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Editors' Preface

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Editors' Preface

The value of contemplative practices in advancing well-being, deeper learning, and a sense of community is becoming well known and documented on many campuses. For the 2019 online issue of the *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry* we received twice the number of manuscripts (40) received in 2018 and it was difficult to decide which ones to work with and publish. Our criteria were not simply focused on which manuscripts were closest to publication standards for academic journals. Equally important was what best reflected urgent and long-term issues in higher education. What emerged this year included adapting contemplative practices from different spiritual traditions to secular classrooms; deepening mindfulness in teacher training and trauma-informed education; deepening social awareness in service-learning initiatives and community-building, and refining how we think about learning assessment and measuring contemplative practice.

1: THE ANNUAL ARTHUR ZAJONC LECTURE

For the second annual Arthur Zajonc Lecture on Contemplative Education, artist and dance history professor Veta Goler gave a presentation entitled **If the Beautiful See Themselves, They Will Love Themselves: Contemplative Practice and Cultural Healing**. This is more than a lecture transcript—she offers her audience engaging experiences and practices that are profound and practical. She notes early on, “While based in thoughts about the black liberation struggle, the approach I will discuss is not just for black people, but for everyone.” She goes on to say, “The time has passed for one great leader to show the way...,” and to that end she includes practices and references to her own work and the work of four artists (Dianne McIntyre, Alice Coltrane, Alice Walker, and Minnie Evans) all of whom use contemplative practices to help us “find our right work to do in our little corner of the world to contribute to the change we want.” This lecture sets the tone for an issue that documents how higher education is being transformed by contemplative practices.

2: REFLECTIONS

In **Advancing Black Youth Justice and Healing through Contemplative Practices and African Spiritual Wisdom**, Michelle C. Chatman uses mindfulness and contemplative approaches in instruction to support student self-awareness, deepen learning, and build community. Her approach also draws on her own experience in West African and Caribbean traditions, “helping young people learn how to still themselves to connect with a deeper sense of who they are, one that is grounded in compassion, love, and African wisdom. From that solid grounding, students can begin to heal from the traumas of the past....” This is a reflection that challenges readers to connect not only with the secular approaches to mindfulness but to the possibility of their own heritages as a source of wisdom relevant today.

In **Teaching in Outrageous Times: Vipassana Practice and the Pedagogical Power of Anger**, Cathryn Bailey dispels the notion of anger as an emotion to be shunned as an always-inappropriate expression, especially for socially disempowered groups. Reviewing her own journey with vipassana practice and yoga as a white, out lesbian professor, she explores judging ourselves negatively and transforming anger without dismissing it. This reflection is prompted by urgent questions: If I focus on such powerful feelings, will my class devolve into a political rallying point rather than a site for disciplined historical, philosophical, and sociological analysis? How can I move into the realm of anger such that my time with students does not become a therapy session, a scenario that I am not qualified to facilitate?

Caroline Barratt moves the experience and importance of connectedness front and center in her reflection, **The Contemplative and Critical in Community**. She reflects on the experience of organizing and participating in a four-day Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium that brought together 24 educators from different disciplines, institutions, and countries. A sense of deep connection developed as they explored topics relating to social justice, discrimination, industrial action, the neo-liberalization of higher education, and how work in the classroom engaged with or was affected by these issues. The event clearly demonstrated to Barratt how the contemplative can bring us into a closer relationship with the critical. Such experience challenges preconceptions of contemplative practice as being a predominantly individualistic or even narcissistic enterprise.

3: ARTICLES

Some authors adapted traditional methods that go back centuries. Drawing on practices of medieval monasteries and the early universities in **Using Lectio Divina as an In-Class Contemplative Tool**, Jake Wright describes a secularized version of *Lectio Divina* in an introductory philosophy course. He goes beyond the benefits to discuss potential challenges, including the practice's perceived religiosity. This adaptation reflects an expanding interest in "deep reading" and the noncognitive aspects of philosophical practice, aspects that are often ignored in the practice of analytic philosophy. What makes it contemplative? Is adapting Lectio Divina a case of cultural appropriation?

