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THE CAREFUL EDUCATOR

by

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SYNTHESIS*

MASTER OF ARTS

CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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Advisor: Robert Ricketts

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

ABSTRACT

Inward balance is experienced when one is able to make sense of various thoughts and feelings conjured by experience. My time in the Critical & Creative Thinking program at the University of Massachusetts Boston has introduced me to a possible formula giving me an answer as to why such an inward balance is, and especially for educators, both so liberating and so necessary. With “philosophy” being a key part of the equation, the balance to be experienced is for educating in a way where former experience sheds light on present and future goals. Passing this experience to our students, allowing such a reflective practice to define how and why they learn, and what should also take place when outside of the classroom, this synthesis focuses on what it means to be an educator, and why it is important for educators to carefully serve the interest of their students.

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Introduction

Personal harmony, or one could say “balance” or “equilibrium,” is achieved when things not only make sense, but when our ability to make sense of how those things make sense also confesses our sanity. I have found sanity not simply in what persuaded me of being sane, but in the process of claiming and exercising my mental faculties to confirm to me the reason behind the miscommunication between my thoughts and my feelings. Understanding that there is relief after the confusion of miscommunicating with self, it has become part of my work to ensure that I, as an educator, and that my students, as human and as spiritual beings, never fail to achieve clear communication with me or with their own self.

I have, for the past eleven years, written and lectured on the need for the human being, in order to properly communicate with its hidden or inward *character*, to mentally refresh, educate, and reform its spiritual or devotional conversation. This is my topic of interest due to me learning of the need for this discipline within my self. What I found, and am still continuing to find out, is that, due to the human being created both as “mortal” and as “essence,” or as “body” and as “mind,” our human element wrongly advises and guides our “being.” Reversing this trend, I have learned that to have the “being” advising and guiding my person has changed my perception of “life,” awakening me to my character, and to its practical usefulness both to me and to society.

Because an exercise in disciplining self leads to the revelation that there also exists a “self” within others, the more I continued studying this discipline, the more I began to realize my bond and my obligation to other minds. Making my work public in

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2017, I soon began to see an audience gravitating towards me, wanting advice from me, wanting to understand what I was saying so that they could then practice it. Knowing that I am constantly, whenever in dialogue about the content of my books, or about any related inquiry, needing to remind myself to maintain patience, temperance, and empathy when listening and when responding, I became concerned with how to properly guide learners into learning, and in a way where unnecessary miscommunication; either between I and them or they and their self; did not occur, leaving them encouraged to continue learning on their own.

I began my journey in the masters program of Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) at the University of Massachusetts Boston when this concern starting developing. This concern was triggered by my care over how I approached and comforted those reaching out to me for instruction. A few instances where conversations did not go as I had intended left me wanting to perfect my teaching technique. Knowing that there is and must be a better way to communicate with every mind, I felt a burning desire to become as circumspect in my profession as possible, and this meant not only being well-versed in the philosophy I espouse, but also being well-versed in how to educate, and in how to encourage a love for learning.

As an author, counselor, and lecturer on how to rationalize and maintain the integrity of one's spirituality, coming across the CCT program in 2019, for its aim to educate educators on how to holistically conduct their life and teaching or leading occupation, was no accident. From my first courses, which were Critical Thinking and Advanced Cognitive Psychology, to my recently last two courses, which were Holistic and Transformative Teaching and Processes of Research and Engagement, I have been

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learning both how and why to educate, uncovering the portrait of just what the CCT program should reveal to my inquiry.

As someone in a counselor, coaching, guiding, or teaching position, it is important to me to understand how to teach in a way where I offend none of my students, and to where my students find no offence in me or in their reflective thoughts and feelings. The courses that I've taken in the CCT program have challenged my character, forcing me to observe my self in action and to make sense of what I see. What I have discovered is that I am, when it comes to educating and guiding for personal mindful awareness, an imperfect guide, and that if I would be any service, I must completely give my student the opportunity to not only learn, but I must also kindly and benevolently guide them on how to learn.

My students range in age from the late teens to the early sixties. Because I write and lecture on the religious and the spiritual experience, and not according to the common belief that it is community oriented and tradition based, but rather personal and firstly or primarily individual, being based upon the exercising of the knowledge gained through the handling and the marrying of the human and the devotional character, the sincere attention I've gained from my work are from people who care to own their spiritual experience. Growing fond of their interests, these are people who, due to being unfulfilled in their religious experience, question religion, who question the *Deity* of religion, who question their own experience with religion, who question the validity of Christian and atheistic theology, and who are also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually hurt at the fact that their religious or spiritual experience has forced them into this

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condition. These are people that want to move forward with how they think about spirituality, and with how they think about their natural and spiritual self.

I thought, five years ago, that my “job” was to put knowledge out into the *world*. Upon making my findings public, I believed that there would be a gravitation towards my work, and whether negative, positive, or neutral, the job would be done and I, as a writer, would be doing my job. But something unexpected happened: an audience I did not suspect began tuning in and reaching out to me.

I went through, and still do experience, philosophical and theological criticism; I expected this. What I didn’t expect was there to be people hearing me and really seeking to find a way to reach out to me for guidance on how to escape, transcend, and transform the religious grave they found their self in. The shows that I guest appeared on had touched more people than did my books, and this was because of the reliability found in my human being. People heard the voice from within the book go off topic and discuss its personal relation to what they were reading inside of that book, and this encouraged them to reach out to me.

Speaking with so many people, I did not realize how many minds were hurt and were disappointed at where their religion, philosophy, or spirituality had led them. Speaking with strangers from all over the world, and then interacting face to face with people in churches or at events I was invited to speak at, I began to grow concerned over my own self, how I educated, that I should not do to any one mind what has previously been done to them. The direction of the CCT program, seeing as how I wanted to resolve this concern and did not quite know how to approach it, appeared to then be extremely relevant to my life.

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Passing through different courses in the CCT program, learning about the cognitive and the communal aspect of learning, I started to place a theory of what I was learning into the context of my profession. I began to think that, if I can get the people reaching out to me to feel inspired and enthusiastic about personally developing their faith's sphere of existence, then I must properly connect with them in a way where they sense my sincere devotion to them practically developing an experimental "philosophy." It was at this point that I, to help my students realize their former experience was necessary for their present inward and mental development, understood that educating through resonating with their experience, and through joining into their struggle, and through sharing the same vulnerability, was a tool to exercise for making their learning experience more real.

And this exercise in empathy I find beneficial for leaders of classrooms encouraging inspiration, motivation, or enthusiasm for consistent human and spiritual wellbeing. The individuals reaching out to me, and the places where I am welcomed to speak at, seek guidance on how to regulate the human and the devotional experience. Students wanting knowledge on how to live well care to grow and to learn how to become mindful about how to perform their experience, and in scholarly circles reviewing the benefit behind exercising mindfulness in the setting of group or individual learning, certain questions are asked, which Siegel articulates by writing:

"Why would the way we focus our attention matter for the quality of our lives? How does the process of developing an awareness of the present moment that is filled with COAL -

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curiosity, openness, acceptance and love – toward our ongoing experience improve the functioning of our bodies, our minds and our relationships?” (Siegel, 2007)

Educate Through Error

These questions actually provide their answer, showing that quality of life depends on how we define our present state or condition of “being.” Yet, desiring an “ongoing experience” for improving wellbeing reveals that awareness of the present isn’t the only factor determining quality of life, but that understanding what once prevented “ongoing experience” is crucial to claiming a quality of life to presently, and to continuously, refine.

My source of inspiration for writing, and for writing about inward and devotional wellbeing, is due to how I, upon reflecting on my self over twelve years ago, understood that my character lacked principles able to stabilize its thoughts and feelings. Sensing this lacking, I began to write about the fracture I felt within my self. Making sense of this fracture allowed me to take into consideration many events from the past to understand why I now felt the way that I did. Being able to understand my feelings, I could make sense of my thoughts, and in a way where my inquiry moved from being, “Why do I sense a fracture in the structure of my being?” to, “Why was or is this fracture necessary?” to, “Has any other mind written about this?” to, “The reason why we are created fractured is so that we may understand what works to stabilize our living experience.”

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A look into the past, for handling the past, is absolutely necessary in order to properly discern how to live, which is the benefit behind educators teaching, coaching, guiding, or counseling through a mindful learning approach. With researchers confirming that mindfulness, despite its unpleasantness, promotes an exploratory experience, (Farb, Anderson, Irving, & Segal, 2014), mindfully guiding our students into wellbeing means giving them the opportunity to understand single or multiple negative instances preventing them from making a decision to know how to realize or achieve a fulfilling human and spiritual experience.

Poetry, for example, through my journey into self, surfaced as a means whereby I may find stability within my fractured character. I began writing what I thought to be poetry at seven years old. It may not have been “poetry,” but it was organized expression.

I’ve never quite felt fulfilled, and I can remember being seven and finding no right fulfillment at home or at school, which oddly left me feeling unfulfilled and disappointed with my own self. Needing to get that frustration out, and in an intimate way, I began writing sentences of expression that turned into paragraphs of discovery. The knowledge I gained about myself from that exercise led me to love myself in a way that was special, and to begin to develop a process of understanding my inward and physical environment in a way where I felt content to enjoy every day.

Self-realization encourages self-observation, which is a tool teaching the learner how to develop sufficiency in thought, in feeling, in deed, and in behavior. Allowing self to sense the present moment, we give to self the opportunity to be a witness of what took place in the past (Siegel, 2007), becoming aware of one’s “*i*,” and of the *space* that “*i*” must occupy for a better vision of self, that has become neglected (Gunnlaugson, 2020),

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leaving the character of the personal learning environment malnourished. In this sense, mindfully becoming aware of our character is the means whereby we may have open and unadulterated communion with that character to create new information for self-regulation (Siegel, 2007).

Giving to our student the opportunity to form a relationship with their self, they are able to separate from their thoughts and feelings to observe those thoughts and feelings without being confined to them. This act causes them to be able to discern an *environment*, or a *space* more suitable to their character than what formerly constrained that character's expression. Thus, with this discipline added to their concern, they may, through its exercise, understand how their prior learning has prevented their understanding from creating new and meaningful experiences (Siegel, 2007).

Prior to a mindful approach to learning, the mind, being unaware of the energy inspiring it, engages in distracting thoughts and activities preventing its ability to not only become away of its self, but to also respond to its self (Siegel, 2007). Our students come to us hoping to break this frustrating pattern, and doing so involves observing supposedly negative past memories or experiences to gather enough information for the cultivation of "philosophy." It is through this analysis that their recovery is, should they remain faithful to this training, inevitable.

There seems to be a stigma established against seemingly negative past experiences, namely, that they only lead to present and future repetition. And this can in fact be true: if failing to examine the past, we are surely bound to repeat, in the present and in the future, former errors. Something, then, must be done to let our students

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understand that what formerly took place is but a waymark to be used as a guide on their journey to who and to where they are supposed to be.

This paper is written to both guide and challenge the way leaders in motivational, inspirational, and spiritual education teach and relate to their students. Our classrooms are filled with individuals possessing a past experience, and with past memories, presently affecting them. Knowing this, our classroom environment should be “error-friendly.” “In an ‘error-friendly’ environment, errors inspire people to learn more about the situation that caused the error in the first place, and, by instigating this learning process, the same mistakes might not be made again, better approaches might be found, or completely new applications might serendipitously be identified, ultimately increasing performance” (Deichmann & Jan van den Ende, 2014).

