇā*), which refers to craving, grasping, and clinging (SN56:11, in Bodhi 2000, 1843–1847; MN141, in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2009, 1097–1101). In the 12-fold chain of dependent origination (P. *paticca-samuppāda*, S. *pratitya-samutpāda*), the ultimate root cause of suffering is ignorance (P. *avijjā*, S. *avidyā*) (SN12:1, in Bodhi 2000, 533). In the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta*, the fires of greed (or attachment) (*rāga/lobha*), aversion (P. *dosa*, S. *dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*) represent the 'three unwholesome roots' (P. *akusala-mūla*) or 'three poisons' (S. *triviṣa*) leading to suffering (SN35:28, in Bodhi 2000, 1143). The ultimate goal of Buddhist paths is often defined as the cessation or 'blowing out' (P. *nibbāna*, S. *nirvāna*) of these three root afflictions (Gombrich [1996] 2006, 65–66).
9. *The Diamond Sutra* (S. *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*) represents a concise version of the canonical Mahāyāna *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in the larger corpus of Perfection of Wisdom literature (Conze [1973] 1975, xi; Lopez 1988, 5).
10. 'Uncoupling' refers to the ability to differentiate between sense experiences and related mental reactions (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 385). 'Decentering' is the ability to observe one's thoughts and feelings about reality without confusing them with the actual reality of things (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 432–433).
11. Originally, MBSR was called the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Programme (SR&RP) and taught as a 10-week programme of weekly two-hour sessions (Kabat-Zinn 1982).
12. In fact, Kabat-Zinn hesitated before including loving-kindness practice in the MBSR programme because it differs so much from the core methods (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 285–286).
13. As non-Buddhist historical sources for Kabat-Zinn's notions of non-duality, these contemporary Advaita Vedānta teachers represent an interesting topic of further research.
14. *The Heart Sutra* (composed c. 350–550 CE) is a condensed version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*) in the larger corpus of Perfection of Wisdom literature (Conze [1973] 1975; Lopez 1988).
15. While these contemporary Buddhist approaches share the aim of 'seeing things as they are', there are significant differences in their underlying assumptions concerning 'liberative insights' and the ultimate nature of reality (see Husgafvel 2016).

16. To my knowledge, the saying 'Nothing is to be clung to as "I", "me", or "mine"' is not a translation of any exact passage in early canonical Buddhist texts, but a paraphrasing of Buddha's core teachings found in many contemporary sources (see e.g. Buddhādāsa 1994, 29).
17. This quote was published in *The New York Times* on 29 March 1972, but it may actually be a combination of two separate passages. In confirmed sources, the first two sentences appear in a different context (Einstein and Calaprice 2011, 339–340).
18. For a similar view, see astrophysicist Carl Sagan (1980, 345), 'For we are the local embodiment of a Cosmos grown to self-awareness. We have begun to contemplate our origins: starstuff pondering the stars; organised assemblages of ten billion billion billion atoms considering the evolution of atoms; tracing the long journey by which, here at least, consciousness arose. Our loyalties are to the species and the planet. We speak for Earth. Our obligation to survive is owed not just to ourselves but also to that Cosmos, ancient and vast, from which we spring'.
19. 'Boundlessness' may also be understood as 'infinite capacity' and 'compassion' (author's interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1 July 2017)
20. Along with compassion (*karuṇā*) and equanimity (P. *upekkhā*, S. *upeksā*), these comprise the 'Four Immeasurables' (P. *appamañña*, S. *apramāṇa*) or 'divine abidings' (*brahmavihārā*), which represent the foundational Buddhist virtues (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 287; Gethin 1998, 186–187).
21. *Tathāgatagarbha* translates literally as the 'embryo (alternatively, "matrix" or "gene") of the Thus-Gone One'. On the terminology, see e.g. S. B. King (1991, 3–5).
22. Vietnamese Thiền teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2005, 431, [1994] 2005, 145, 2005, 70, 138, 199, 578); Korean Sōn teachers Seung Sahn and Chinul (1158–1210) (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 41, 62, 174, 187, 447, 461–464, 494–495, 503, 526, 2017, 1125); Tibetan teachers (Gelug) Tenzin Gyatso the 14th Dalai Lama (1935–) and (Kagyū) Kalu Rinpoche (1905–1989) (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 49, 168, 2003, 150, 2005, 183, 520–521); Japanese Soto Zen teachers Shunryū Suzuki, Dōgen (1200–1253), and Ryōkan (1758–1831) (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 110, 232, 2005, 85, 92, 480, 517–518); Chinese Chán masters Sengcan, Dongshan (807–869) and Wumen Huikai (1183–1260) (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 16, 2005, 272, 468); American Zen teachers (Sanbōkyōdan) Philip Kapleau and (Ordinary Mind Zen School) Joko Beck (1917–2011) (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 174, 491–492).
23. German Theravāda monk Nyanaponika Thera (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, 108–110); IMS teachers Joseph Goldstein (1940–) and Larry Rosenberg (1932–) (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 109).
24. For a similar Mahāyāna-based, non-dual reading of the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta*, see Thich Nhat Hanh ([1990] 2006).
25. See Seung Sahn ([1976] 1994, 18).
26. See also discussion in Watt (2017).
27. See Collins (2010, 33–34).
28. Kabat-Zinn's notions of conventional (S. *saṃvṛti*) and absolute (S. *paramārtha*) reality, Bodhisattva vows, practice 'for the benefit of all beings', and skilful means (S. *upāyakauśalya*) (see Kabat-Zinn 2011) are also characteristic Mahāyāna ideas, but due to restrictions of space these are left out of further examination.

29. This is not to say that all different Chán schools share their doctrinal and practical views; there are important variations in both practice methods and views on reality (see e.g. McRae 2003; Broughton 2009).
30. See Kabat-Zinn (2005, 478).
31. I am grateful to Dr Albion M. Butters for drawing my attention to this Tibetan term, which is a further indication of shared terminology between Kabat-Zinn's work and Vajrayāna teachings.
32. In early canonical descriptions, the 'cessation of apperceptions and feelings' (S. *saṃjñāvedayitanirodha*, P. *saññāvedayitanirodha*) is the only possible candidate for a 'non-dual' meditative attainment. However, in this 'cessation' not only subject-object dualism but also consciousness itself is understood to cease completely (Vetter 1988, 63–71).
33. There are some anecdotal references to mind's luminous essence already in the Pāli *Nikāyas* (e.g. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1:49–52, in Bodhi 2012, 97), but they are systemically developed only in later commentarial traditions (Anālayo 2017).
34. This quote is actually from Guifeng Zongmi and only cited by Chinul (see Buswell 1983, 102, 143).
35. However, there are inconsistencies in Dōgen's early and later works, which may challenge some aspects of such generalised arguments about his teachings (see Abe 1991; Heine 2006).
36. Naturally, in terms of a more detailed study, Dzogchen practice cannot be understood properly without references to Tibetan Buddhist sources and discussions.
37. In Kabat-Zinn's naturalistic view, 'karma' refers to causality in general and 'the sum total of the person's direction in life and the tenor of the things that occur around that person, caused by antecedent conditions, actions, thoughts, feelings, sense impressions, desires' (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005, 221).
38. While recognising some of its traditional Buddhist meanings, Kabat-Zinn reframes 'saṅgha' to include 'everybody who is committed to a life of mindfulness and non-harming' (Kabat-Zinn 2005, 307).

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