Seeing the Whole Elephant:
Understanding the Nature of Mindfulness

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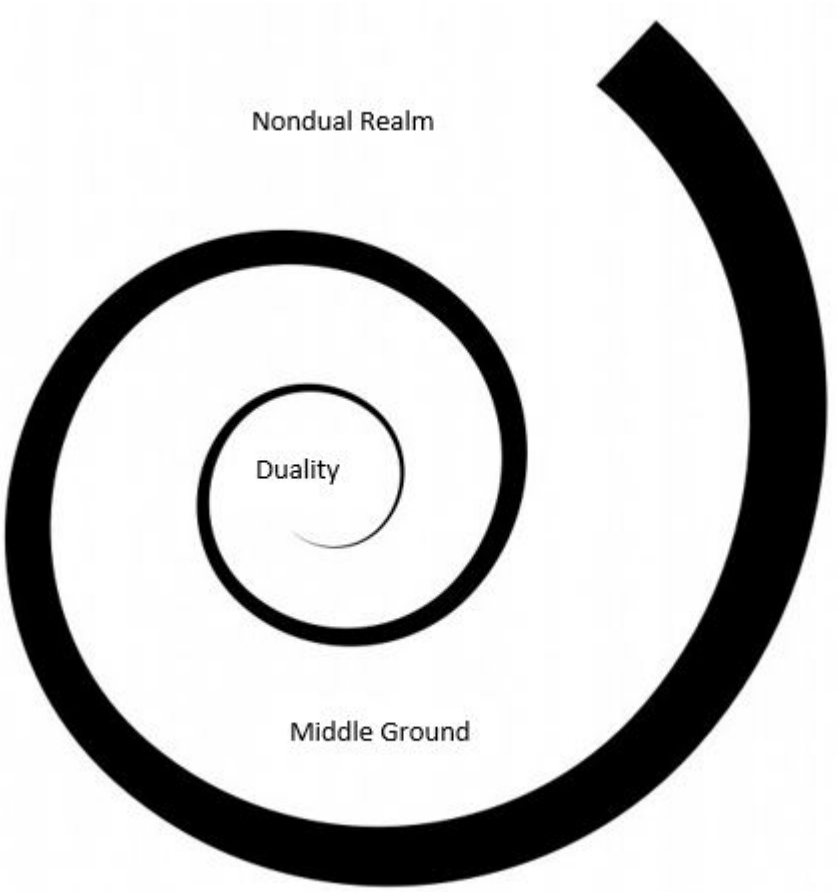

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc in Mindfulness Studies at the School of Education, University of Aberdeen (March 2020)

“I declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that all quotations have been distinguished appropriately and the source of information specifically acknowledged.”

Katrina Gordon (Student ID 51553547)

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Abstract

There is currently a lack of consensus regarding the definition of “mindfulness” (Dam *et al.*, 2017). This confusion may stem from the variety of different *ways of knowing* mindfulness. This study aims to develop a secular understanding of the nature of mindfulness through experiential, arts-based research. Using musical composition as a method and taking a metaxological approach (Desmond, 1995), this project seeks to investigate the nature of mindfulness from a variety of perspectives; from dualistic, rational attention to intuitive, nondual awareness. Dualism differentiates, whereas nondual awareness indicates nondifferentiation of subject and object: the former is a scientific approach while the latter is the realm of religion and the arts. The metaxological approach maintains an awareness of what lies *between*, whether investigating material, conceptual or cognitive aspects of experience.

The author, a professional composer, journaled her experience of “being mindful” (i.e. simply noticing, with curiosity) as she created an orchestral work. The data evidenced mindfulness of her extraordinary inner world during this period. Profound insights were documented, including some which, themselves, provided analysis of the nature of mindfulness within the spectrum of duality. Mindfulness from a nondual perspective was experienced as pure Being: this nondual porosity of Being was revealed to infuse all experience.

Considering this, it is recommended that the secular mindfulness community adopt a radically *explicit* approach towards developing mindful awareness of the perspectives of **duality**, and of **nonduality**, to develop holistic practice habits which are balanced, healthy and beneficial.

Keywords: mindfulness; music; nondual; metaxological; composition; orchestra

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Seeing the Whole Elephant:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Context and Rationale

This arts-based dissertation seeks to gain an understanding of the nature of mindfulness by examining theoretical and experiential perspectives through the process of musical composition.

The author is a professional musician and composer with an aspiration to understand the mechanisms behind the effects of music-making in relation to the workings of the musician's mind (Sluming *et al.*, 2002; Green, 2005; Levitin, 2009; Creech *et al.*, 2013; Moradzadeh, Blumenthal and Wiseheart, 2015; Rogenmoser *et al.*, 2017; Ascenso, Perkins and Williamon, 2018).

It has been suggested that the practice of music can be viewed as mindfulness practice, and this author's experience concurs (Steinfeld and Brewer, 2015; Gordon, 2017). However, the ongoing lack of consensus surrounding the definition of "mindfulness" (Chiesa, 2013) is a barrier to conducting meaningful research into the role of mindfulness as a potential source of orchestral musicians' widely varying experiences of health and well-being, which is this author's main area of interest.

Therefore, this dissertation adopts a "self-study" approach (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2003; Fraser and Wilson, 2010; Lunenberg, Zwart and Korthagen, 2010) to developing a holistic understanding of the nature of mindfulness through observation of the author's experience of being mindful during the process of musical composition.

1.2 The Key Concept: Nonduality - The Elephant in the Room

Loy describes the term *nondual*: “no concept is more important in… religious thought... and none is more ambiguous” (2019, p. 3). Although this concept relates to the source of all religion, the author, for this study, adopts a secular understanding of nondual as “the nondifferentiation of subject and object” (ibid., p. 13).

Musical composition is a practical exploration of duality (i.e. the differentiation of subject and object; e.g. audience and performer; sound and silence). Concurrently, composition is also a uniquely practical and accessible way to explore nonduality through the practice of creativity (Sprigge, 1983, p. 253; Loy, 2019, pp. 13, 156–159). During performance, the individual elements of the orchestral score manifest as one complete musical creation: many of the notional boundaries between performers, score and audience become blurred or even vanish completely. Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan, a devout Catholic, describes this nonduality of the communication of his music thus:

> *"It’s a three-way communication that is mystical and magical"* (2019, 2’35")

In the process of musical composition, something complete and tangible appears from nothing, and this manifestation is channelled solely through the composer’s mind in an act which defies the usual dualistic distinctions between subject and object. Therefore, noticing the experience of the composer’s mind provides exciting potential for developing a secular understanding of the nature of mindfulness within the nondual realm.

The embracing of duality as a core component of nonduality, and vice-versa, has also been explored by the Irish Catholic philosopher William Desmond, who created the metaxological approach which infuses every aspect of this dissertation (Desmond, 1990, 1995, 2014; Desmond and Simpson, 2012). This approach fundamentally involves always being prepared to look *between*, whether investigating material, conceptual or cognitive aspects of experience.

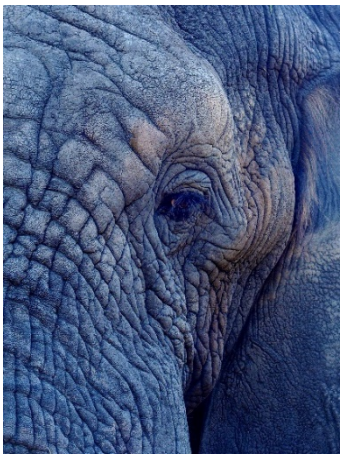

Illustration 1: The Elephant

There is an Eastern parable: "The Blind Men and the Elephant" (Saxe, 2010). Six blind men encounter an elephant for the first time and each come to radically different (dualistic) conclusions as to the nature of the beast, due to their inability to be able to see the whole picture.

This study aims to explore the composer's personal experience of the nature of mindfulness within a spectrum of viewpoints from dualistic to nondual.

1.3 The Research Problem: What is "mindfulness"?

Because the term "mindfulness" has been discussed over many centuries and across many cultures, there is confusion surrounding its definition. This issue has been recognised and is the topic of inconclusive debate (e.g. Dam *et al.*, 2017; Batchelor *et al.*, 2018). This lack of consensus provides a challenging climate in which to conduct academic research about how mindfulness can be utilised.

The diversity of mindfulness practices across Buddhist traditions and contemporary interventions includes a spectrum of interpretations and understandings of the relationship between duality and nonduality within practice (Dunne, 2011). Dunne describes nondual mindfulness as "lying outside of the Buddhist mainstream" (ibid., p. 71) and yet also asserts that "MBSR [Jon Kabat-Zinn's secular Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme] is overall adopting a nondual approach to practice" (2011, p. 75). Kabat-Zinn also admits that "there was from the very beginning of MBSR an emphasis on nonduality" (2011, p. 292), although he was less explicit about this aspect when introducing the programme (ibid., p. 282).