When correctly put in place, errors can lead to great mental, spiritual, and emotional healing. With unfavorable memories of past experiences analyzed, new meanings can arise, leading the individual, and for developing a character for investigation, to get past whatever is stopping them from making sense of what they’ve been through. With literature on error management showing that reviewing errors can actually influence exploratory behavior (Deichmann & Jan van den Ende, 2014), as educators, counselors, and guides, we ought, in order to encourage positive independent learning behaviors, to re-frame how we approach teaching.

My own experience has taught me that this is true, that errors do actually afford an exodus into the realm of self-discovery. Reviewing past written dialogues I’ve held with my self, I’ve come across a piece of my own writing that I feel demonstrates the

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activity of reflecting on former errors to presently refine an understanding on the living experience:

“I too understand that I am not without error, which is why I take the difficult task of ensuring my experience properly aligns with the intended language and context. The concern should be not to guide the experience, but how the heart in the experience is guided. That experience needs knowledge and understanding if it should become pure to the individual experience, to safely conduct that experience.”¹

I wrote this seeking to understand why “fact” outside of the scientific paradigm is not valued. This was written three years ago, and it is written when my findings were receiving a negative response from theological communities. I felt as though I didn’t exist. I felt as though a scientific desire to care for “fact” didn’t exist. I couldn’t understand why the paradigm of scientists seemed to be more important than that realm of thought existing outside of the paradigm, which thought, when looked at, could actually add to and clarify the science within the accepted paradigm.

Because the scientific paradigm is taken for “fact,” and because that “fact” remains the leading thought, I felt as though something was wrong with me. Finding nothing but error when I reviewed theological theory, and then presenting this to minds I believed should care about advancing their philosophy, seeing these minds unwilling to move forward in thought, and to even treat me disrespectfully for what I presented, compelled me to reflect on my self, on what had led up to this point, and on what was

¹ Taken from my private writings

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going on within me. The answer I arrived at was that my experience is my own, and “fact,” despite the opinion of the majority, is still fact. Encouraging myself to maintain the vision of what is ultimately true, I exit this writing reminding my self of who I am, and of how who I am becoming should continue to define my present experience:

“But I have been created differently. The experience matters, and to possess sound understanding on the experience will only make the experience more real and more enjoyable. Despite what popularly exists, I do step in an uncomfortable zone to give Bible understanding a platform. I do ask (concerning the moment a care for such a field of thought should arrive) ‘How long?’ but I do believe that the answer rests within me, depending upon my present actions.”²

I plan, as I’ve provided in the appendix of this synthesis, because of the benefit I’ve found in them, to guide my students into exercises similar to what I do guide my own self in. Students wanting to understand how to live well need to know that they are right for confronting a haunting memory or experience. Our students need to feel as though confronting a haunting memory or experience is the right thing to do. Persuading them into this confidence means giving them the opportunity to feel comfortable exploring or discovering what is or what went wrong. This will increase not only their behavior to independently continue this activity, but will positively reinforce not only the habit of consistently performing this activity, but also the intention behind it.

² Taken from my private writings

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Experience improves consistent habits of mind and of behavior (Sheeran, Godin, Conner, & Germain, 2017), and to make sense of experience is to make sense of desire. It is understood, or at least theorized that internal or external cues, depending on how rewarding the former experience was, triggers desire (Hofmann & Nordgren, 2016), meaning that if we should stimulate a desire for curiosity within our students, we must make them feel comfortable positively re-living what is wrong. Engaging our students in this way allows them to feel comfortable with developing a behavior to analyze their self. Analyzing their self, they receive the opportunity to experience the feeling of making new meaning out of what once appeared to be haunting. This feeling will increase their desire to keep on continuing in this attitude for the wisdom received when learning better approaches, when understanding failures, and when making sense of their environment. All of this must occur so that they can realize that “wisdom is better than rubies.”³

The goal is to get our students replacing formerly held negative memories with knowledge of a present experience that is positive. The positive re-enforcement of thinking and learning habits through making sense of former error, or of what formerly didn't feel right, allows the individual to generate new thoughts and feelings, replacing what formerly existed and increasing the desire to maintain that inquisitive and mindful spirit.

Re-structure The Past

³ Proverbs 8:11

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The elements making up the structure, substance, or body of the experience needs to be carefully thought on for re-structuring the experience's pattern. This is key to re-integrating our students with reality because once an idea of a past experience is etched within our memory, perceiving even one element of that experience can activate other elements, impacting how the experience is understood (Hofmann & Nordgren, 2016), and, despite how uncomfortable this is, this is what our students need. Now, with the experience thought on, re-imagined and re-structured, sense not only exists, but also mixed into the memory is the wisdom acquired through analyzing the event, which wisdom brings with it a positive energy, allowing the individual to think better of the situation.

Our students need to think well of their situation. Vision of wisdom through seemingly traumatic experiences needs to be teased out of their memories in order for them to make sense of their depression. Our work, seeing as how our attitudes are unknowingly shaped by our beliefs (Doll & Ajzen, 1992), involves changing, refreshing, or altering "belief" about events.

Our role, as educators of wellbeing, is to increase, within our student, the cultivation of positive behaviors for learning. Entered into our classrooms, and seated in our audience, are individuals who have put their learning on hold for whatever they believe past experience has taught them of their self. These people have turned to us for a direct experience in creating new meaning out of erroneous situations, and rightly so, seeing as how research shows that our intentions are, under conditions of direct experience, become more stable and accessible than under conditions of indirect experience (Doll & Ajzen, 1992).

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So what type of character ought we, as the guides and the leaders of their experience into new thoughts and feelings, to possess? Surely “a faithful witness will not lie,”⁴ and if turning to us, then they are turning to us because they see a faithful demonstration of the peace they imagine to possess. In essence, a more thoughtful approach to our profession as educators is needed, even a teaching style keeping alive both the interest of the student and their desire to learn (Haider, Khan, & Taj, 2020).

What we are teaching should not get in the way of the reason for why our student has tuned in to us. Our material should forever connect with the character willing to experiment with our guidance. They have come to us, as my students confess to me, due to being unsatisfied with where their experience has led them, proving that there is, within them, motivation to understand what is wrong. We can take advantage of their enthusiasm by remembering that individuals who are inwardly motivated to learn do not mind choosing or taking on difficult tasks or endeavors (Deichmann & Jan van den Ende, 2014).

The intention of our student, more than learning the material, is to make sense of who they are through what they are learning. Making sense of the environment influences and is influenced by one’s idea of self and its personal identity (Carvalho, 2021). The motivation of our students to pursue the construction of identity should be carefully handled in a way allowing them to know that this need of theirs is also our number one concern. This is why, although the past may be what haunts, carefully guiding them into a concern for the present is also needed.

⁴ Proverbs 14:5

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An understanding of the present cannot escape examining decisions, plans, and goals formerly desired and adopted (Carvalho, 2021). Seeing as how our existing mental models serve as a script for responding to external cues (Ellis & Davidi, 2005), challenging the present outlook through what formerly occurred allows new patterns or models of thought to create a new and challenging script.

This new and challenging script is needed in order to positively re-shape present responses to unfavorable past stimuli, revealing that no such unfavorable stimuli ever existed, but that, in order to arrive at the person they should assume, whatever occurred only took place so that their person may be where it must be. This analysis will direct students to become fascinated with learning of and achieving their highest human and spiritual potential, letting them know that, if desiring growth, they must become mindful of not only the reason behind their former mental models, but also, in order to create new conditions where existing mental models can reform and mature, the conditions inspiring them (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

As much as the past is an issue; and my students continually harp on the fact that their past has left such an impression on their mind that they presently do not know what to do, how to behave, what to believe, or how to re-organize their character; the present is an even greater issue. It is in the present that they now must function, and must they think to make sense of the past without making sense of the present? My students tell me that they want to develop a vision of their self to claim, but can a future thought exist without rationalizing the present? Another meditation of mine, written in 2020, illustrates the answer to these questions:

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“Thoughts are interesting. Thoughts are interesting because they cannot be trusted. If thoughts cannot be trusted, and especially because their genesis is from past memories, then one should think, ‘What good is it to think?’ But to think is to rationalize without thoughts, to see and to understand without interfering with what should be seen or thought about. And this is what makes ‘thoughts’ interesting, because while they can be injurious, their injury can be something used to keep us on watch, on guard, and ever present in our attempts to do, be, or live better.”⁵

Our students care to learn how to think. Our students want to execute, from what is thought on, what fulfills, and by focusing on information relevant to their desired performance, our students can understand why, to improve the future performance of developing mental models, their decided performance matters (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). The entire reason for their presence in our classroom is to understand why past experience has left them presently unfulfilled. Making sense of the present, and through activities and material making sense of the past, allows our student to develop “identity.” With the past stripping their sense of self away, and presently living in that non-existence, our student does not ultimately want to forget their past, or what happened to them, but wants to make sense of what formerly occurred to cultivate a character that they can presently identify with.

Our material, then, should point to how students may sincerely perform their experience. This involves, while making sense of the past, making sense of the present, and making sense of the present also involves the construction of reality by giving

⁵ Taken from my private writings

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authority to the context, ontology, and meaning behind events (Carvalho, 2021). Such an education or training is a course on learning through errors, in that errors may become, for triggering learners into more thoughtful learning strategies to improve mental models, a means to shed light on what was misunderstood (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

The learning experience must be given to the student, and fully. While a guide to their enlightenment, and while supervising their journey, we are to teach in a way where they individually complete the construction of their identity. Our students come to us not to be told what to do, but rather to learn how to perform what they must do in order to have an experience providing knowledge to live by. This is why it is well to remember that individuals sensing a flaw within the foundation of their performance cares, in order to improve their performance, to improve the knowledge of that foundation (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

Past experience has given our students motivation to “know,” and this must be conveyed to them. Our students come to us depressed about certain past life experiences, wanting explanations for why those events did absolutely nothing for their human or their spiritual being, but if they could actually see that their past was only preparing them to embrace a certain mental and emotional *space* for learning, they would see things differently. This is where we come in, to help make sense of their seemingly deplorable past learning experience to lead them into discovering treasure under the apparent rubbish of their memories.

And what can better assist in this task than intimately relating to our student? Speaking with my students, they tell me that they initially reached out to me because they related with who I was, or with the reason behind my work. I have noticed that, as an

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author and lecturer, my material is only cared for when its benefit somehow finds articulation through my character. This has led me to understand that making sense of our experiences involves being open to creating a guiding shared meaning and experience (Carvalho, 2021), and if we are to place the idea of “philosophy” into the hands of our students, and if we are to encourage decision making for re-structuring or re-organizing their thought pattern, we must also model the benefit they are inspired to claim.

Encourage A New Domain

As educators on how to maintain personal and spiritual wellbeing, we want our students mindful, as happy to continue in the craft of learning, and as acquiring health, joy, peace, and virtue through whatever they perform from whatever they learn. Our human interaction with them greatly increases the chances of their mindfulness (Haider, Khan, & Taj, 2020), increasing motivation and desire to dig into the subject at hand. We then have a task set before us, because while our students see us as a leading voice in the *field* and in the *discussion*, we have to show them that this journey into discovery is a journey without end, and that we too are travelers with them.⁶ Such a labor involves creating a dialogue for a learning *space* to share, proving to our student that we are also learners with them.