Another crucial area that may benefit from greater attention by contemplative educators is service-learning. Service-learning initiatives are employed at many universities to enhance community relationships and give students practical experiences; however, in practice, these well-intentioned initiatives may reinforce social divisions and propagate white supremacy culture. In **Mindful Practices to Interrupt White Supremacy in Service-Learning Education** Melissa Jean and Jennifer F. Steinfeld use contemplative practice and mindful pedagogies to evaluate their own social positions and help students confront biases and prejudices. The authors conclude with the necessity of deep reflection by instructors as well as students for the development of meaningful community.

In **Mindful Assessment in Support of Student Learning** Eileen Kogl Camfield and Leslie Bayers explore the uncertainty over accurately measuring learning. Assessment has drifted from its intended purpose: to give feedback on student learning in the context of a class or program for the purpose of continual educational improvement. Some fear that assessment does not cultivate genuine curiosity or deep learning. In their experience, classroom activities organically become more meaningful when everyone in the room feels connected to and invested in the learning and in one another. It is within those spaces of groundedness and connection nurtured through mindfulness that deep and transformative learning flourishes.

In **Construction of a Scale of Contemplative Practice in Higher Education: An Exploratory Study** by Maryann Krikorian and R. T. Busse we return to our beliefs about measuring learning and contemplative

practice in particular. Some scholars have formed a more expansive view of knowledge that moves beyond the cognitive notion of intellect. For example, emotional intelligence theory posits that human intelligence encompasses both cognitive and emotional competencies, providing a framework for the concept known as contemplative practice. In this article, methods of scale development from psychology are applied to new territory. The purposes of this study were: (a) to develop a self-report measure, the Scale of Contemplative Practice in Higher Education (SCOPE), and (b) to explore issues of validity and reliability related to the SCOPE. The work is not over: it is an exploratory study, inviting researchers to re-consider population sampling and related mindfulness scales, and inviting feedback and debate on whether contemplative practice can be studied and measured this way.

As contemplative practices are included in more disciplines and campus activities, we see applications to new groups. To date we have not seen much research on the impacts of mindfulness on preservice teacher candidates. Stress and a lack of self-efficacy are variables leading to educator burnout and exiting the profession—right at a time when we need more and better prepared teachers. In **Mindfulness for Teacher Candidates: An Exploratory Study to Examine Teacher Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Awareness** by Ernest Solar we learn of a specifically adapted course for preservice teachers, including examination of performance expectations. The results of this study are an important contribution to efforts in higher education and PK-12 to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified educators.

4: CASE STUDIES

Returning to the campus community, in **The Compassion Project: A Community College Case Study on Cultivating Compassion and Understanding through Mindfulness** by Linda Domenitz, we learn from her decades of experience that affiliation, trust, and security—qualities that can be increased through contemplative practices when enculturated in the learning community—show evidence that these qualities are particularly supportive for vulnerable learners, who typically have multiple stressors in their lives. In some community colleges completion rates are low, particularly for the low-income students. Many efforts to strengthen retention and persistence have focused on academic and financial support, and college administrators have become more knowledgeable

about ameliorating some of the conditions that contribute to these challenges. Contemplative practices, when embraced, also have a way of creating bidirectional influence, which helps to shape the very institutional culture that supports students who may be at high risk of dropping out. This report explains the history, evolution, and recent outcomes of one New England community college's endeavor to explore how contemplative practices might cultivate greater capacities for compassion and understanding amongst students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Ranjeeta Basu, Jocelyn Ahlers, Jacky Thomas, Marie Thomas, and Jill Weigt contributed to **Working Toward Beloved Community: Contemplative Practice and Social Justice In One Public University**. This paper continues the discussion of contemplative practice and the critical lens. The authors offer a descriptive case study of the ways a group of faculty, staff, and students introduced contemplative practices into a medium-sized state university community, with the long-term goal of fostering justice and inclusion for all members of that community. Using documents and oral and written narratives from key participants, they detail the ways community has been fostered through shared contemplative practices; faculty learning communities (FLCs) focused on contemplative pedagogy, compassion, and social justice; and the use of contemplative practices to underpin and guide decision-making. Evaluations from students and faculty members involved in these initiatives suggest that the use of contemplative practices not only serves to create connection and belonging but also is laying the foundation for spaces where the hard work of creating inclusion and justice can happen.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we welcome any comments or questions.

Sincerely,
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