In this way, implicitly nondual mindfulness practices have become mainstream within our dualistic culture in the western hemisphere over recent decades. This conflation of approaches may be the cause of some issues, not only within

Buddhist circles but also for those who wish to define secular mindfulness for the purposes of research.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

This project aims to review the literature and conduct an experiential, arts-based study to develop a holistic, secular understanding of the nature of mindfulness.

The objectives are:

- to consider a sample of the literature representing the historical diversity of socio-cultural perspectives on mindfulness;
- to develop an understanding of why so many contrasting perspectives about mindfulness have arisen;
- informed by the literature, to document the author's experience of "being mindful" over a period of 15 weeks whilst working on a commission to compose an orchestral work, and subsequent reflections on hearing the premiere performance;
- to synthesise the findings from the literature review and the arts-based self-study, thus providing a personal perspective regarding the nature of mindfulness.

1.5 Structure and Content

1.5.1 Theoretical framework

Underpinning all aspects of this study is a robust commitment to the theoretical framework provided by a metaxological approach (Desmond, 1990, 1995, 2014; Kinsella, 2000). This term was coined by Desmond using the Greek "metaxu" meaning "between" and "logos" meaning "discourse" (2014, p. xxxvi).

Metaxology takes account of what lies "between" in every sense, and this is apposite, as this is also where the communication resides in music-making:

> *"Music is the space between the notes"* (Debussy, cited by Koomey, 2008, p. 96)

Desmond's philosophy relies on an assumption of the porosity of being itself and also the porosity of boundaries between the immanence and transcendence of material reality; an assumption which resonates deeply with the author's experience as a composer. As a Christian, Desmond explores immanence in relation to God, i.e. the idea that God infuses every aspect of the material world (nondual), versus the transcendence of God, i.e. the idea that God lies exclusively in a realm beyond our material experience and understanding (dual). In his investigation of these polarities, he has come to understand that this is not an issue of black vs white, nor even a grey area, but that porosity of being allows for a truth which can contain all realities. As a secular practitioner, the author does not share Desmond's Christian beliefs. However, through the experience of creating and playing music (which crosses the boundaries of immanence and transcendence in a very practical manner), the author does share Desmond's understanding that a nondual perspective might contain all realities; material and transcendent.

Examining Desmond's metaxological theoretical framework during the writing of the draft literature review gave birth to the idea of using a musical self-study project as a non-religious, experiential method through which mindfulness might be understood (Desmond and Simpson, 2012, p. 244).

1.5.2 Epistemological Stance

The author's epistemological stance is that of an Absolute Idealist (Sprigge, 1983). It was Hegel who first voiced this way of legitimising ontological idealism within an epistemological framework. He asserted that thinking and being are essentially the same. This nondualistic understanding forms the heart of Absolute Idealism (Guyer and Horstmann, 2015). The author's nondual epistemological stance underpins all aspects of the study, thus challenging the traditional dualistic boundaries between being, not-being, knowing and not-knowing through practical examination of the composer's experience.

1.5.3 Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter Two reviews the literature in six sections:

1. Introduction
2. Epistemological stances relevant to understanding mindfulness
3. Exploring the history, development and socio-cultural background of mindfulness
4. Thematic analysis of the debate surrounding the understandings of mindfulness
5. Mindfulness in relation to “flow” state
6. Conclusion

Chapter Three introduces the research question.

Chapter Four explains and justifies the theoretical framework, research approach and methodology.

Chapter Five develops a model for analysis and reveals the key findings of the self-study process.

Chapter Six discusses these findings in light of the literature, theoretical framework and research question.

Chapter Seven summarises and offers recommendations.

2 Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

As a preliminary to conducting an experiential exploration of the nature of "mindfulness", it is necessary to review the literature. However, this is not a straightforward task: through studying what other authors claim to *know* about mindfulness, it emerges that there are many differing perspectives surrounding *ways of knowing.* These varied epistemological stances could obscure the quest for clarity regarding the nature of mindfulness.

Therefore, before approaching a thematic analysis of understandings of mindfulness, we must first explore the various ways in which mindfulness might be "known".

2.2 Ways of knowing (and not knowing)

There are many ways of understanding one's experience. The Integrative Knowledge Model (Fig. 1) provides a useful lens through which to examine ways of knowing and is especially useful in fields, such as mindfulness, where religion meets science. The creators of this model, two academics who embrace the Baha'i Faith, suggest that while academic thinking develops "rational knowledge", it is only experiential, mindful contemplation that can develop what they label "spiritual knowledge". The model illustrates how integrating these ways of knowing might bring benefit to society by informing "integrative action" (Cherman and Azeredo, 2018).

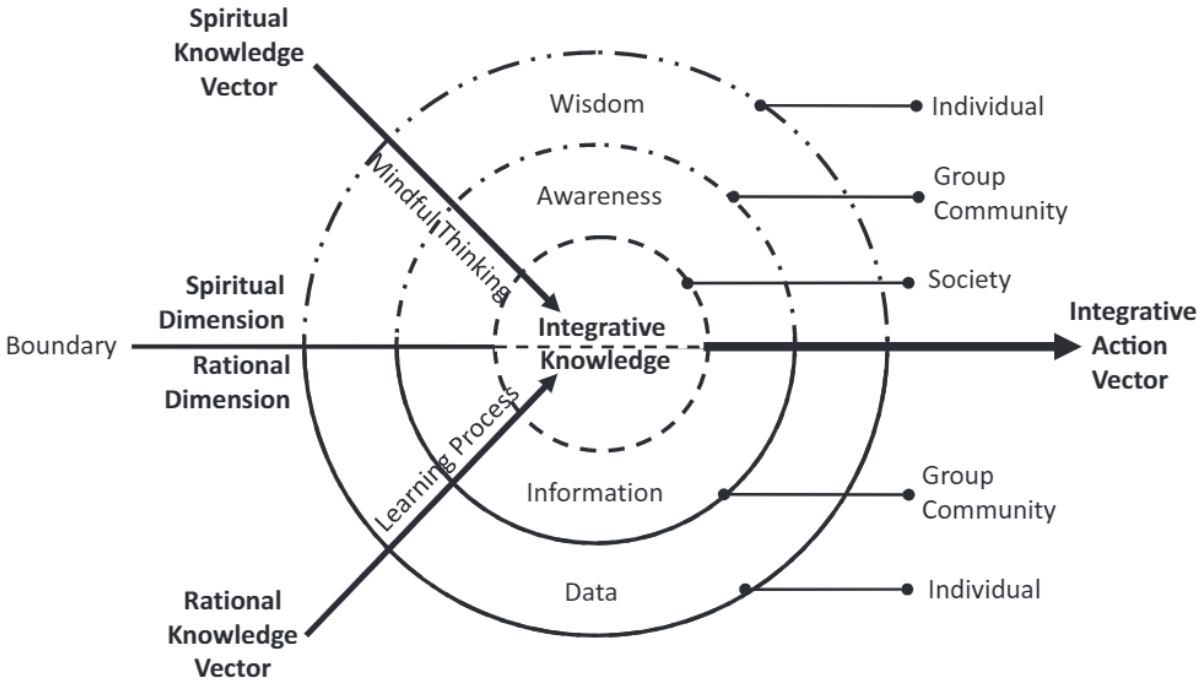

Figure 1: Integrative Knowledge Model, developed by Cherman and Azeredo (2018, p. 229)

There is an assumption within this model that being mindful leads practitioners to a "spiritual knowledge" which cannot be understood or known purely through rational study.

Researchers are certainly currently unable to agree on a single, rational, definition of mindfulness. This is clearly evidenced in "Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation" (Dam *et al.*, 2017). This paper, presented by fifteen respected psychologists, urges mindfulness researchers to counteract "prevailing inherent semantic ambiguities" by ensuring that their investigations report entirely rationally, using only "precisely focused terminology" when reporting on experiences relating to mindfulness (ibid., p. 16).

It appears that the scientific community is having difficulty working with the uncertainty surrounding some of the more intuitive aspects of mindfulness.

Acknowledging this dualistic tendency to avoid the realm of the rationally unknowable is important to this study. Mindfulness has developed through Buddhism almost entirely within the experiential "spiritual dimension" of this model. This secular arts-based investigation might usefully unlock this (usually religious) way of knowing mindfulness, by accessing intuitive knowledge through creativity, which is more similar to spiritual than rational knowledge (Ingold, 2011, p. 206). This approach therefore promises a new perspective on the rationally unknowable. This may be especially useful for those who currently operate only in the "rational dimension" because of an intrinsic distrust of religion.