With my work being to encourage human growth and development through the growth and development of the devotional or the spiritual mind, I make it an effort to get

⁶ Matthew 10:24

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my student to understand their human being through first rationalizing the character of their devotional conversation. Making sense of the devotional conversation's thoughts and feelings means being able and open to re-educating the devotional conversation's thoughts and feelings. This is where a certain space, the "i" space (Gunnlaugson, 2020), becomes pivotal in allowing our student to access an experience they might ultimately refrain from if they were alone.

The "i-space" is a *space* where we are in communion with an emerging context only because we have first entered into communion with the essence of that context. The "i-space" is strict to the positive vision of an emerging character. Possessing an "i-space" means that the *i* within the *space* is under our care, and so a union of our "i" with the developing "space" only means the formation of a shared knowledge between the combined "i" and that "space." It is the knowledge of these two realms; the realm of *i* and the realm of the *space*; that opens us up to accept the effort that must be taken in order to exchange reality for that emerging context.

Our responsibility is to guide our student into a new and living context for their character. They must create and interact with an environment that only they have constructed, and through carefully handling past and present models or patterns of thought. Engaging our students in the act of making sense of past memories or experiences allows them to completely re-organize not only what happened, but what should, according to their newly developing vision and identity, next take place. By allowing past experience to give knowledge of self, and to give knowledge of their environment, we put into their hands the ability to create an atmosphere suiting and providing for their individual person.

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Our communication with our student matters more than we think. My experience has taught me that our type of student does not want to be told what experience to have, but rather how to go about claiming the experience they know they should have long since had. Encouraging the practice of developing an “i-space” is what allows our student to have the courage to be able to overturn past thoughts for envisioning and securing a more sure present.

Cultivating the character of the “i-space’s” personality is what transforms lens, causing new meaning to be made out of former information. If without an “i-space,” there is no way I can be any benefit to anyone who sees an ideal context for his or her personal or devotional conversation. Being unfamiliar with how they feel and with what they are piecing together about their experience, they are looking for a “bigger picture,” and if I am unable to relate to this desire, or if I am oblivious to how they are feeling, then I am failing in my occupation.

My students, upon first meeting me, tell me how relatable I appeared to them when they either read one of my books or heard me speaking somewhere. The nature of this relatable appearance is what they hope to continue when meeting me, and how disappointing would it be if I could not join into their journey? It is true that leading our learners into the “i-space” is where their journey to recovery takes place, but if unable to resonate with that journey, if unable to understand the language of their conflict, if unable to place self in their position, if without an “i-space” of your own, or if without a memory of ever being in the position of establishing an “i-space,” then what value do we have to them?

The Social Aspect

It cannot be forgotten that our student being able to create new meaning out of past experiences involves us being able to share a *space* with them. This shared space is what is called the “we-space” (Gunnlaugson, 2020), which “space” “brings participants an expanded basis of identification and broader inclusive sense of selfhood that grows from our initial work with our i-space and you-space” (Gunnlaugson, 2020).

With the “you-space” being where key social, emotional, and relational information becomes available (Gunnlaugson, 2020), this is where we are able to learn how to feel for the energy of another’s *space*, preparing us to take the next step into entering into the “we-space” with them. The “we-space” is important because this is where new norms and a better inward culture for a more sure emerging character is formed; “unlike the you-space or i-space, the we-space is the first collective field that relies initially on a facilitator in order to collectively establish the presencing norms within the specific group” (Gunnlaugson, 2020).

As educators, we have to become one with our students, adopting the advice, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”⁷ Remembering the “suffering” of our student means being able to relate to their struggle from having first suffered, endured, and learned from like-trauma. This is the only way we will ever have our students comfortable enough with their own self to allow us into the “space” they are creating.

⁷ Hebrews 13:3

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Experience has taught me that students care more about how you came to possess the demeanor that you now claim than to know what philosophy you actually exercised in order to claim that demeanor. Knowledge of what is known or understood for exercise is always a subject or topic of interest, but I am finding that learners want to engage with educators on the level of experience. I stand out to potential students not because of what I am saying, but because of how I am saying what I am saying, showing that their intention for reaching out is not due to them wanting what I know per se, but wanting the experience forwarding that course of learning.

In order to assist our student in making sense of past experience, we have to jump in to their present and, with them also, observe the vision of their future, growing familiar with where they are mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. The social aspect of making meaning out of past experience is important because, at some point, we are going to have to enter into their newly developing *landscape* to make sense of the elements used to build it. This is what I, in my CCT 616 course on Dialogue Processes, learned, that our growing familiar with these “spaces” is important because without realizing the immense spiritual, emotional, and psychological task our students face, we can never relate to them in a way where they feel safe enough to construct a personal learning environment through our guidance.

It is our genuine relation to our student that increases their desire to remain motivated to investigate their self. It is because of their failure to maintain a strong or willing connection to their former experience that they inevitably wandered from their former traditional thought, stumbling upon us. And this, when thinking on how to engage our learners, is well to remember, because research does show that after acquiring a

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certain amount of experience, if the original intention behind the experience isn't served or understood, consistency in the behavior of that experience greatly reduces (Sheeran, Godin, Conner, & Germain, 2017).

Teach What Worked

A major reason why the former personal or spiritual experience appears negative to our student is because the experience forwarded an unsatisfying habit. Allowing the student to understand that their mind desires more than routine or tradition allows them to possess consistent levels of motivation to dig into a more suitable experience. They feel misused by their past experience because their character demands more than what is generally accepted; their character demands a mental *model* to experiment with.

In addition to giving meaning to our social environment, mental models are used as a frame of reference for how to actively interpret the world (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). Our student's ability to communicate to us what is wrong increases the more they are able to establish mental models fitting their human and spiritual character. And what is greater than this is that with them learning what is wrong, they can also learn what is actually right, giving them further assurance that what occurred in the past was only for their present and future benefit.

Experience has taught me that the students tuning in to me are individuals unsure of the benefit given by their religious or spiritual performance, and who also see that aspect of being unsure as being a costly error to their natural and spiritual wellbeing. This peculiar disposition points into the direction of research, showing that successful learning

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occurs under two conditions: the first being when learners are unsure about whether or not their successful performance is due to luck, and the second being when the cost of committing errors is too great (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

Equal to giving students the opportunity to make sense of past experience is the opportunity to allow students to understand what, from that same past experience, actually worked. Understanding what worked, or what was a success, allows them to continue positive practices in their newly developing *environment*. An investigation into what was or is successful isn't generally thought about when guiding learners into better *places* of mind, making the act of generating new meaning both out of what succeeded and what did not succeed an integral factor into giving our student the chance to re-observe the past for present wellbeing.

We all possess two parts of *being* making up one whole or complete existence; "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."⁸ The issue that arises from this is that, because the natural body assumes control over both parts of *being*, the *other* constitution of our nature is left undiscovered. Being without discovery, we live our lives seeking to fulfill that *other* part through the natural part, taking our natural person through experiences we believe should and will satisfy the *person* within.

While living through that natural part of our *being*, there is a call to understand that *being's* hidden inward essence. Every choice we make reveals the spirit of an essence seeking fulfillment for what is hidden to our natural person. And we do execute this fulfillment in our own particular way, yet the students reaching out to us have a mind to realize or accomplish this type of fulfillment through cultivating, exercising, living,

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:46

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and making decisions through their spiritual or devotional *body*.

My experience has taught me, and continually teaches me, that my students care to live happy and healthy lives where they are able to make decisions without their natural or human mind directing the limbs of their body. They have sought religious or spiritual denominations or philosophies because they thought them to be what should direct their thoughts and feelings into a liberty where they can live without surrendering self to the impulse of their natural or human *being*.

Desiring to live in a way where mental and inward thought directed the physical body, and not the physical body directing mental and inward thought, our students turned to religion or spirituality, but ultimately found both their natural and spiritual self enslaved to what they believed to be an inhumane habit or routine. My student comes to me hoping to understand how the experience they perceived to be enlightening turned out to be misleading. They want to be able to make a decision for their devotional constitution without being told what decision to make, and as leaders of classrooms, it is our responsibility to introduce them to the fact that they, for the sake of making and refining sense, control how their *bodies* are to be governed.

This thought places me in remembrance of something Mill writes: “The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preferences are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is custom makes no choice. He gains no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is best. The mental and the moral, like the muscular, powers are improved only by being used” (Mill, 1978).

Our engagement with our students needs incentive for self-discovery, and a great

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way to incite care for self-discovery is through their ability to make decisions, or to create decisions for them to make.⁹ Encouraging the capacity for decision making returns to our student their lost esteem. Having their conscience dictated to them, and believing that what they were told was for their best interest, they have found that their energy has been wrongly spent. Instead of claiming their experience, instead of making and creating beneficial decisions for their individual character, they believed that another mind knew what was best. Being disappointed, understanding that their character demands more than what it was being trained to accept, they want the ability and the discernment of now knowing how to judge what is best for self.

As educators, we have to be with our students where they are, and if providing questions and exercises arousing curiosity or innocent interest in their experience, we may engage students wherever they are in their development (Marks-Tarlow, Siegel, & Solomon, 2018). They may not reveal how shaken or how vulnerable they are, but we have to, when communing with them, make sense of their journey to help them understand that a learning experience is the right experience. This is how, engaging in mindful activities, we offer our students a type of collaboration supporting the inquisitiveness their former experience may not have allowed (Marks-Tarlow, Siegel, & Solomon, 2018).

Giving to our student the capacity and the freedom to make a decision for the direction of their faith's intellect, we open them up to understanding how to define a successful or a failing experience. Research shows that failed and successful events are two internal sources of information advancing the generation of new propositions to

⁹ I have provided example activities supporting such an incentive in the Appendix section of this synthesis.

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either confirm or refute (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). This means that, in right context, there is really no such thing as failure or as success, but rather experiences educating for what best suits self's character and capacity to learn.

The advantage of uncovering what did not work is in also stumbling upon what did work well, and it may be that one thing completely left their character lacking, but knowledge of what lacked, being understood in what was missing, is what is now needed in order to keep the spirit of the performance edified and *youthful*. This exercise gives to the learner new evidence to prove or disprove old or former thoughts, feelings, and information, positively adding to the construction of their environment more suitable elements for their person.

Through the construction of the new environment for performance, the student will begin to open up to the vulnerability they have been, by failing to understand what they have been through, suppressing. And this is important for them to experience because a care for knowledge increases according to the need for closure, and if able to sense a benefit coming from closure, the greater the act to obtain that closure (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

Encourage Closure For Increased Mental Activity

Our communion with our students is founded upon their need for closure. How will you heighten their level for achieving closure? How will you engage their experience to direct concern for closure? As educators encouraging the development of personal "philosophy," our role is to draw the attention of our students to acquiring and to

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exercising knowledge in order for them to have the closure they need. The “ah-ha” moment they hope to be given by us must actually come from them, and it may be realized only as they have an experience to contrast.

Giving to students the responsibility of claiming their experience, placing within their hands accountability for their progression or advancement in performance, gives to them the experience they are actually looking for. My students, when first reaching out to me, confess that their former religious experience took advantage of their sincere thoughts and feelings. Eventually, those sincere thoughts and feelings became enraged at the fact that they were faithfully given in the hope of a return quenching their need for self-love, industry, and self-worth, but found a return in humiliation, self-centeredness, frustration, and disillusionment.