Kabat-Zinn fully embraces the idea of "not knowing": he describes a mindful process of learning through maintaining "the spaciousness of *not knowing*", which he contrasts with "conceptual knowing" (2011, p. 297). This approach fits the model: Kabat-Zinn's "conceptual knowledge" equates with "rational knowledge"; a dualistic epistemology. By contrast, his "spaciousness of *not knowing*" represents a more nondual way of being and knowing, which equates with Cherman and Azeredo's "Spiritual Dimension". This, they claim, can only be understood experientially.

Kabat-Zinn has defined mindfulness in terms of "not knowing":

> *"Being in touch with this not knowing is called 'mindfulness'"* (1994, p. xiii)

In an interview, he elaborated:

> *"…any really good scientist is as much an artist as a scientist. All the interesting stuff is found on the edge between knowing and not knowing. …you need to know what you know, but if you can't get out from under that, you won't be able to make that insightful, first-time connection that nobody else has seen before."* (2012 para. 8)

Relating to the Integrative Knowledge Model, Kabat-Zinn's comparison of Arts and Science also fits: the lower semi-circle represents the "scientific dimension" and the upper half the "artistic" or "intuitive dimension". His assertion that science and art should work together in order to achieve useful insight has an affinity with

“integrative knowledge”. Kabat-Zinn’s perspective therefore concurs with, yet shines a secular light on, Cherman and Azeredo’s faith-based model.

Langer also writes about not-knowing with a secular tone, asserting that avoiding uncertainty is mindless behaviour. She suggests “exploiting the power of uncertainty, so that we can learn what things can become and so that we can become more than we previously thought possible” (Langer, 2005, p. 15).

This viewpoint is echoed by Claxton, a psychologist with a Buddhist background: he writes, “Knowing emerges from, and is a response to, not-knowing. Learning – the process of coming to know – emerges from uncertainty” (1999, p. 6).

Both Claxton and Langer refer to that area of uncertainty which infuses the upper half of the model – that which cannot be known through rational thought but which must be explored through “engagement by the individual in some deeper spiritual activity” such as mindfulness practice, meditation, contemplation (Cherman and Azeredo, 2018, p. 229) or artistic endeavour (Ingold, 2011).

Steiner, a philosopher who spent his career synthesising spirituality and science, summed up knowledge acquisition thus: “Intuition is to thinking as *observation* is to perception. Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge” (1995, p. 88).

To maintain a secular approach to this study whilst building on Cherman and Azeredo’s work, the author will henceforth respectfully refer to this upper part of their model, borrowing from Steiner’s vocabulary, as the “Intuitive Dimension”; the realm of “intuitive knowledge”.

Tarthang Tulku’s nondual perspective on what is knowable is a unique voice within this literature review. As a Tibetan Lama, he states explicitly:

> *“A basic principle of our view is that **anything** involved in our being here in the world is **directly knowable**, not out of reach. And, it can always be traced back to ‘space’.”* (1977, p. 41 (original emphasis))

Tarthang demonstrates a holistic perspective on knowledge acquisition which embraces the entire Integrative Knowledge Model. Although he utilises both rational (dual) and intuitive (nondual) ways of knowing, he is critical of the former approach when used in isolation, which he describes as the "ordinary approach to knowledge", pointing out that this rational approach alone "does not encourage the development of any higher intuitive faculties…" (1977, p. 130). He insists that only by developing our intuition can we solve the problems of our everyday existence.

This exploration of epistemology reveals that each cited author speaks from a different epistemological stance, viewing mindfulness from their unique perspective. It is important to bear these differences in mind as we now explore the history and development of "mindfulness".

2.3 Exploring the Origins of Mindfulness

2.3.1 Dictionary definitions

The 1989 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary presented one definition of "mindfulness":

> *"The state or quality of being mindful; 'attention; regard' (J.); †memory; †intention, purpose."* (1989)

However, in the latest edition of this dictionary, a second definition is given:

> *" 2. A mental state or attitude in which one focuses one's awareness on the present moment while also being conscious of, and attentive to, this awareness. Also: the cultivation and practice of this, esp. as a therapeutic technique… Frequently attributive, as mindfulness meditation, etc.*
>
> *… with reference to Yoga philosophy and Buddhism… but from the late 20th cent. increasingly taught and practised outside these contexts as a formal discipline, often involving meditation with a focus on, or acknowledgement of, one's emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations."* (Oxford, 2002)

The etymology note clarifies:

> *"In sense 2 after Pali sati (as one of the steps of the Eightfold Path… sammā-sati right mindfulness)…"* (ibid.)

So, the rational meaning of mindfulness is not straightforward: here are two contrasting definitions, each referring to an experiential quality of the mind, the first having its origins in old English and the second arising from an ancient Pali term with a complex etymological history. To understand how this change in understanding arose, we now consider the history of mindfulness.

2.3.2 Historical understandings

The original Pali term for mindfulness, coined by the Buddha Siddhartha Gautama more than two millennia ago, was "sati". This literally means "memory", but is more generally understood to be an attentiveness to that which is considered to be skilful, or "right" within Buddhist philosophy (Levman, 2017, p. 122). Many scholars have written about the place of sati within the history of Buddhism (Thomas, 1949; Gordon *et al.*, 2015; Samuel, 2015; Sharf, 2015; Ditrich, 2016).

The Buddha presented the four foundations of sati: contemplation of body, feelings, mind and phenomena (Bodhi, 2011, pp. 20–21; Trungpa, 2013b, pp. 285–328). After his death, his followers gathered to consolidate his teachings. At this first Buddhist council, 500 monks gathered to learn by rote his exactly-remembered teachings (Suzuki, 1904). Within a century, these had spread by word of mouth across the Indian subcontinent (Sujato and Brahmali, 2015, pp. 15–16).

Seventy years later a second council was held, resulting in a fundamental divergence in Buddhist practice which is of vital relevance to this study. Two camps emerged:

- the Theravada School, whose practitioners consider themselves to be faithful to the Buddha's teachings
- the Mahayana School, whose practitioners hold a more liberal approach which they believe is more like the Buddha's own practice (Landaw, Bodian and Buhnemann, 2011, p. 67).

This was a critical moment for the development of sati, as the Theravada adopted a more dualistic stance towards their practice and the Mahayana adopted a nondualistic stance (Bodhi, 1998; Dunne, 2011, p. 73; Landaw, Bodian and Buhnemann, 2011, p. 75). The Theravada school spread through southern areas of Asia while the Mahayana school spread north (Landaw, Bodian and Buhnemann, 2011, p. 86). These two diametrically opposed ontological perspectives on mindfulness travelled in opposite directions across Asia.

The British Empire's attempt to colonise Burma between 1824 and 1855 played a pivotal role in the international understanding of sati, which would in 1881 be translated as "mindfulness" (Sun, 2014; Ditrich, 2016, p. 9). An unprecedented meeting of cultures occurred as Burmese Buddhists debated with Protestant Christians and encountered western science for the first time. This resulted in fundamental changes: for the first time in Theravada Buddhist history, private meditation was placed at the centre of practice, and there was an explosion in numbers of lay practitioners. There was a reduction in emphasis on sangha, ritual and anything that could have been perceived as magical (McMahan, 2012; Braun, 2013; Ditrich, 2016). Ironically, it was this shift away from secrecy, which was intended to protect Buddhism from incoming cultural influences, that may have subsequently had the consequence of facilitating the eventual secularisation of mindfulness (Sharf, 1995, p. 268).

2.3.3 20th Century Influences

In the 1960s, American Jack Kornfield travelled to become a Theravada monk, studying in Thailand, India and Burma. On his return, he co-founded the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts alongside Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein, introducing classical vipassana (insight) meditation to a western population (Kornfield, 2018). This advanced practice, involving honing the precision of focus in the present moment so as to understand the "constituted nature" of one's field of experience, is fundamentally dualistic (Bodhi, 1998; Wallace, Alan; Bodhi, 2006, p. 16).

Around the same time, American molecular biologist Jon Kabat-Zinn was studying meditation with nondualists Thich Nhat Hahn and Zen Master Seung Sahn before he began teaching at Kornfield's Insight Meditation Society (Boyce, 2010). He then established the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts. Despite knowingly teaching secular programmes based on Buddhist principles, he admits:

> *"I bent over backwards to structure it [the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course]… that avoided as much as possible the risk of it being seen as Buddhist, 'New Age', 'Eastern Mysticism' or just plain 'flakey'"* (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 282).