My work has led me to discover that whosoever is tuning in to me, they are tuning in to me because of the liberty they foresee returned to their experience from what they hear, which liberty I do articulate by stating, “Why is my liberty judged of another’s man’s conscience?”¹⁰ Hereafter my process for understanding what is wrong with their experience begins, and also my subtle manner at getting them to see, from within that wrong, what actually defines success to their experience.

As educators, we may intensify our student’s desire to learn about owning their performance by bringing their attention not only to what obviously failed, but to what also was successful about their activities or decisions (Ellis & Davidi, 2005), and this is what we want. Allowing our students to wholly review their experience, they are able to make connections to where there appeared to be no connection at all; our role is to

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:29

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facilitate their making sense of every seemingly positive and negative thing for developing a “space” or “realm” of “being.”

Research shows that making sense of the experience involves a continual process of refining one’s understanding, taking action, and restoring balance to the context of the performance (Carvalho, 2021). Making sense of the entire portrait of their past and present, we give to our student the chance to develop learning habits continually refining how and what they learn. The result of this activity, in order for them to properly furnish their developing *space* or *environment* with elements keeping their goals strong, intelligent, and sober, is exactly where we need our students to be.

This is the frame of mind we need to introduce our student to because there are cues, warning signs, hints, and suggestions about what is well within their past experience that we must not ignore. Motivation to refine the experience gives to the learner wisdom to exercise for owning that experience, and by allowing them to grow comfortable learning from the past to step into the present with a newly developing *landscape*, we give them the opportunity to continue to learn how to perceive defining a successful performance.

Making sense of past experiences does not mean growing comfortable with present knowledge. As educators, we need to understand that sense-making involves the process of noticing and extracting specific cues to then contextually interpret those cues according to certain held beliefs, mental models, rules, procedures, theories, and thoughts (Carvalho, 2021). Just because our students are seeing how they have dug their self out of the grave of their sorrow does not mean that they must not now grow accustomed to a new way of thinking, feeling, and doing, wherefore it is our responsibility to creatively

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engage them in activities where making sense of the past occurs in new and insightful ways.

In essence, seeing as how our students come to us for a learning experience that is not traditional, sense-making is driven by the need for a workable level of understanding that guides action above a search for what is universally done and believed (Carvalho, 2021). It was because of universal truths that our students grew tired of their experience, wanting something different. Framing our lessons to suit the development of learners, as educators encouraging inquiry and discovery, there needs to be more of a growing concern with allowing the student to understand “truth” through their experience, as opposed to having the experience dictate “truth” to them.

Our students must have the liberty and the opportunity to cultivate a narrative for their experience. Pondering about the reality or the correctness of that narrative is not the ultimate concern, seeing as how our engaging the *space* or *environment* of that narrative will reveal the fact of the matter to the learner. Their being able to take responsibility for the growth and the development of their experience is what will stimulate them to care for circumspection, seeing as how sense-making is an attempt to reduce multiple meanings and complex information into something able to be both exercised and gained (Carvalho, 2021).

And this is how we can know that we are benefiting those reaching out to us. The care or the desire to develop new mental models and structures to continually examine is the sign of a mindful learner, and research shows that individuals show mindfulness in at least three ways: they actively make sense of and refine existing experience through categories and distinctions; they create new or alternative categories out of ongoing

events and experiences; or they appreciate complete contexts, including the use of adaptive, alternative ways to operate in them (Rerup, 2005).

Mindfully Guide

Students needing clarity on how to live well come to us in a state of “mindlessness,” but it is our responsibility to send them away in a state of “mindfulness,” in a position where they consistently own their experience while they continually learn how to remain motivated due to the loss given by their former experience. Arising from the depression felt when reviewing where their past experience has mentally, spiritually, and emotionally brought them, our students should leave our domain feeling comfortable to not only return at any time, but to also never return.

Cognitive research on mindfulness defines or describes it as a form of awareness arising from paying attention on purpose, and in the present moment without judgment, to things as they are (Farb, Anderson, Irving, & Segal, 2014). Bringing our students out of a “mindless” state and into a “mindful” state means bringing them to feel their loss in ways edifying or refreshing their desire to benevolently serve their self and others.

Exercises embracing curiosity and ambiguity are to allow our student to inwardly move on from their past to presently claim the vision they hold for their daily and spiritual life.

Giving our student the opportunity to make sense of their thoughts and feelings gives them the opportunity to put away negative streams of thought to focus on their original reason for even wanting to cultivate their spiritual or devotional mind. This level of focus enables our students to have the ability to create streams of thought differing

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from previous seemingly inescapable habits of mind (Siegel, 2007), supporting their intention to safely decide on what constitutes or complements their preferred spiritual experience.

The logic behind these mentally and spiritually liberating tactics, and especially the exercising or the training of mindfulness, is to get our students comfortable with defining, to their own self, a livable spiritual or devotional philosophy. More than their digestion and regurgitation of what we believe, it is our responsibility to guide them into a revelation of belief, and if “philosophy” is to be observed as a tool providing true belief and knowledge, then the exercising of the mental and the inward or moral faculties must lead the way in this revelation.

The aim or objective behind “philosophy” is, as Socrates reports, a concern with what is “real,” or with what is to be “understood.” With Socrates stating that only belief and knowledge exists to give good guidance and correction, and that if possessing these two things we may give correct counsel, (Plato, Five Dialogues), as educators, and as educators still experiencing the “shift” in thought, *being*, and feeling our students do now experience, our aim in the classroom should not be to reinforce our philosophy, but to guide our students into perpetually discovering a sustainable personal philosophy.

We bring our students through a journey of self-discovery for the purpose of adding “philosophy” to their character. They have come to us for doctrinally knowing what they do not know, but experience has taught me that doctrine is not their ultimate concern. Mindfully guiding their thoughts and feelings, our students are led to make a decision for the sake of “philosophy,” which is the only reason they are with us.

With research showing that mindfulness promotes meta-awareness of emotion regulation

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strategies for creating a trajectory for self-change through introspection (Farb, Anderson, Irving, & Segal, 2014), our labor in getting learners to confront their past is to get them focused on understanding a present “philosophy” for their future. Guiding the development of “philosophy,” we are returning power to our student for their avenging the harm formerly suffered. With them now able to rationalize not only certain past events, but also the material we present to guide them through that memory, they are left inwardly recovering, being inspired to care for the culture of their developing “space” and “philosophy.”

And is this not the goal? Is not our intention the regeneration of their thoughts and feelings for practical self-regulated growth and development? The cultivation of “philosophy” is the practice of “rebirth,” and the greater the learner’s ability to confront formerly believed past experiences, the greater the learner’s ability to unshackle their conscience to enjoy the liberty of pure and unadulterated thought. Freke and Gandy’s book correctly states this fact by advising, “The end of becoming is the beginning of destruction. The end of destruction is the beginning of becoming” (Freke & Gandy, 2018).

We are asking our students, by taking them through such a strict yet mindful course of learning, to embrace putting their self to death. Of course, should we rightly guide their journey, they will learn that, in order to be the person they hope to be, they will have to allow their former thoughts and feelings about their self and of their belief to pass away. This truth is again confirmed in the saying, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”¹¹

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 7:8

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Our learners come to us believing to be at the end of their learning journey. Feeling down about where their past human or religious journey has led them, they now question their experience's destination. It is our responsibility to inform them that if they truly believe they have reached the end of their journey, then this is a positive position to take, because they may then begin to evaluate it for discovering a new thought to begin with. This reflection for a new beginning thought is the foundation of "philosophy," informing the student that "pure philosophy is spiritual striving, through constant contemplation" (Freke & Gandy, 2018).

Just recently a former student of mine reached back out to me, for me to hear of their journey. It has been either a year or a year and a half since we last made contact. I intentionally wanted to keep my distance because I do not want to be a "temple" for my students, but would rather allow them, through our time together, to develop a guiding *temple* within. Being so happy to tell me everything they have been learning, and of their new personal spiritual philosophy's ventures, in the midst of trying to get so much of her experience out at one time, she said, "For the first time in my life, I finally understand my purpose in life."

In our time apart, she began reading different books and, maintaining the principles of literary analysis I constantly reviewed with her, she cycled through different things and, through it all, developed a spiritual philosophy to continuously prune and purge. Just listening to her, I found my educational intention to be a success, and not at all as I intended, but as what she saw, when rightly guided, was best intended for her self. Her saying, "You, and everything else I found after you, came in to my life at the right time to get me to where I needed to be," really resonated with me, because although I

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may have given her an experimental foundation, more than that, my character appears to be the reason for her continuing to challenge her own developing spiritual philosophy for teasing a genuine thought out of it.

It is true that “belief grows from contemplation, and disbelief from lack of thought” (Freke & Gandy, 2018), but if our efforts are to guide into contemplation, our character needs to possess an attitude fit for this activity. This attitude gives to our student a spirit that is willing to feel good about embracing newness of mind, or as Jordan and Schwartz write,

“Connection is so essential to our wellbeing and to our very survival that the brain is wired to respond in the same way and in the same place to social exclusion as it does to life-threatening physical pain. In mutual, growth fostering relationships we experience what Jean Baker Miller (1986) called ‘the five good things’: zest, worth, clarity, knowledge of self and other, and desire for more connection” (Jordan & Schwartz, 2018).

Lead Through Empathy

If, as educators, we would encourage “philosophy,” we need to approach learners through the connection of “relationship.” Our classrooms need leaders that would see students not as vessels for imputing information, but as minds able to develop their own manner of approach to learning in order to develop, within their own self, “philosophy” making sense of the information they already have.

The use of the word “relationship,” in regards to educating, is interesting, because, in reference to the term leadership, the use of the word “leadership” can denote

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various avenues of classroom management. Barker, in his research on the term “leadership,” articulates this point:

“Other words that end in the suffix *-ship* can be used to denote a skill, such as in the words *statesmanship*, *seamanship*, or *craftsmanship*, or can also be used to indicate a relationship as in *partnership*, *apprenticeship*, *fellowship*, and in the word *relationship* itself” (Barker, 1997).

It would seem, then, that our learning environments can lead into the direction of training for “skill,” or training for “relationship.” Training for relationship, it is not that we would bring learners into a relationship with every possible element under discussion, and from even within their own self, but that our students are also brought into a real and living relationship with us. Notions of such a possibility provoke thought of our necessary demeanor when in communion with our students, that we need to serve not only their learning character, but also their human character with all of its faults and defects.

There is a relationship to educating that I have, in my experience being an educator, learned. Teaching involves balancing standards and boundaries and their power in forming a connection between teaching and learning (Jordan, & Schwartz, 2018), allowing us to greatly influence learners. Serving the interest of our student, we have the opportunity to foster a care for their awareness encouraging them to feel comfortable enough to learn.

Empathy is therefore a key character trait we educators need to improve upon. I

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have never taught for the sake of teaching information, and I have never learned anything for the sake of learning. Being not so hung up on the material, but rather on my student's ability to experiment with the material, I do not mind spending hours listening to what prevents their understanding, or to what former experiences have contributed to their inability to freely analyze what they themselves are discovering. I, having felt what they feel, feel for my students, therefore I am able to indifferently guide their learning through the material and encourage them to step into paths that only they need for enlightenment.

What I am doing by placing the experience into the learner's hands is giving them the responsibility and the accountability that is necessary for the development of new memories. Our students come to us wanting to take control of their learning for the purpose of letting it go, giving to time and chance, or to *God*, the office of doing with their faith or belief what they themselves cannot do. Research shows that this develops the potential of others (Syafrimen, Ishak, & Erlina, 2017), encouraging them to take on and grow comfortable with the role of "learner."

As educators, we are in the business of developing the potential of others. This means that, as that conductor or facilitator of potential, we need to approach educating from a point of view where learning and retaining is not seen as something that one can ultimately gain from another, but as something that one can gain from their living experience. This approach becomes simple as we realize that human beings are fractured, and as fractured beings, need to have correct respect shown to their fractured thoughts and feelings. If we are to therefore serve the interest of the learner, we ought to exercise empathy; we otherwise insert a fraction of our self into their journey that need not ever be inserted.

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Exercising empathy with our students gives them the opportunity to find self-evaluation as an instrument for growing, appreciating, and harnessing potential. Jordan and Schwartz make greater sense of this theory by writing:

“Students who learn to see assessment as an opportunity for growth rather than an indication of failure are more likely to be open to critical feedback. By showing empathy with students who make an effort and by appropriately sharing stories of our own experiences of using feedback to improve work, we can help students shift from seeing assessment as a binary, possibly shame-inducing experience to seeing assessment as essential to learning” (Jordan, & Schwartz, 2018).

As educators, although guiding individuals through former experiences to develop a body of knowledge they can trust and transform into a “philosophy” structuring the landscape of their belief, how we guide into this achievement matters. We are to lead our classrooms for the purpose of serving the interests of our students, and should we be effective practitioners, how we relate to our students will reveal the affect and the benevolence behind our labor.

In order for the expression of empathy to have an impact and to bring about change, students must sense that we have been touched, impacted, or influenced by their situation” (Jordan, & Schwartz, 2018), opening them up to positively respond to everything their new experience should demand of them. This means that our responses should be “real,” able to give our students the sense that we actually are with them in their journey. More than wanting to philosophically understand the meaning behind their

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belief, our students want to merely understand why their belief does and should matter, and this involves them both being open to give and to receive from us a high level of vulnerability.

A Defined Experience

My care for effective communication between students and educators is, as previously mentioned, due to me understanding, from experience, the importance behind safely approaching and facilitating dialogue. Reflecting on interactions with my students that went in both positive and negative directions, I've learned that meeting people where they are; in terms of emotion, spirituality, experience, and thought; much can be achieved to get the question, thought, or memory the student is suppressing for fear, or for anxiety, rightly acknowledged and examined.

Noticing also, through these reflections on past and current interactions, that the state of my emotional self is what moved learners in my classroom to embrace vulnerability, mindfulness, and a willingness to allow a new personal learning "space" or "environment" to develop, understanding the weight of empathy in group or in individual dialogue became important. Exercising a higher level of concern for my student, I found that they were more liable to calm down when meditating on what conflicted with their belief, and that they were able to greatly step outside of their train of thought to accept me as a helper to their understanding. This is what led me to believe that new meaning can be created through former experiences to reveal a positive vision for the present and the future.

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As previously mentioned, this paper is written to guide and to challenge the way leaders in motivational, inspirational, and spiritual education both teach and relate to their students. Our intention should be to guide our students into forming a mental *space* or *environment* for pruning and purging a “philosophy” suitable to their person. To get our students encouraged to challenging themselves in this way, we must both model the ability to deal with ambiguity and also be willing to, at the cost of balancing inquiry and discovery with advice and guidance, re-interpret popular and personal mental models and assumptions for investing in beliefs and habits that greatly serve the new mindset we introduce them to (Stillman, Freedman, Jorgensen, & Stillman, 2017). This task, while involving much work on the part of our students, first begins with us, and how we approach their particular learning situation and emotional state.

The one comment I most value from people reaching out to me after reading one of my books, or from people after hearing me discuss a certain topic, is that they felt as though I was conversing with them. It is in my personality to understand, and excruciatingly, the needs of the person or people that I am speaking with, to address them in ways that get them thinking differently about the subject. Challenging my own point of view, and challenging the thoughts and feelings attached to that point of view, the more I began to get others engaged in the same challenge, the more I began to realize that we all hurt, and that we all hurt in ways limiting the development of our human and spiritual character, and that for every painful or uncomfortable memory, there is a an experience attached to it. Speaking in ways to address what is uncomfortable, and conversing with or encouraging learners in activities challenging their core belief, I began to notice them

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observing their challenge in a new light, seeing their difficulty not necessarily as a challenge, but as a thought-provoking prompt.

This paper's analysis on the labor it takes to not only guide one into constructing a new personal learning *space*, but also on the willingness of our students to challenge their adopted or cultivated paradigms shows that, as educators, we need to be more inclined to serve the learning needs and desires of our students above simply instructing them. Facilitating learning through empathy, or through understanding and serving the interest of our student, should we discern a more complete meaning behind coaching or educating through sincerely resonating with the experiences of our students, this presented research can help us to remember to give our students a reason to embrace their feelings for making sense of them.

I remember a conversation that I once had with someone, who I will call "K." Two years ago I received a message from one of my social media accounts. "K" reached out to me to better understand what I was teaching, yet, now looking back on the event, ultimately wanted to challenge what I was saying. Our communication lasted for a number of weeks, with them stating their position, and strongly, and with me, while giving analysis and my own personal experience with the subject, allowing them to get their position out. Our dialogue eventually got to a point where they seemingly, other than through being stubborn, could no longer support their position. They then began to listen and to reflect on what I was saying.

In this case, and in other meetings thereafter with different individuals, a deep-rooted emotional tie to what they believed kept them stout to that belief. Only after understanding that, while seeing or hearing me on a podcast or on a web show, I am not

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the character they imagine me to be, and hearing of my own ability to relate to them, reason was allowed into the conversation, and after reason, humility to engage in learning.

“K,” while initially or outwardly praising my philosophical stance, inwardly grossly objected to it, using a false pretense to get my attention. After receiving my attention, and after having real conversations with me, and after seeing that I actually am not concerned with doctrine, but rather with what “K” thought, felt, and believed, “K” eventually confessed their agenda, taking into consideration much that I encouraged them to think about. Months later, “K” ended up messaging me a picture of my book of poetry on their dinner table.

Reflecting Practice

Instances like this, that are initially confrontational and then, due to the demeanor that I exercise, transform into a less hostile environment for learning, I attribute to me unknowingly exercising elemental points of emotional intelligence: the first point, reflectively regulating emotions; the second, understanding emotions; the third assimilating emotion in thought; the fourth, perceiving and expressing emotion (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). With my concern over not what they believe, but rather how they arrived at that belief, and how that belief serves their human and their spiritual wellbeing, I do not find it difficult to step away from the moment to see people as being more than their belief. I feel as though this ability of mine is what allows my student to

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feel comfortable enough to not only be their stubborn self, but also that self inwardly concerned about the direction of their belief.

Educating through empathy involves, and in relation to the student, becoming intelligent or aware of one's state of being. A careless coach or educator will miss students' emotional cues, they will lack empathy and connection, they will have difficulty relaying insights, and they will easily fail to engage their emotions in ways to solve problems (Stillman, Freedman, Jorgensen, & Stillman, 2017). As opposed to the careless educator, the careful educator exhibits emotional awareness, they will feel what the learner feels, and from different perspectives, they will sophisticatedly express emotional insights, and include data from within the dialogue to better facilitate the learning process (Stillman, Freedman, Jorgensen, & Stillman, 2017). All in all, the careful educator is first careful of their mental and emotional state.

Our well rounded, or well cared for mental and emotional state will allow us to serve the needs of our learners. Educating through the spirit of empathy, we serve our students by creatively getting them to practice what they are learning, what they understand, and what they think they know. By giving them variations of thought to practice with, and by promoting "sound" or "good" thinking, we open them up to a realm of possibilities heretofore hidden from them. A great part of "learning" is in "practicing," and if we would have our students well enough to both participate in and claim their journey, we need to get them comfortable with "practice," which is something reiterated by research:

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“Learning how to do something better requires regular practice. In the early stages of learning, a learner is conscious of almost everything, but is often unable to identify what is important. As learning progresses, thinking and behavior are gradually refined, and it becomes increasingly automated until the learner can do what they want while paying little attention to doing it” (Fazey, Fazey, & Fazey, 2005).

The desire to educate, and to educate in a way where learning not only becomes fun, but also becomes a rewarding habit, is virtuous, but there appears to be more virtue in serving the educational and the experiential needs of our students. Our learners are exiting *spaces* of information and are ready to enter into a *space* where they control what stream of thought enters and exits. Leading our classrooms through serving the interests of our students, we give them, and for possibly providing the same experience to another, educational models to both adopt and mirror.

As educators, being first careful of our mental and emotional state means realizing that our character, although housed within us, and while personal to us, is for another mind to observe and experience. Before directing another into “philosophy,” the *environment* of our thoughts and feelings needs cultivation, and much like how it says, “The husbandman that laboureth must first be partaker of the fruits.”¹² It is how we embody the principle of “practice,” and of “doing,” that allows our student to feel content with not only practicing the exercising of their mind on the material, or on the *environment* they are constructing, but also venturing out into different variations of that practice.

¹² 2 Timothy 3:6

Variation Matters

There is an approach to teaching or to counseling that is helpful. Educating for the development of “philosophy” is a means whereby what is known may charitably and consensually enter into the secret chambers of another’s mind. By encouraging discernment for “philosophy,” we give students the opportunity to learn from prior knowledge for present personal truth. It is the discovery of this personal truth that will guide our students into realizing a way of life and of living that is rewarding and healing.

This is where a variation in mental activity is needed. Learners need to be and want to feel engaged with the *environment* they are constructing and with the environment they are leaving behind. Offering students variation in thought, in approach, in activity, leads to them better retaining and improving upon adaptability than when constantly practicing the same thing (Fazey, Fazey, & Fazey, 2005), letting them know that they have the capacity to care for their own self. And while it may not be fitting to mention that research reveals that learners who do practice a task in the same way outperform those who have had higher levels of variation in that practice (Fazey, Fazey, & Fazey, 2005), because we are training learners on how to think, we should take into consideration that students will not only be better learners if they are open to how an experience changes how they presently understand, but also if they are open to how others have perceived the same experience (Fazey, Fazey, & Fazey, 2005).

We are, as the research from this paper shows, innovatively creating an experience where mental models are being challenged. The *environment* we are

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encouraging is one where self is put up against its character for making sense of its thoughts and feelings. Allowing our students to take knowledge of what is believed, to then question it in order to reach a conclusion for further examination, we are giving our students the education they have been craving, moving them into habits and into patterns of thought where their perspectives are giving birth to new perspectives for re-arranging and re-defining reality.

Experience has taught me that this mental and emotional regeneration is what they may need in order to find unkind past experiences benevolent. Freke and Gandy further make note of this learning process by writing:

“Birth is not the beginning of life — only of an individual awareness. Change into another state is not death — only the ending of this awareness. Most people are ignorant of the truth, and therefore afraid of death, believing it to be the greatest of all evils. But death is only the dissolution of a worn-out body” (Freke & Gandy, 2018).