Unlike Kornfield, Kabat-Zinn does not describe himself as a Buddhist and became a trail-blazer in the secularisation of mindfulness. However, he stresses that:

> *"the early papers on MBSR cited not just its Theravada roots… but also its Mahayana roots within both the Soto and Zen traditions… as well as certain currents from the yogic traditions… and the teachings of J Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi"* (ibid., p. 289).

The wide range of backgrounds which contributed to the design of the MBSR course resulted in a conflation of practices from nondual and dualist traditions: any meditation which involves focus on an object (such as the breath) reinforces subject-object duality, whilst meditation instructions such as "rest evenly within present awareness" reflect a more nondual approach (Dunne, 2011, p. 80). The MBSR programme includes both but is explicit about neither: Dunne concludes that it adopts a more nondual approach overall (ibid., p. 75). Bodhi recognises the difficulties associated with this:

> *"the merging of techniques grounded in incompatible conceptual frameworks [dual vs nondual] is fraught with risk… it seems likely that their long-term effect will be to create a certain "cognitive dissonance" that will reverberate through the deeper levels of the psyche and stir up even greater confusion"* (1998 para.2)

Kabat-Zinn initially avoided any explicitly Buddhist ethical framework in his teaching of mindfulness “for obvious reasons” (2011, p. 282), although subsequently has been more open about his underlying aspiration to spread “the dharma” through his mainstream, secular work (2017).

Independently of the history outlined above, during the 1970’s, American psychologist Ellen Langer also began researching “mindfulness”. With no Buddhist influence, she defines mindfulness simply as the process of making choices (specifically as the opposite of mindlessness) and her lifetime’s research investigates this attitude and its outcomes (Langer, 2010, p. 5).

Aware of the possible conflation with Buddhist-derived “mindfulness”, Langer describes the phenomenon she researches as “mindfulness, achieved without meditation”, and yet curiously her research documents many of the same benefits as have been delivered through the Mindfulness Based Interventions which use meditation as their primary tool (Langer, 2000, p. 220).

Langer is clear on the differences:

> *“For me, the two ways of becoming mindful are not at odds with each other. Becoming more mindful does not involve achieving some altered state of consciousness through years of meditation. It requires, rather, learning to switch modes of thinking about ourselves and the world. It is very easy to be mindful, which makes doing so appealing to those unwilling to sit still for twenty minutes twice a day. Mindfulness is simply the process of noticing new things. It is seeing the similarities in things thought different and the differences in things taken to be similar.”* (Langer, 2005, p. 16)

Langer’s attitude differs from Buddhist and MBSR approaches – she understands mindfulness as an “easy” way of being that anyone can adopt immediately through choice, rather than a hard-earned experience which takes years of silent, solitary practice. Interestingly, her approach mirrors the metaxological approach adopted

by this study: by viewing things from as many perspectives as possible, she sees through the rational, dualistic boundaries and glimpses what lies between the differences and similarities of our reality.

In the section which follows, the academic debate surrounding mindfulness is discussed.

2.4 Debating Mindfulness – a Thematic Review

2.4.1 Introduction

Contributions to this debate have come from a wide variety of sources, including psychologists, psychiatrists, Buddhist scholars and professors of Religious Studies, each with a unique epistemological perspective. Appendix Two offers a small sample of contrasting expert opinions regarding mindfulness.

Kabat-Zinn's popular working definition is used as a starting point:

> *"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally"* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

The four main themes of this definition are examined in turn.

2.4.2 "Paying attention in a particular way"

This section discusses apparent conflation in the literature of the terms *attention* and *awareness* in relation to mindfulness. Some authors, including Kabat-Zinn (e.g. 1994), use these two terms interchangeably as though they both mean *noticing*. Indeed, Langer favours the phrase "noticing new things" to describe this "simple process" of paying attention mindfully (Langer, 2005, p. 5).

By contrast, Yates, a neuroscientist and Buddhist practitioner engaged in both Tibetan and Theravadin practices, is more specific. He gives separate entries in

the glossary of his meditation manual to describe *six* different types of attention and *eight* different types of awareness (Yates, Immergut and Graves, 2017).

Dunne recognises a pathway from beginners' practices, focussing on dualistic attention on an object, giving way over time towards more advanced nondual practice, where subject and object differentiation is entirely negated through awareness (2011, p. 77).

Buddhists have developed a huge vocabulary to describe this subtle pathway from dualistic close-focussed *attention* towards nondual *awareness*: the author questions the efficacy of the English language as a tool to describe these subtle differences. English language is limited in its ability to describe the workings of the mind compared to the richness of Sanskrit or Tibetan vocabulary (Goleman, 2015, p. 38). Translators have been battling with this issue for centuries and the battle is ongoing (Dunne, 2011; Sun, 2014; Levman, 2018).

Kabat-Zinn overcomes the issue of translation of Eastern vocabulary by suggesting a practical way forward for mindfulness practitioners:

> *"…embodying and drawing forth the essence of the dharma without depending on the vocabulary, texts and teaching forms of traditional Buddhist teaching environments..."* (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 281)

He outlines an intuitive, internal, personal, discernment - based as much on not-knowing as it is on knowing. This nondual approach is in stark contrast, although not entirely incompatible, with the traditional Theravadin teachings (ibid., p. 297). His approach fits better with the Tibetan and Zen nondual traditions (Dunne, 2015) but the nondual is a very difficult starting place for beginners (Dunne, 2011, p. 77). It is worth noting that Langer also evidences overlap with this approach in terms of her underlying, nondual philosophy:

> *"I began to realize that ideas about mind/body dualism were just that, ideas, and a different, nondualist view of the mind and the body could be more useful."* (Langer, 2010, p. 5)

It seems that inadequate translations from Eastern languages may have contributed to confusion, or even inaccuracies, in modern understandings of the constantly shifting importance of attention and/or awareness within a pathway of mindfulness practice.

The following section explores the intentions behind the practice of mindfulness.

2.4.3 "On purpose"

The act of paying attention deliberately, or "on purpose" suggests that there is an underlying intention - a reason for paying attention - but opinion is varied regarding the purpose of mindfulness practice.

Secular Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) differ substantially from their original sources of inspiration in terms of purpose. While the purpose of MBIs is to provide "symptomatic relief" from everyday suffering (Monteiro, Musten and Compson, 2015, p. 11), the Buddha's intention for mindfulness was to facilitate a complete "cessation" of suffering through the ultimate goal of enlightenment (Teasdale and Chaskalson (Kulananda), 2011, p. 99).

Bodhi shines a Theravadin perspective on this contrast, by paring the act of mindfulness back to its bare essentials. (Note the emphasis on subject/object duality in his description):

> *"Mindfulness is itself an act of establishing presence. Mindfulness establishes the presence of the object and thereby makes it available to scrutiny and discernment.* (2011, p. 25)

He goes on to describe his understanding of a "spectrum" of mindfulness practices which encompasses all styles, stages and intentions (ibid., p. 31). This understanding of a spectrum of interpretations of mindfulness is echoed by some contributors to this debate (Amaro, 2015; Gordon *et al.*, 2015). However, others argue that the distinct differences between cultural and personal intentions for and understandings of mindfulness are so polarised as to be insurmountable, and

some have suggested the adoption of a variety of more specific terms to describe mental states to avoid the current confusion surrounding the non-specific nature of mindfulness (e.g. Lindahl, 2015; Dam *et al.*, 2017).

This dissertation argues that keeping an open mind is likely to be the most fruitful way forward. The metaxological approach involves holding awareness of the space between dualistic polarities: insight may emerge from within this common ground.

The following section investigates the temporal nature of mindfulness.

2.4.4 "…in the present moment"

The reader might be forgiven for assuming that all mindfulness practitioners agree to maintain awareness in the present moment, exclusive of past or future. Popular interpretations of The Buddha's teachings on the four foundations of mindfulness often seem to focus exclusively on the present moment (e.g. Bodhi, 2011, p. 25; Trungpa, 2013a).

However, this author's reading of Thanissaro's translation (2018) reveals explicit instruction regarding the past and future elements of mindfulness which is missing from, even contradicted by, Kabat-Zinn's definition. The Buddha repeatedly highlights two important factors: these are (a) the holding in mind of our origination (i.e. the past) and (b) the holding in mind of our passing away (i.e. the future) as we focus within the present moment:

> *"In this way he remains focused internally on the body… or externally on the body… or both internally and externally on the body... Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination and passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge and remembrance..."* (ibid., Section 3, para. 4).