We are asking our students, so that they may learn to claim their experience and the performance of that experience, to put their former experience to death. It is our responsibility to make sure that they understand this silencing to be a crucial part of the learning experience, in that by ending the awareness of their former experience, through discovering the meaning of the awareness attached to that former experience, they might, for the sake of cultivating a knowledgeable belief suitable to their person, give new life to their human and spiritual experience. Fazey, Fazey, and Fazey explain:

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“To induce change in our mental models, we must become adept at taking different perspectives by applying ideas like variable and reflective practice. Taking different perspectives allows us to vary our experience and question our current understanding. However, we also need to be open to changing our mental model as our understanding of the system develops. To do this, we need to become ‘good thinkers’” (Fazey, Fazey, & Fazey, 2005).

If the intention behind “philosophy” is discovered through knowing the environment of our thoughts and feelings, then what is discovered can’t just be for us, but for minds encountering our character and personality. Defining “philosophy” to myself is beneficial because it helps me to understand the relevance of my experience and the spirit I can transfer if willing to continue to patiently and humbly fulfill that experience. “Philosophy” is then, aside from and beyond its typical or traditional reference, more than doctrine, or ideology, or perception, or belief, being a way of life, defining how we both think and feel for actions and behaviors revealing not only our inward character, but also the character of whatever we would invent and promote.

The Educator’s Expectation

As careful educators, despite our intention in the classroom, the research presented shows that if we would positively re-direct the way our students approach life and learning, we must have an empathic disposition. If we, as leaders of classrooms, are to guide learners into creating meaning from what appears to have no meaning, if we are

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to care for their sensitivity towards their insecurities, and for creating a shared victory over emotion or mentality, we must therefore take how we lead our classrooms seriously, remembering that leaders affect followers' attitudes and behaviors towards accomplishing stated and intended goals (Baba, Makhdoomi, & Siddiqi, 2019).

There is no greater instrument building an empathic disposition than first experiencing the growth, the development, and the exercising of that disposition towards self. Experience has taught me that I am and can be more patient because I have exercised patience with myself, and that I can listen only when I have listened to and reflected on my own self. Disciplining myself in this manner has made me aware of the fact of the importance of "philosophy" to our human being, and that because "philosophy" is truly what we all hope to discover, educating for "philosophy" means being empathetic towards another not yet acquainted with their self that is to be discovered.

And this thought is exactly what sparks my desire for understanding how to become the best educator or counselor that I can be. My journey to becoming the best educator I can be has led me to question not what I am teaching, but how I am teaching it. Over the years, I have come to learn that when patiently embracing both the positive and the negative effects of a person's character, a door is opened for them to exercise rational thoughts and feelings. Irrational statements originally uttered are, I have found, transformed into thoughtful expressions when acknowledging the emotional damage inflicted upon the conscience of another, leading me to believe that intelligence can come from rightly guided emotion, and that education is more than what we think it is.

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My experience in teaching has led me to believe that, if information should be converted into knowledge, I can't add onto the information some one already has. No matter what I say, no matter how I say it, I will always sound like I'm giving information on my opinion. It is for this reason that I encourage my students to practice reflective and creative thought. Allowing them to challenge their chain of belief, I am getting them, without them even knowing it, to re-define "education" to their experience, which awakens within them an awareness for their *space* of thought and feeling. Adding to this thought, Broome, Pereira, and Anderson, write:

"In constructing meaning in the world, we first engage our senses to provide evidence that we then address affectively, intellectually and practically to make sense of our existence" (Broome, Pereira, & Anderson, 2017).

The reason for assuring our students that their past experiences were necessary for yielding a higher character for self is to get them accustomed to "right education." Our students understand what a wrong education is, being subjected to routines, traditions, and theories failing to bring them into the presence of their self for mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. "Right education" is liberating the mind of our student from the chain or "guilt" of former habits and passions, exposing those former practices as unhealthy through the exercising of critical and reflective thought.

"Right education," because it forces the person to examine or converse with their self for establishing meaning, is a very difficult form of training or instruction. It is a difficult form of training because we are asking our students to take and to weigh their

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acknowledged and their unacknowledged experience. We are, in a sense, prying into the uncharted depths of their memories that not even they desire to enter.

This idea of learning of self through venturing into the unknown domains of our character is a philosophy I retained and do exercise from the Bible. “Learning” is, to the Bible’s mind, defined as “comfort,” because when the mind is edified, it is alleviated of unwanted, conflicting, perplexing, or damaging information, finding comfort in the given revelation for enlightenment. True learning and right education lifts undesirable burdens off of the mind for rescuing the feelings, allowing thoughts to freely flow without unnecessary distractions from within.

Like as it says, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he,”¹³ our feelings affect our thoughts, which affects our actions and our behaviors. Being able to correctly guide our students into a new and achievable stream of thought means being able to discern a reason behind action and behavior, and without harsh or insensitive judgment. How to do this, and in a way where my students felt encouraged to maintain this training on their own, has been my concern, inspiring me to inquire, for the sake of establishing undisturbed communication between educators and their students, of how to thoughtfully approach minds within our classroom.

Taking the this synthesis’ research into consideration, we, as educators, if, for their discovery of mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, the cultivation of “philosophy” is what we must guide our students in to, then we must carefully tend to the wounded individual resting within them. Right “philosophy” kills self-complacency and self-righteousness, developing the spirit of humility within the person. I admit to the

¹³ Proverbs 23:7

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development of humility through the process of philosophy because if properly engaging self, then the person is discovering all of self's deficiencies to better feel for the condition of others. This is why it is important that, as practitioners, we have knowledge of the experience our students face.

From my own experience in this training, I can say that, because I have fought, and still continue to fight to understand my character defects, I am more sympathetic and empathetic towards everyone I encounter. Not everyone is taking the time to know who he or she is on the inside. More preference is given to unkind or traditional opinions about who we should be than quietly discovering who we are, and what we actually believe. Right philosophy, then, and right education, does not care to convince the mind about how or who it should be, but rather about "being," and "being," at its highest mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual potential, who it ought to be.

This fact of "being," and of cultivating "being" within our students, through a reformed manner of learning, is the reason behind this paper's relevance. As educators, it is necessary to remain careful about how we educate and about how we teach the skill or craft of learning. Our profession handles anxious and traumatized minds, minds that are ready to embrace and exercise their right to think and feel, but that do not quite know how. Our aim, when it comes to learning, and to how to learn, should be to inform them of what is "just" and "unjust," and to do so through giving them the opportunity to define learning for themselves. Serving their interests, we are to inspire them to think critically and innovatively, to where they are then able to inspire as they once were inspired by us.

The Hereafter

There is, within the Bible, underneath its very archaic traditional religious philosophy, an underlying philosophy. This philosophy is based upon the premise that “a sound heart is the life of the flesh.”¹⁴ When digging in to and immersed within this discipline, it is understood that when once the human being is edified, so too will the heart of the human being’s character. Mindfully, then, caring for the condition of our thoughts and feelings, an enlightened heart is to be the means whereby our human being is stable enough for an excellent and serviceable living experience.

But according to this underlying philosophy, before the heart of our human being may be enlightened and recovered, the heart of our spiritual or devotional conversation must first be enlightened or recovered. This must first occur because we are not primarily natural creatures; as quoted earlier, “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”¹⁵

When we think on such things as “thought” and “emotion,” their essence enters into a realm outside out of what is natural or physical. Neither a thought nor emotions, in their sphere of existence, are innately physical in their act or operation. “Thought” or “emotion” does not first find physical execution, but are physically performed or executed after mental or inward agitation. The very idea and experience of “thought” and “emotion” allows us to understand that there is more to being human than simply functioning through the mind or chemicals naturally given to our organism.

¹⁴ Proverbs 14:30

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:44

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This *mind* within our human being is what naturally caters to our thoughts and feelings. The individual mindful of their human frame, and careful to correct it, therefore knows to admit, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”¹⁶

In right context of language from within the Bible, the word “good” is a term signifying some *thing* that benevolently edifies. When defining the word “good,” this term is usually understood from how it says, “Be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,”¹⁷ and, “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification,”¹⁸ and, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.”¹⁹

My students cannot move forward in understanding the underlying philosophy related to their human being if they cannot first unlearn and re-learn familiar terms. Coming to me to learn why their experience has not fulfilled them, they must know how to correctly allow words to carry their experience.²⁰ Because the spiritual journey is not ultimately physical, but is mental, coming from an experience where their religion or spirituality was physically executed, and seeing that execution failing to satisfy their need to perform that journey, allowing them to learn how the context of language stimulates performance is key in getting them to realize a “philosophy” to both develop and experiment with.

Guiding learners into mindfully handling their natural and spiritual experience means getting them to understand “good” habits. Everyone cannot do every *thing* alike

¹⁶ Romans 7:18

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 6:18

¹⁸ Romans 15:2

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:29

²⁰ This is demonstrated by the third experimental lesson plan within the Appendix

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and remain content in that course, and so allowing students to grow familiar with the character of their self allows them to know what “good” is to and for them.

Their understanding of that “good” is designed to regenerate and create experience. Knowing that what is “good” is performed for education, allowing students to discover what has not been “good” may lead to the revelation of what is “good.” This revelation unseals knowledge to them and to their experience, giving them wisdom to exercise for continually doing what forwards the refreshing of their spiritual mind.

The regeneration of the spiritual mind is what is needed for the intended discipline in mindfulness. Because our human being is firstly driven by sensations and stimuli beginning from within, the re-organization of what is within means developing a level of awareness for how we govern our human being, or for how we are governed by our human being or by our external experience. With the conscience of our spirituality reviving, we are to better guide the limbs of our body into an experience matching what is already taking place within.

Our students need to understand that they must continue the training we give them in thought and in feeling. Being asleep to their genuine self, and to how their genuine self would define its spirituality, our students must understand their task to continue refining their spiritual mind for what is naturally “good.”

Learners must know, from how we handle their thoughts and feelings, our obligation to them. We are not there to teach them what we know, but how to know. We are not there to dictate the expression of their inquiry. We are in service to their ability to mindfully carry out and fulfill a learning experience. Many of my students come to me looking to escape or evolve from out of the experience of religion. Many of my students

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want to understand the “good” their self would know and not the “good” of an imposed religion or of an unproven belief. As educators, we are in service to their desire to learn, to safely expose and make sense of indecent habits for a “good” train of thought.

It is then, from our service to them, that they may become serviceable to their self, as it says, “He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread.”²¹ The point of mindfully approaching the nature of the inward person is to realize that our hidden or malnourished character, in order to do “good” to our person, must be cared for. Enlightenment of self’s experience is to get the mind aware of the gems that experience gives for life’s refinement. Continually refining the experience by those gems is key to ensuring “good” “philosophy” develops for both mental and spiritual sufficiency.

The research conducted for this synthesis provides steps for educators to ensure that learners know this sufficiency. We need our students cultivating and experimenting with “philosophy.” We may carefully guide their thoughts into developing an *environment* for “philosophy,” but we also need to let them know that it is not us that must care for this *environment*, but them. This paper’s research explains the educator’s involvement in this training as being a servant to the interests of students, and as serving their interests, we are to make known to them interests hidden from them, encouraging them to continue to personally refine their human and spiritual experience.

A mindful journey is a passage or odyssey into the idea of what is personally and benevolently “good.” Realizing that the experience was not right because it had no “good” within it, students may realize that they are not actually the problem, but that they failed to find “good,” or a benevolent service within their experience, because their

²¹ Proverbs 12:11

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performance was not properly edifying them. Finding edification, then, involves understanding the definition of “good,” and then how self would define its “good.” With “good” defined, “philosophy” may then surface to assist in making new meaning out of former experiences.