This passage is repeated five times in Thanissaro's translation: in relation to mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind and mental events. This suggests that the

Buddha's mindfulness was a present moment focus which could *maintain constant awareness of past and future* events. This active inclusion of the past and future within each moment as an integral part of day to day mindfulness practice is not one usually explicitly expressed in contemporary western practice, even within Buddhist communities. The Buddha's instructions in this translation are far from prescriptive, with seven distinct but flexible options being offered as to how one might remain mindful, and so it is unsurprising that many interpretations have arisen from these instructions.

The ninth Karmapa, in the 16th century, wrote seemingly simple instructions to the beginner meditator regarding attitude towards past, present and future, but it is possible to see how a dualistic misunderstanding could have arisen from his instructions:

> *"Do not pursue the past. Do not usher in the future. Rest evenly within present awareness, clear and nonconceptual"* (cited by Dunne, 2011, p. 80)

The instruction is to desist *chasing* thoughts about the past and future. This is different from excluding the presence of all of our past experiences and potential future experiences from our present-moment awareness.

Any interpretation of mindfulness which excludes awareness of past and future within the present moment is borne of a limiting dualistic epistemology which might be fully contained by a more holistic, inclusive, nondual understanding of temporality.

An explanation of the nondual nature of time illuminates the difficulties faced if an exclusive, rational approach is taken to the nature of the present moment:

> *"When fully appreciated, Great Time is seen to be a kind of perfectly liquid, lubricious dimension – it is quintessentially 'slippery'…. It is as though all the friction in the world were removed – nothing can then walk away from anything else…"* (Tarthang, 1977, pp. 162–3)

The practical findings of this arts-based study will illuminate both the nondual nature of time and also the place of judgement within mindfulness (Chapter 6).

2.4.5 "Non-judgemental"

The limitations of English vocabulary, issues of potentially inaccurate translations, and issues of varying perspective also apply when exploring what has been meant by "non-judgement" within the practice of mindfulness. As with *attention* and *awareness*, Buddhist scholars report that attitudes concerning discernment (which may be viewed as a type of judgement) also change as the novice advances in experience (e.g. Dreyfus, 2011, pp. 51–53; Amaro, 2015, pp. 65–67).

In examining the confusion arising from Kabat-Zinn's "non-judgemental" stance, Amaro demonstrates how this term might relate to wise discernment:

> *"…this nonjudgmentalism refers to refraining from habitual harsh and absolute judgments of good and "evil," right and wrong. It does not mean foolishly going against common sense. Is a person being judgmental if they put their right shoe on their right foot? No, they do so because putting it on the left brings discomfort and difficulty. They do not look at their left foot as evil or bad, it is simply the incorrect foot for a shoe shaped for the right."* (2015, p. 66)

Thanissaro's translation of the Buddha's four foundations of mindfulness concurs with Amaro's perspective, especially with reference to mindfulness of feelings, where wise discernment is explicitly instructed:

> *"… a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling.' When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'"* (2018 Section 4, para. 1)

Kabat-Zinn also agrees with Amaro's stance on the importance of wise discernment, distinct from a ban on all forms of judgement, and also makes reference to the second foundation of mindfulness to clarify his stance (2011, pp.

291–292). However, his repeated clarification on this topic has not prevented widespread misinterpretation across the western world (Purser, 2019). Some modern, secular approaches to non-judgement fail to interpret the more nuanced depth of understanding of wise discernment within mindfulness practice which has developed over centuries through the Buddhist traditions. Dreyfus argues that:

> *"the modern understanding of mindfulness as present-centred non-judgmental awareness although not completely mistaken reflects only a partial understanding… By over-emphasising the non-judgmental nature of mindfulness and arguing that our problems stem from conceptuality, contemporary authors are in danger of leading to a one-sided understanding of mindfulness…"* (2011, p. 52)

In concord with Dreyfus is a growing concern about the commercialisation and over-simplification of non-judgement:

> *"Contrary to popular definitions, mindfulness is not merely paying attention to the present moment non-judgmentally. This is a common misinterpretation which obscures the role mindfulness plays as an integrated path… Discrimination, evaluation and judgment are part and parcel of mindfulness."* (Ng, Purser and Walsh, 2018, p. 49)

Examining Langer's writings, it becomes apparent that she also feels the need to address a perceived issue over the practitioner's understanding of discernment. Langer's view agrees with the perspectives of our other contributors:

> *"It is important to note that* ***we can be discriminating without being evaluative****. Noticing new things about the world is the essence of mindfulness. Unquestioningly accepting a single-minded evaluation of what we notice is mindless."* (2005, p. 58 (original emphasis))

The combined weight of the arguments of these eight contributors illustrates that viewing non-judgement from a simplistic, dualistic perspective demonstrates an incomplete understanding of this complex aspect of mindfulness. It seems a wider perspective may be a wiser perspective, and so this study will be a practical

exploration of the nondual nature of creativity in relation to discernment, mindfulness and insight.

As a composer, the author regularly experiences a state of “flow” (MacDonald, Byrne and Carlton, 2006). The following section examines how a flow-state might relate to experience of mindfulness and insight.

2.5 Mindfulness and “Flow”

2.5.1 Introduction

Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi coined the term “flow” to describe an optimal state of subjective experience (2014). He argued that scientific examination of behaviour had taken precedence over understanding our own internal experience. He set about examining the science of experience – the focussing of attention on thoughts, feelings and sensations (ibid., pp. 210-11). Therefore, one would expect an overlap with mindfulness as taught by the Buddha, who also described focus on mental events, feelings and bodily sensations (Thanissaro, 2018).

Csikszentmihalyi describes key features of the experience of flow, which can occur whenever the challenge of an activity is optimally balanced with the skill level of the participant, as including:

- A deep concentration resulting in the distortion of experience of time passing
- A strong intention to meet an achievable goal, resulting in a lack of ambiguity
- High level focus on the activity resulting in a temporary loss of awareness of self
- The activity is “autotelic” - one which is chosen freely and undertaken for its own sake

  (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 216)

How does this experience relate to the Buddha’s teachings on mindfulness? Certainly a strong intention is expected: Right Intention is included as part of the Eightfold Path (Bodhi, 1999). Focussed concentration is also described by the

Buddha in his original teaching on mindfulness (Thanissaro, 2018). Losing awareness of self might be compared to realisation of no-self, which is said to be a precondition of mindfulness which leads to insight (Amaro, 2015, p. 66). The concept of the activity being autotelic – one which brings its own reward – also applies to Buddhist mindfulness which is intended to lead towards a cessation of suffering for the practitioner.

So, the recently coined term *flow* is clearly defined, and this discussion has revealed considerable overlap with what has historically been described as *mindfulness* or *sati*. It is therefore unsurprising that some mindfulness practitioners equate the terms "mindfulness" and "flow" (e.g. Michie, 2018 para. 2).

However, flow does not equate with *some* types of mindfulness *meditation,* for two reasons:

1. flow-state embraces physical and mental activity rather than stillness;
2. flow-state favours focussed attention over the open awareness which is involved in some types of mindfulness meditation.

It is therefore worth investigating the potential mechanisms relating to flow-state to consider its potential role in the development of mindfulness and insight.

2.5.2 Potential mechanisms

Neuroscience goes some way to explaining the mechanisms of flow-state: the Default Mode Network (DMN) of the brain, associated with mind-wandering and spontaneous thought, is of relevance. The DMN is usually inactive when the mind is purposefully engaged and becomes active when the mind is at rest (Nairn, Choden and Regan-Addis, 2019, pp. 21–22). However, studies have shown that advanced meditators demonstrate *reduced* DMN activity whilst their minds are at rest, suggesting the potential to rewire or control these networks (Fox *et al.*, 2014, p. 66).

While the thoughts arising as a result of DMN activity are often considered to be negative and unhelpful, this is not always the case: default positivity of the DMN can, with practice, be trained (Nairn, Choden and Regan-Addis, 2019, p. 150).

During flow-state, due to the autotelic nature of the activity being undertaken, any thoughts arising would likely be positive, and due to the dynamic nature of flow-state the DMN is likely to be less activated. Therefore, flow-state practised regularly might be considered, as an alternative to meditation, as a route to develop mindfulness and insight.

Having examined the debate surrounding understandings of mindfulness, the following section of this literature review discusses the findings.

2.6 Conclusion

Cherman and Azeredo's Integrative Knowledge Model (2018) shines a much-needed light on the findings of this literature review (see fig.1, p. 14). The "whole elephant" of understanding mindfulness is represented by the complete diagram; rational knowledge complemented by intuitive knowledge. Rational knowing, on its own, is unable to provide a complete picture of the nature of mindfulness, but combined with intuitive knowing, this may become possible.

Each author-contributor to this review also demonstrates personal bias through their balance of taking either predominantly an intuitive or rational approach to knowledge acquisition. This disparity of epistemological perspectives explains why there is currently so much confusion and disagreement surrounding the understanding of mindfulness.

History shows that Buddhist understandings of mindfulness have developed within a spiritual setting. Reframing this concept to be understood by a secular, scientific, rational audience has become the life's work of Kabat-Zinn and many others, but the Integrative Knowledge Model (Cherman and Azeredo, 2018) illuminates how extremely challenging this task is.

The model suggests that some intuitive knowledge may lie *beyond* the realms of rational scientific understanding. An alternative approach is required to gain understanding of the intuitive, nondual aspects which infuse any full experience of mindfulness. An arts-based approach may prove fruitful: Ingold argues that music has the capacity to "directly touch the soul and set it in motion", adding that "…this

principle corresponds, of course, to what Yolngu people call the Dreaming, and to what medieval monastic thinkers saw as the hand of God" (2011, p. 206). Composer James MacMillan agrees: "I think music is more important now than ever. It's a language that speaks beyond words and images and that's why it's so mysterious.. and has still so much potential... to communicate its beauties and its endless possibilities" (2019, 2' 57").

This Literature Review has explored the research problem, which is summarised by Dam et al.:

> *"…there is neither one universally accepted technical definition of "mindfulness" nor any broad agreement about detailed aspects of the underlying concept to which it refers"* (2017, p. 6)

Dam et al. have provided adequate guidance to overcome this problem for the purposes of dualistically-minded scientific researchers. However, as a composer integrating both rational and intuitive knowledge on a daily basis, the author has an interest in further exploring the intuitive aspects of the experience of mindfulness, which fall beyond rational description, in order to gain a more complete understanding.

The literature suggests that taking an integrated approach to knowledge acquisition may achieve this holistic understanding, thus abandoning any rational requirement for there to be one single correct definition of mindfulness. This study therefore embraces the possibility that even contradictory understandings may be coincidentally correct and true, from each author's unique epistemological and ontological perspective. Seeking to explore a nondual understanding of mindfulness has emerged as a promising way forward.

3 Research Question

As the practical element of this study primarily explores realms which are possibly unknowable in rational terms, the chosen research question is openly-worded:

- What is the nature of mindfulness?

It is not expected that one straightforward answer will be forthcoming from this study. The author's nondual approach to knowledge acquisition will be embraced alongside a deep respect for the myriad individual perspectives: this epistemological stance preserves the possibility of recognising a metaxological, porous view regarding the nature of mindfulness, one which may remain open enough to be able to hold and infuse all possible existing perspectives as being coincidentally valid.

In examining the "nature" of mindfulness, the author will specifically be noticing her experience of mindfulness within a spectrum of perspective from dual to nondual. As was clear from the literature review, mindfulness can be viewed as a way of knowing, as a way of being, or both. This aspect will also be investigated to gain a clearer understanding of the epistemological and ontological nature of mindfulness.

4 Research Approach & Methodology

4.1 Arts-Based Metaxological Approach

The research question and findings of the literature review demand the adoption of a non-traditional approach and methodology. It has been said that "arts-based inquiry… inhabits contested, liminal spaces" and this is certainly one such space (Finley, 2008, p. 3).

Scientific research has examined mindfulness dualistically, and there is a thirst within the scientific community to define exactly what is being studied or measured (Dam *et al.*, 2017). But scientific studies are not well placed to examine mindfulness from a nondual perspective. Scientific research favours the reduction of experience to fundamental, quantifiable principles, while arts-based research tends to provide ways of knowing which are more expansive, affording a broader, more nuanced perspective (McNiff, 2008, p. 34). An arts-based approach is therefore well placed to provide a subtler, more open way of knowing the whole experience of mindfulness.

A vigilant, metaxological awareness throughout the project can hold open the space within which intuitive knowledge may arise. This approach involves noticing, and maintaining awareness of, the space which lies between all material and cognitive manifestations (Desmond, 1990, 1995, 2014; Desmond and Simpson, 2012).

Desmond discusses, to cite just a few examples, "the space of mystery" (1990, p. 156), "the space of free being" (ibid., p. 105) and "dynamized space", which he argues "suggests an energy of transcendence in matter itself" (1995, p. 279). But most importantly in terms of this study, "the metaxological… keeps the space of the between open to mediations from the other" (1995, p. 178).

Maintaining this space of openness to the dialectic (i.e. exploring the truth of a variety of perspectives) is an important feature of the arts-based element of this study. This builds upon the more dualistic dialogical approach taken during analysis of the literature, which considered the polyphonic nature of the speaker's

voice and the relationship between speaker and audience, thus providing a more hopeful space for the possibility of overcoming contradictions (Wegerif, 2008, p. 347).

The arts-based element of this project uses musical composition as a tool, and music as a language, to counterbalance the dualistic restrictions of the English language. Using composition as a method also offers the possibility of accessing intuitive, nondual insight surrounding the experience of mindfulness, which might illuminate the rational knowledge acquired through the literature review.

In terms of the Integrative Knowledge Model (fig 1., p. 14), the arts-based approach traverses the "spiritual knowledge vector" in a non-religious way which respects the venerable nature of this intuitive way of knowing, while the literature review navigated the "rational knowledge vector". The arts-based approach enables the author, as composer, to inhabit and integrate both nondual and dualistic ways of being mindful, opening the gateway to a more holistic understanding of the fullness of the ontology of mindfulness.

The potential of music as a medium through which to access both dual and nondual realms is supported by the view of another composer who has studied the composition process:

> *"To me, music is an open place, a portal… it can transport us to somewhere beyond the human experience, beyond words, beyond thought, beyond our furthest imaginings—to transcendence."* (Douek, 2013, p. 4)

The author acknowledges that the self-study element of the project brings with it concerns regarding validity of the findings, and has sought to assuage these by following guidelines to ensure that authenticity is voiced within a recognised historical and cultural context (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2003). The complete methodology, combining literature review with arts-based self-study, delivers the necessary background of academic scholarship which lends credibility to the solitary composer's experiential perspective.

4.2 Methodology

The use of a metaxological approach in the holistic exploration of mindfulness requires a porosity of approach which is a perfect match for the composition process. Alternative methods of data collection do not share this quality of porosity which seems necessary to work within Desmond's metaxological paradigm:

> *"I speak of this 'between' in terms of an **original porosity of being**, neither objective nor subjective, but enabling both, while being more than both. The porosity is a between space where there is not fixation of the difference of minding and things, where our mindfulness wakes to itself by being woken up by the communication of being in its emphatic otherness."* (Desmond and Simpson, 2012, p. 202 (original emphasis))

To put metaxology in context, Desmond describes "The Fourfold Way" of understanding the nature of being (Desmond, 1995, p. 3). Desmond's framework includes the "univocal" (unambiguous), the "equivocal" (open to more than one interpretation and so more ambiguous), the "dialectical" (investigating the truth of different perspectives) and the "metaxological" (awareness of that which lies between). It is the metaxological way which opens up the space in Desmond's philosophy and throughout this study: adopting a metaxological theoretical framework ensured porosity of space in the author's attitude, thinking and music. This theoretical framework uniquely offers a nondual, perspective on data collection and analysis which is more commonly a dualistic realm.

A successful implementation of this methodology might provide invaluable insight into that which connects and binds the many debated perspectives on mindfulness, through a conscious, personal examination of this phenomenon from within an expansive flow-state. The nature of the mindful creation of music as being simultaneously dualistic (i.e. building the music from its constituent parts) and nondual (i.e. manifesting a musical reality from nothing; crafting a whole which defies the usual subject-object boundaries) makes composition a promising method for examining the nature of mindfulness.

This methodology demands the author's personal commitment to formal, daily mindfulness practice as detailed below.

4.2.1 Formal Mindfulness Practice

As a practising musician, the author spends three to eight hours each day engaged in musical activity. This may in itself, as discussed in the introduction (p. 7), be framed as a mindfulness practice (Steinfeld and Brewer, 2015). In addition to this, which many would view as an "informal" practice, she commits one hour every morning to a formal Tibetan Buddhist mindfulness practice.