So there is, in the task of guiding learners, a critical aspect to educating. This attitude is summed up in the saying, “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.”²²

The educator’s responsibility is to serve the joy of their students. With their joy being the possession of their mind for freely performing a beneficial and fulfilling experience, above forcefully admitting their joy into the prison of our belief, we are to maintain the burden of making sure they understand how to define their joy, and in a way where their sorrowful experience, enlightening them to a thoughtfully curated course of learning, is made to appear as possessing a stream of thought.

Students need to know that nothing they have gone through is an accident. As it says, “All these things happened unto them for ensamples,”²³ so every experience, concerning personal and spiritual direction, may be taken for unsealing a perfect message. Becoming mindful of this fact means taking on the labor of making sense of that message. Finding or creating new meaning out of past experiences, students may begin to find value in their self. Kept hidden from them by an oppressive *religion* was a beautiful and gracious character, yet now awakening to their character’s *essence*, they know how to better love who they are.

²² 2 Corinthians 1:24

²³ 1 Corinthians 10:11

The Commitment

And “knowing,” from mindfully exercising the thoughts and feelings, is the point. Taking our students through mindfully growing familiar with their thoughts and feelings means introducing our students to the craft of thought, or of learning how to learn how to think. In this sense, metacognition plays a major part in the benefit of a discipline in mindfulness.

The CCT program has a course entitled *Metacognition*. It is in this course that I, for the first time, learned about the science of metacognition. Put simply, metacognition involves being mindful of one’s thinking processes, such as strategies to tease out the meaning of an unfamiliar word or improve the way in which we remember certain facts (Wilson, 2012). Students exercised in such strategies make use of their brain power’s executive operation, which is responsible for making, monitoring, and evaluating the achievement of goals and for assessing the execution of plans of action (Wilson, 2012). With the executive functions of the brain consisting of self-regulatory skills and behaviors, strategies employing metacognition should heighten awareness not only of one’s behavior, and of how to assess it, but also of another’s thoughts and feelings, to better interpret them for reciprocation.

Mindfully approaching metacognition benefits our student. Metacognition, due to its ability to get the mind aware of its self, can reverse the psychological, emotional, and social barriers given to the student from traditional *educational* institutions. By giving the student power to examine how they perceive, metacognitive strategies awaken the “i” that is lulled to sleep, causing the student, through the cultivation of their higher human

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and spiritual faculties, to become aware of their thoughts, feelings, actions, and behaviors. Through metacognition, the nature of the human being is exercised and refined, its idea of self evolving as its cognition matures.

A mature mind is a soberly assessing mind. To engage in thought, and on how to think, is to engage in the development of becoming aware of “context.” Interacting with “self” informs “self” of its context, that it is not alone, or that there is no “self” without “other,” making it true to believe that instruction on metacognitive strategies supports a process of learning that can be applied across all areas of learning and in students’ lives outside of school (Wilson, 2012). This is undoubtedly how “true education” should be thought of and defined.

True education, for reaching a more logical conclusion about what “is” and what “was” once thought, should link what is learned to what is known. To activate, through metacognitive strategies, this level of care, is to activate, within the student, a care for self-assessment, self-regulation, and self-possession. This activation is due to, as previously noted, the development of one’s mental executive functions, making it fair to conclude or to assert that a willing or conscious mastery of higher-order thinking skills is key to the development of a knowledge that consistently edifies (Wilson, 2012).

And what is to consistently edify but “philosophy”? When in CRCRTH 603, which is a course entitled, *Foundations of Philosophical Thought*, I spent the course meditating on what the actual meaning of “philosophy” is. My conclusions reported of in my final paper are that “philosophy,” while positioned as being a discipline studying the foundation behind the theoretical basis of certain branches of understanding, in the context of this synthesis’ scope and inquiry, is but the reason for why we care to live each

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moment of every day. The “meaning” of “philosophy” points to a self-sacrificing nature, and if not willing to embrace the process of “philosophy,” can it truly be said that we, in whatever we would do, find “meaning”?

“Meaning” cannot just be found. “Meaning” cannot just be discovered. “Meaning” cannot surface from what never once held “meaning,” or cannot arise from what we never attributed “meaning.” There is a process to finding “meaning,” and the research stated within this synthesis shows that every step leads to mindfulness, and that exercising mindfulness leads into an exercising of metacognition, which leads into an understanding of self for “meaning.” It is from this understanding of “self” that “philosophy” is developed, giving to the individual a reason for why they, and for why everything they went through, matters.

Now, with “philosophy” added to the individual student, they may take their present learning experience and weigh it with their former learning experience to understand “right” and “wrong.” “Philosophy’s” process gives our student the ability to make connections out of seemingly disconnecting experiences. Because “philosophy” inspires a will to “know,” “philosophy’s” doer takes on the *image* of its *nature*, becoming a positive inspiration for every mind observing them. The process to learn of and edify self, with it encouraging mental, moral, and spiritual wellbeing, should inspire its doer to produce something mirroring its spirit. This process is important because it trains self to present a kind service that only its individual person can fulfill, and to fail to give time to “philosophy” is an injustice because the person is not only being robbed of their self’s lovely character, but the world is also being robbed of their character’s essence.

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And this, as educators, is the reason for why we must be careful in how we educate. Our responsibility is to enlighten learners of their inward beauty so that they, comprehending the beauty and worth of their self, may spend energy for others in a way where that beauty and worth can inspire. I can attest to this from a recent student of mine.

Just recently a student reached out to me. For the sake of this paper, I will call them “H.” “H” had originally come across me on a web show; I was brought on to discuss the philosophy behind the Bible’s words and how the Christian philosophy diverts from the Bible’s philosophy. After seeing this show, according to “H,” they searched the Internet for a way to contact me. Coming across my phone number, they gave me a call.

Grocery shopping on a Sunday morning, I receive a text: “Is this you?” I can remember responding, “I’m me lol but who is this?” It turns out they are from Hawaii. After showing her husband the show I appeared on, he then encouraged her to reach out to me. After I finished grocery shopping, I gave her a call, which lasted for around an hour and a half. A great relationship had then formed.

Thereafter she wanted to schedule times to talk on the phone. After hearing about why she reached out, I began to design a set of lessons for her. I felt as though, through these planned sessions, she would get to understand where she not only needed to be, but how her past experience served her present inquiry. Our classes were great, and her questions were even greater, getting me to reflect on my own self and on the material I was presenting to her. But then, two months later, when our scheduled time together would end, I wouldn’t hear from her for another year.

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Hearing her journey, and seeing the kind of character her “philosophy” has adopted, I am happy that I was not in her life during that period of transition. Recently speaking with her, she told me about how she had to let go of certain feelings about religion in order to move forward in her devotional journey. Listening to how she now influences her new church, I get a better understanding of the saying, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”²⁴

This scene in the book of Mark tells of an individual that was healed. Wanting to journey and to travel with his healer, the healer tells the individual, although it is well to demonstrate your gratefulness towards the one that healed you, it is even better to go and to return to those that you love, and that love you, and to express to them the wellness experienced. My conversation with “H,” seeing as how she had been inwardly and philosophically healed, and how her recovery had inspired her to more perfectly impact those around her, reminded me of this scene in the book of Mark, how that an educator should never take the glory of the student’s regeneration, but should let the wellness experienced be that individual’s expression enlightening every one encountering it.

The glory of the student’s wellbeing is not to be attributed to the educator, but rather to the “philosophy” cultivated by our efforts. Being a careful educator means giving respect where respect is due, and all respect is due to the individual and to their developing “philosophy.” Our responsibility is to guide into the possibility for knowledge, so that the knowledge created may give birth to a new person. Once *born*, this new *person* is no longer our responsibility. Our role is to safely ensure that new

²⁴ Mark 5:19

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person and their new “philosophy” meet, mingle, fall in love, develop a fondness for one another, and marry. Once married, supervision is given to “philosophy,” and if we have been careful enough, our student will actually watch over their “philosophy,” assisting their “philosophy” in its watch over them.

Conclusion

The research presented in this synthesis shows why, concerning human and spiritual growth and development, it is important to realize that the paradigm personally adopted should not be thought of as the intended reality. We, as human beings, have a moral obligation to our self, to ensure that we are fulfilled. As human beings, it is our personal responsibility to accept accountability over how we learn, and over how we express what we are learning. As educators guiding such an assignment, it is our task to carefully inform our students that they are the educator they have longed for, and that their greatest training occurs as they, for present and future insight, continue to learn how to make sense of what they have been through.

A more suitable vision and version of self exists. This is the message we must give to our students. As we understand their heartbreak, as we make sense of their frustration, as we rationalize their belief and their unbelief, as we scrutinize their theories, as educators training students on how to both form and exercise life-altering habits of mind, our students must know how to re-organize their thoughts and feelings for developing an inward learning “space.” They must, for embracing who they should be and what they should believe, make good use of their time, skills, character, and memories.

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The research presented in this synthesis shows that, in the right environment, profound involvement with not only what is being taught, but also with self, this educational goal is best served through empathy. The careful educator is emotionally intelligent. The careful educator knows the downside of emotion, but they also understand the intimate relationship between emotion and learning. Educating through empathy we, in order to become them in their circumstance, listen to our students, setting our self aside to join them in their experience. Doing so allows us to train our students on how to gain control of their emotions to both rationally think and create.

Our human faculties, when they are not challenged or when they are not properly served, wear down. Serving the learning interest of our students, it is our responsibility to guide our students into finding “passion” or “desire.” This synthesis elaborates on how making sense of former experiences incites “desire,” which then encourages “philosophy.” Students needing competence, confidence, self-love, and communion, are seeking “philosophy,” and as educators carefully guiding their experience, it is our responsibility to make sure they have the tools to not only continue to learn of and exercise that “philosophy,” but to also own that “philosophy” by guiding others into the same experience.

The present study answers a lot of questions I’ve had about educating, and has revealed to me techniques and tools to personally and professionally employ. I entered into the CCT program knowing that I, while being and continuing to be sound in my field, was just as poor, and if not more, than the educators, ministers, and inspirational speakers of that same field. Maybe I am hard on myself, but I knew, for my professional development, for how I guided minds in either group or individual settings, and for how I

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felt that I wasn't quite reaching them as I wanted, that I needed something more to offer them, but I couldn't quite understand what that was.

This synthesis conveys that “more.” There is more to educating than giving fact. There is more to educating than listening. There is more to educating than responding. There is more to educating than preparing the “perfect” lesson or lecture. There is more to educating than education itself. Correctly educating means becoming the student, tailoring every thought, every remark, every gesture, and every exercise according to their interest and need. Correctly educating means serving the interest of the student, which means creating a connection with them through dialogue, joining into reflection with them. My time in the CCT program has taught me that a professional educator is one that is mindful of both the internal and the external environment of the human being, and this is that “more” I will continue to apply and investigate.

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APPENDIX: EXAMPLE LESSON PLANS

LESSON OR WORKSHOP PLAN#1 (for adults from age 21-64)

Purpose:

Goal 1: To develop students' imagination for thinking outside of the box and for being able to better articulate the world/field and the dialogue inside of them.

Goal 2: To give students the opportunity to reflect on how they interpret the world/field, and to think about what they see in relation to themselves.

Goal 3: Students will be able to develop an appreciation for thinking about how they feel.

Goal 4: Students will be able to effectively learn how to utilize strong written, oral, and communication skills.

Expected Outcomes:

Goal 1: Students are able to reflect not only on their personal experiences, but also draw relation to the experiences of their classmates.

Goal 2: Students are able to learn how to collect and gather data from their "world" for learning how to apply meaning to their memories and to what they experience.

Goal 3: Students are able to better assess personal goals through discovering their character.

Goal 4: Students, reflecting on their own experience, will be more likely to participate and to share what they discover through the activity.

Goal 5: Students will become aware of their own mental processes used to solve problems.

Goal 6: Students, by reflecting on their thoughts, and by thinking about how they made conclusions, will be able to better understand who they are as individuals, and learn to respect the opinion of others.

Materials and Media to be used:

1. A notebook (for students)
2. Pencil or pen (for students)
3. Image used for discussion by instructor (PowerPoint)
4. Question proposed by instructor (PowerPoint)

Procedural Steps:

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1. Show a quote to all of the students on a PowerPoint slide – an idea I care the students to meditate on. An example would be, “Learn to do well,” Isaiah 1:17.
2. I would ask the students to spend a moment observing the quote, and to then spend ten to fifteen minutes writing about how the words made them feel, and why it made them feel the way that it did. I would ask them to consider what each word in that verse may mean, and why it is represented to them in the way that it is.
3. I would then ask them, based upon what they assume the quote means, to create an outcome, or to rationalize an outcome where this verse is honored. An example of a response would be, “What is to be learned?” “What does it mean to do ‘well’?” “Why is it necessary to learn what is ‘well’?”
4. I would then ask the students to meditate on a question they have come up with and to write out a thoughtful answer to it. I would encourage the students to think about why the question is relevant to them, to their prior knowledge of what is “well,” and of how to do it, and how they would re-arrange the question to better think about it.
5. After ten to fifteen minutes of meditating and writing, I would select one student to share their thoughts, and to share why their conclusion is what it is, and how they arrived at that conclusion.
6. For the remainder of the activity, I would then challenge the students to think deeply about their classmates responses, giving them time to resonate with what the chosen student has said, and allowing them to voice their opinion, and their discoveries from the picture that was shown, or the sentence that was asked.

Accommodations for students/participants with Special Needs:

I honestly do not see any necessary accommodations for students or participants with special needs, but if any should be made, then I may consider:

1. Instead of showing a quote, I may play a video portraying the essence of the verse or thought in question.
2. To make learning and thinking more acceptable, break the students up into small groups, or assign students to individual partners.
3. If I am not presenting the material in an understandable way, to develop a more precise and simple way to get the idea across.

Assessment Procedures:

1. The Portfolio: Students will be required to keep a special portfolio of every written activity. Throughout the period of the activity’s duration, students will keep and grade, or judge, their progress in thought and in perception, and by the end of that period of time, will write one final assignment reflecting on the character they observe in their responses, and on how they may now differ from the character they observe at the beginning and throughout the course.

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2. Feedback: Each student will fill out a survey about their experience, and about what did and didn't work for them, why it did and didn't work, and how they believe the activity can be improved.
3. The Discussion: The faculty, at the end of the activity's duration, will receive every portfolio and survey from every student and will discuss findings. The group will discuss what learning principles were and weren't met, and which ones failed to surface. The group will also discuss, according to the feedback and the content within the portfolios, better ways to implement the goal of helping students better think and feel about how they interpret the world within their self.

Follow-up Steps:

1. What should next occur is that each student will, as did the instructor originally, lead the course.
2. Students will then be required to respond to the student's picture, sentence, or thought provoking question, as they did for instructors'.

LESSON OR WORKSHOP PLAN#2 (for adults from age 21-64)

Purpose:

Goal 1: To give students the opportunity to expand their prior knowledge on the Bible.

Goal 2: To give students the opportunity to reflect on their interpretation of the Bible.

Goal 3: To let students safely and confidently question, challenge, and meditate on the validity of their religious beliefs.

Goal 4: To train students on how to think about the language and context of the Bible's words.

Goal 5: To increase students' confidence not on their religious tradition, but on their ability to think without their religious tradition.

Goal 6: To increase students' love and respect of self from meditating on the Bible's words.

Goal 7: To introduce and familiarize students with the philosophy within the Bible.

Expected Outcomes:

Goal 1: Students will be able to confidently distinguish between the philosophy within the Bible and Bible-mimicking religions.

Goal 2: Students will, for drawing real conclusions about the Bible's philosophy, learn how and where to apply their prior religious knowledge.

Goal 3: By reflecting on the language and context of the Bible's words, students will be able to shape their own devotional belief and experience.

Goal 4: From listening and communicating with classmates, students will be able to better reflect on their experience with religion.

Goal 5: Students will, from learning how to think about the language and context of the Bible's words, be able to become independent thinkers and learners, withdrawing from self-cultivated and inherited religious information to exercise personal knowledge acquired through inquiry.

Goal 6: Students will develop an awareness of their thoughts and feelings through exercising their mind on the Bible's philosophy.

Goal 7: Students will understand why it is well to personally reflect on and investigate the Bible's words.

Materials and Media to be used:

1. A notebook or laptop (for students)
2. Pencil or pen (for students)
3. PowerPoint (for instructor)

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4. Bible (for both students and instructor)

Procedural Steps:

1. Point out a certain passage from the Bible and explain its relevance to the discussion.
2. Explain the context of the language within the passage, most likely citing other passages to expound upon the main passage's idea.
3. Ask students why such a passage may have been chosen and how it relates to the discussion.
4. Open up the floor to discussing where the instructor's explanation of the passage fails to meet their understanding of it, and how their traditional religious belief may be impacting their ability to see the passage in any other way.
5. In the discussion, get the students to challenge their self and their classmates by getting them to think about why they think the way that they do, and how they may undo or unlearn their train of thought to better comprehend the passage's meaning.
6. Ask the students why they believe what they believe about the Bible. Get students to think about why a difference between what is in the Bible and what their religious tradition teaches exists, and how that misinformation, although unsettling, can actually benefit the growth and development of their belief's intellect.
7. Ask students to reflect on what steps they would take to ensure their belief's growth and development.

Accommodations for students/participants with Special Needs:

I do not see any necessary accommodations for students or participants with special needs, but if any should be made, then I may consider:

1. To make learning and thinking more tolerable, break the students up into small groups, or assign students to individual partners.
2. If I am not presenting the material in an understandable way, to develop a more precise and simple way to get the idea across.

Assessment Procedures:

1. Ask students to keep and document a sheet having two columns. In the left column, students will record "ah-ha moments," or instances where new connections are made. In the right column, students will record how those new connections differ from what was previously thought.
2. The Assignment: Students will, weekly, with their two-column document as a potential guide, write a reflection about their thoughts and feelings of the previous class, and of its material, to keep within a portfolio. At the end of a certain

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- number of weeks, students will then write a reflective paper (a self-assessment) on their collective experience, explaining what it has been like to apply what they have been learning, how what they have been learning has impacted how they see both themselves and the world, what this may mean for them and their belief, and how they intend to strengthen the application of this experience.
3. Feedback: Each student will fill out a survey about their experience, and about what did and didn't work for them, why it did and didn't work, and how they believe the activity can be improved.
 4. The Discussion: The faculty, at the end of the activity's duration, will receive every portfolio and survey from every student and will discuss findings. The group will discuss what learning principles were and weren't met, and which ones failed to surface. The group will also discuss, according to the feedback and the content within the portfolios, better ways to implement the goal of helping students better think and feel about how they interpret the world within their self.

Follow-up Steps:

1. The same process repeats, this time a new verse, with new and connecting thoughts, is presented to the group.

LESSON OR WORKSHOP PLAN#3 (for adults from age 21-64)

Purpose:

Goal 1: To give students the opportunity to reflect on their personal goals.

Goal 2: To teach students the reason behind allowing the experience to define itself.

Goal 3: To get students thinking about how the process to achieve a personal learning and performance goal can better their character.

Goal 4: To get students reflecting on the importance of perseverance.

Goal 5: To get students thinking about what they are passionate about, and why.

Expected Outcomes:

Goal 1: Students, reflecting on and making sense of what they are passionate about, will understand the type of character needed to achieve their goal.

Goal 2: Students will, by meditating on the various verses and concepts, gain more confidence in their ability to achieve the performance they desire.

Goal 3: Students, after having reflected on the various verses and concepts, will be able to exercise greater empathy with one another, showing respect towards the thoughts and feelings not only of their classmates, but of anyone achieving what appears to be impossible.

Goal 4: Reflecting on their desire for achieving a real spiritual or devotional experience, students will learn the benefit of initiative, and of how staying true to one's intention for self-betterment can lead to positive unexpected opportunities for creating sense.

Materials and Media to be used:

1. A notebook (for students)
2. Pencil or pen (for students)
3. PowerPoint (for instructor)
4. The Text: "Elephant Farm," by Isabelle Traveler (for both students and instructor)

Procedural Steps:

1. The subject of creation must be highlighted. Point out to the class a verse where the subject of creation is highlighted.
2. Point out a verse: "I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you," Proverbs 1:23.
3. Get students to think about how the words in the verse shape the meaning behind the context within the verse. Get students to think about what the verse, by that context, is saying. Get students to think about, concerning growth through

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- “words,” what personal goals they have, and where their character, in order to reach them, needs improving, and how they intend to better or challenge their self to achieve them.
4. Ask the students questions to get them thinking about how the text personally relates to them: “Can you see yourself relying on words for training your spirituality?” “Are you willing to have your thoughts and feelings refreshed only by words?” “Would you be willing to go through an experience where you have to actually make sense of words in order to understand the context of those words?” Are you willing to allow that new experience to re-define your former experience?” “Would you be willing to let this new experience help you make sense of your former experience?”
 5. Give students time to reflect on these thoughts, either through an activity, such as “free writing,” an open discussion, or group work.
 6. Ask students to reflect on what steps they would take to ensure their belief’s growth and development.

Accommodations for students/participants with Special Needs:

I do not see any necessary accommodations for students or participants with special needs, but if any should be made, then I may consider:

1. To make learning and thinking more tolerable, break the students up into small groups, or assign students to individual partners.
2. If I am not presenting the material in an understandable way, to develop a more precise and simple way to get the idea across.

Assessment Procedures:

1. Upon completing the full discussion of this book, the students will write a paper reflecting on how they now think about perseverance, and how their thoughts differ from when before the discussion of this book took place. The students will write about their change in knowledge, and on what skills, attitudes, and behaviors they must now put forward in order to further what they have been learning.
2. At the end of every class session related to this book, ask a compelling question for the students to answer; “How was perseverance demonstrated? In what ways could have perseverance been demonstrated better? Do you think you could have done what Sook did? What did Sook’s actions or behavior mean to you?”
3. The Discussion: The faculty, at the end of the activity’s duration, will receive every portfolio and survey from every student and will discuss findings. The group will discuss what learning principles were and weren’t met, and which ones failed to surface. The group will also discuss, according to the feedback and the

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content within the portfolios, better ways to implement the goal of helping students better think and feel about how they interpret the world within their self.

Follow-up Steps:

1. A new book will be chosen for examination. The same process will repeat, but with different compelling activities.