To be clear, the author is not a Buddhist and has no aspirations to become one, nor does she affiliate herself with any religious group. However, the literature reveals that Buddhists have led the way in the study and development of mindfulness and so their practices are worthy of close practical scrutiny in terms of both process and mechanism. Tibetan Green Tara practice is an hour-long, daily, music-based practice which is usually sung as a group with percussion accompaniment (Zangmo, 2004). In 2017 the author made the conscious decision to begin to practice Green Tara, as a personal, secular, musical mindfulness exercise (therefore without seeking a formal "empowerment" as a Buddhist would have done) with the original intention to explore the potential for development of a secular, music-making mindfulness practice which might benefit the mental health of professional orchestral musicians and others.

The author's choice is not unprecedented: "Secular Buddhism" is a growing movement led by Stephen Batchelor (2012). He shares the earliest teachings of Buddha without any requirement for belief or ritual. Unlike the author's approach, however, Batchelor's secular Buddhism does not embrace traditional prayers as potentially effective tools worthy of exploration. There is, however, a precedent for the secular practice of prayer within the Israeli Jewish tradition (Azulay and Tabory, 2008). Wallace has also considered the issue of secular experimental Buddhist mindfulness practice in his correspondence with Bhikkhu Bodhi:

> *"Could someone achieve profound realizations by taking up such practice as a purely empirical experiment, engaging it with full earnestness?... I expect*

> *that if they kept pure ethical discipline, cultivated a meaningful, altruistic motivation, and devoted themselves to meditation with confidence in the practice, in the teacher, and in themselves, they might indeed achieve profound realizations."* (2006, p. 19)

However, Tara practice was not chosen as part of this study's method "to achieve profound realizations". Rather, it stems from the author's commitment to develop a capability to observe the activity of her own mind *in action*, as opposed to at rest, in training for the task of mindful composing. It seems appropriate that, in order to achieve mindfulness during the activity of composition, a suitably active formal practice, such as Tara practice, should be implemented.

Because of the author's tailored approach to Tara practice, and in the interests of replicability of the study, a detailed account of the personalised intention-plan that was practised daily is outlined in Appendix Three. It must be stressed that this is not a traditional Buddhist approach to the practice (e.g. Palden Drolma, 2017) and neither is it a recommended approach, it is simply a record of the author's personally developed method as practised during the study.

Mindfulness of feeling, listed by the Buddha as the second establishment of mindfulness, forms the core of the author's formal practice (Thanissaro, 2018 Section 4, para. 1). Feeling tone has also been recognised as a useful framework for research (Batchelor, 2019). Alongside the metaxological approach, mindfulness of feeling, which is a type of wise discernment, forms a central framework for the whole study.

4.2.2 Working definition of mindfulness

Chapter Two detailed the problems and ambiguities surrounding the definition of mindfulness. For the purposes of this study, the author has adopted a personal, minimalist definition:

> Being mindful means <u>simply noticing</u>, with open curiosity.

The author's mindfulness involves attention *and* awareness in variable measure. The purpose is to gain understanding. The present moment is treated with open

respect (past and future thoughts are noticed rather than excluded). The arising of judgement, preference and/or discernment is similarly noticed but not excluded.

4.2.3 Data collection

Data were collected using two methods:

1. Personal journal: documenting the experience of mindfulness of the composition process and of daily Tara practice. This handwritten journal includes accounts of all insights which arose during this period. The journal was indexed as it was written. The index provides an indicator of main themes of experience, e.g. *space*, *insight*, *time* and the experience of *not knowing.* Following the premiere of the work on 16/06/19, further entries were added surrounding insights which arose on hearing the whole work performed by a live orchestra.

2. Musical score: providing documentation of the composer's direct, non-verbal communication of the deepest level of her experience of the practice of mindfulness. This comprises 8 pages of handwritten, notated, manuscript sketches, a full printed score, and a 15 minute YouTube video of the live performance.

"The Astonishment of Being" was written for a Scottish Chamber Orchestra Connect event and is scored for seven professional musicians (violin, viola, 'cello, flute, clarinet, bassoon and trumpet) alongside an inclusive community symphony orchestra of 80 volunteer musicians of varying abilities, aged 7 to adult.

The title was directly inspired by the writing of William Desmond (2012, p. 25) and this reflects the metaxological approach which infused the musical and academic aspects of this study. The musical work was inspired by a wide variety of influences, including quantum physics and the work of William Blake. The composer's awareness, whilst encompassing curiosity in every moment about what it is to "be mindful", was also intuitively drawn to the phenomenon of "being" itself.

The writing of the piece eventually revealed the experience of *being* to underpin mindfulness in a fundamental way.

While collecting the data, no outcomes were hypothesised: the data collection was purely a documentation of the self-exploration of the experience of mindfulness. The deep structure of this methodology involved trusting, noticing and, to the extent that it is possible, accurate documentation of the author's experience of being mindful in full awareness and acceptance of *not knowing* what the outcomes might be.

The project began with a blank jotter of manuscript, a blank journal, an open mind and an open heart – a true exploration of the unknown.

4.2.4 Analysis methods

This study had initially been proposed as an extended literature review: a Dialogical Narrative Analysis of the literature was undertaken (Holquist, 1990; Flyvbjerg, 2005; Frank, 2012). However, this approach has at its core two dualistic ideas: that any single voice is a polyphony of the many voices which have influenced the speaker, and that each single voice is always a dialogue between the speaker and his audience. Following this dualistic path through the literature brought the author to the clear understanding that the voices of some speakers were simply not being heard or understood by some audience-groups due to epistemological differences. Therefore, this approach alone was unable to address the research question fully. To gain a wider understanding, a method of data collection and analysis which included a core element of nondual understanding was required: the arts-based project became the key to unlocking the vital knowledge element which might only be understood within the intuitive dimension.

Plans for analysis of the arts-based data had to remain flexible, as the author could find no precedent for interrogating experiential data from the nondual realm within an academic setting. This data was from the intuitive domain of awareness, rather than the rational domain of measurable information. The main method of comprehending this arts-based data was through an iterative process whereby the

intuitive knowledge voiced by the arts-based findings permeated the rational findings of the literature review, creating “integrative knowledge” (fig 1., p. 14).

The project followed a linear, iterative, timeline:

1. Review and analysis of the literature and presentation of a socio-cultural history and thematic review of the understandings of mindfulness to date.
2. Stop reading and cease all work on dissertation-writing. Begin the mindful, intuitive data-collection process of composition and journaling. Focus during this period was entirely on observation and journaling of the mind’s activity and felt sense during the composition process and formal mindfulness practices.
3. Revisit the literature review (rational data) in light of the arts-based findings (intuitive data) and, through a process of iterative synthesis, integrate these two ways of knowing to uncover a clearer way of examining the data more holistically.
4. A further phase became necessary in order to make full sense of the experiential data: during the premiere performance the composer experienced a whole new set of intuitive insights, which extended the iterative process of integrated knowledge acquisition.
5. A third and final re-write of the literature review was completed. An integrative model for analysing the empirical data was created, and a bespoke analysis of the creative experience of three sections of the musical score was carried out.
6. Finally, the analysis model itself was interrogated by the literature, the findings discussed, and conclusions drawn.

Ultimately, the intuitive data set included several multi-dimensional, nondual manifestations of insight which were very challenging to journal in words. These were also reflected within the musical output at a subconscious level. During the data collection period, most of these insights seemed beyond any formal analysis.

However, the live performance clarified much of the subconscious material in the score, bringing it to a conscious level in the composer’s mind for the first time.

During the final stages of the project, the author devised a method to analyse experience by developing a “Spiral of Duality” model within which to locate the mindful nature of each musical experience (section 5.2, pp. 43-7). Because the development of this model drew primarily from the author’s experiential findings, its rationale and method are fully described in Findings (chapter 5): because the model is new, it is interrogated and thus validated in Discussion (chapter 6).

5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This arts-based project involved simply noticing activity of the mind with curiosity, maintaining an open awareness of mindfulness during both formal practice and the composition process. The results exceeded expectations in terms of the depth, clarity and frequency of the intuitive insight which emerged. The final data-set included words, music and sketches, all of which are mere reflections of the deep, intuitive knowledge which was accessed through this mindful curiosity. The experiential knowledge gained, whilst impossible to evidence or argue in a rational academic sense, had a deep, open, heartfelt feeling of secure certainty rather than belief or expectation. In particular, the experiences of multi-dimensional nondual insight which emerged during formal mindfulness practice seemed impossible to document:

> *"As I write, it seems like a lot of thoughts, but it wasn't. This [insight directly relating to the nature of mindfulness] was just one, whole, clear understanding. Like an oil painting or a sculpture. It just was. No need for thought. The thought came later, but during practice it just was, and it was just so clear. Sometimes I feel a homesickness for that clarity as I go about my daily life."* (Journal, p.11)

A fundamental limitation of this dissertation is the difficulty in finding an effective method through which to communicate these intuitively-won nondual findings. The next section introduces the model which was developed in order to analyse, understand and communicate the mindful nature of the composer's experience.

5.2 Creating a model for analysis of findings: the "Spiral of Duality"

The Spiral of Duality model was initially inspired by Bodhi's idea of a "spectrum" of mindfulness (2011, p. 31) and further informed by Loy's in-depth study of nonduality vs duality as a concept (2019), but primarily the content of the model was informed by direct personal insight experiences.

Perhaps surprisingly, duality and nonduality were not experienced as being opposites. The nondual realm had a feeling of being able to "hold" all of duality through porosity, but not vice versa. This insight was illustrated in the journal (page 60):

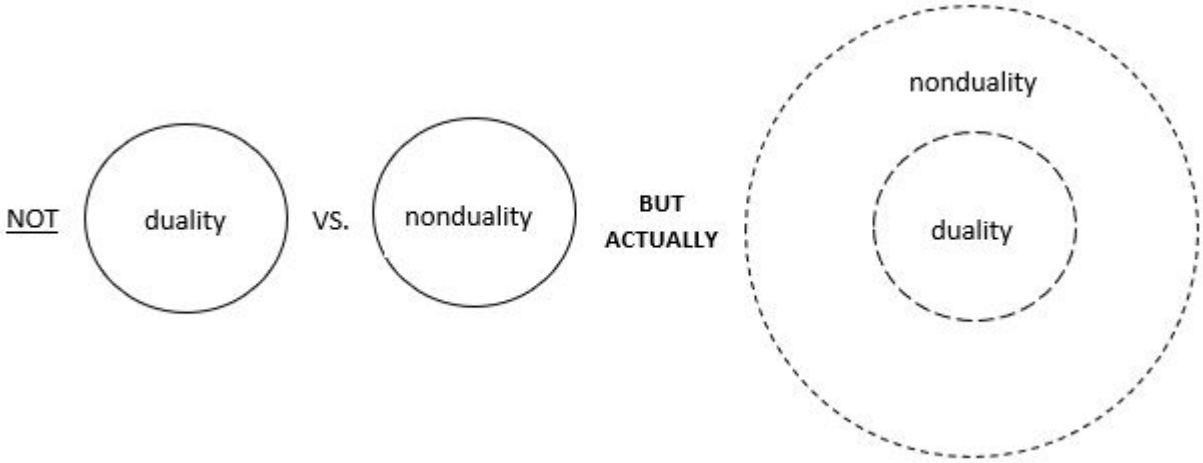

Figure 2: Relationship of duality and nonduality

The author experienced regular fluctuations within a spectrum of experience between dual and nondual, but the path was neither linear nor one-way:

> *"Quite regularly, the tide changes and I realise I'm not in control any more. The [metaphorical] water's flowing upstream and my only choice is to go with or to resist."* (Journal p.24)

Mindfulness of feeling-tone (Batchelor, 2019) was the author's main practice, both formal and informal: this revealed a felt sense of constriction during dualistic experience, of openness during nondual experience, and occasionally of tangible energy fluctuations. One insight revealed this pathway in the form of a slowly opening spiral (Journal p.61):

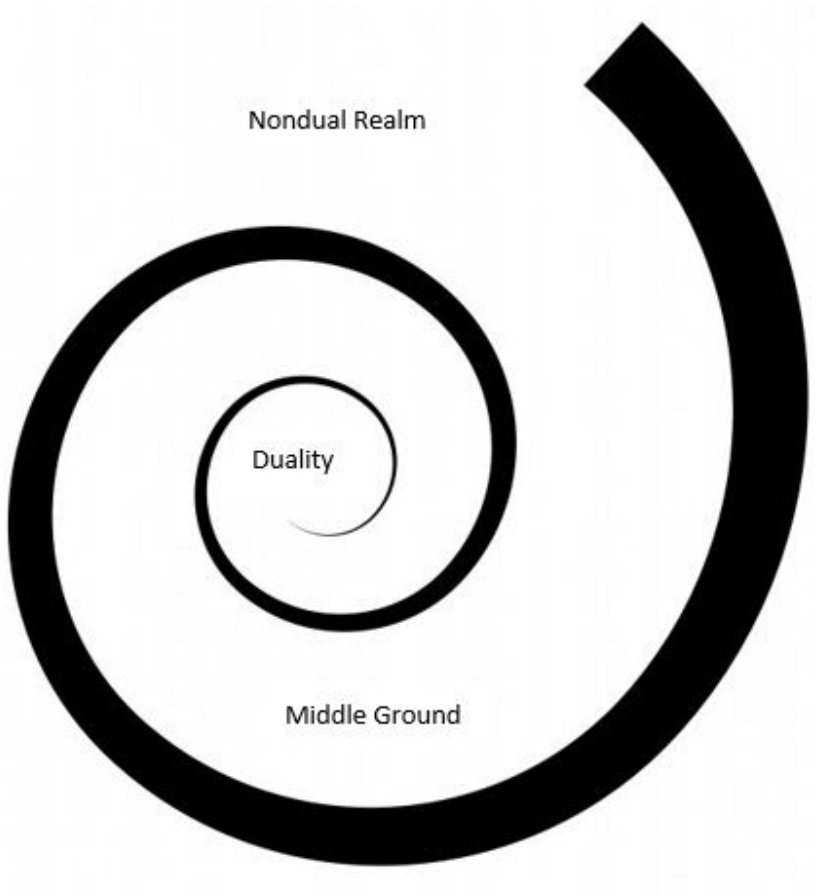

Figure 3: The Spiral of Duality - a model for examining the nature of experience

The three stages of the Spiral of Duality are summarised, within the limitations of the English language, overleaf. (N.B. These claims are unreferenced here as they describe personal experience, but this content will be interrogated by the literature in Chapter 6.)

Essence of Mindfulness of Dualistic Experience	Essence of Mindfulness of Experience in the Middle Ground	Essence of Mindfulness of Nondual Experience
Belief in the solidity of material things	Rational understanding of the "unknowns" in quantum physics surrounding the relationship between space, energy and "matter"	Intuitively gained understanding of material things as a pure expression of Being: not actually solid at all
Firm belief in the autonomous self	Rational understanding of the interconnectedness of all things and people	Intuitively gained understanding and lived experience of no-self
Feeling of constriction	Feeling of confusion	Open feeling of spaciousness
Feelings of loneliness, separation, lack	An increasing intuitive sense that everything is actually okay	Complete feeling of sameness, without boundaries
Belief in the linear nature of time	Experience of time slowing or stopping; past-present-future occasionally seeming concurrent	Intuitive understanding and lived experience of nondual time as Being: non-linear; inextricably entwined with Space
Belief that exclusivity is desirable	Intuitive sense that inclusivity is vital and exclusivity is unhelpful	Intuitive understanding and lived experience of *everything being included* within the non-dual realm
Underlying feeling of fear or dis-ease	Increasing intuitive, and resulting rational, sense of safety and courage	Sustained experience of no-fear

Figure 4: Author's felt-experience of mindfulness within the Spiral of Duality

Duality appeared to be limited to the centre ground of the spiral and weakened gradually with the feeling of expansion through the middle ground. By contrast, the nondual realm seemed able to infuse all experiences, although observing this during the constriction of dualistic experience required mindful vigilance. Loy argues that "intentionality is the 'hinge' between duality and nonduality" (2019, pp. 111–2); a claim built solely on a rational understanding of the literature. The author's experience differs: rather than being a "hinge", intention feels more like a swimmer's "push-off" in the intended direction, gradually losing power and relevance during the glide towards nonduality. However, once duality has been left behind, Loy is correct in his assertion that there is no place for intention – like fear, intention simply cannot exist in a completely nondual realm.

This word-full dissertation is necessarily dualistic, so it is the author's intention to make use of the Spiral of Duality as a guide for analysis in the following section. This will hopefully provide the "push-off" needed for the reader to be able to locate their own experiences of mindfulness within the model.

It is recommended that the reader listen to the musical composition on YouTube while digesting the following analysis.

5.3 Analysis of the nature of mindful experience during composition

This section is a systematic analysis of the experience of creation of three different sections of the score, grouped according to the nature of each experience as situated within the Spiral of Duality model (pp. 45-6).

5.3.1 Mindfulness of Dualistic Experience

The Presto from the second movement (3' 48" to 4' 59" on YouTube) was written completely within the dualistic realm: it was rationally conceived and conceptually developed, following research into the make-up of the nucleus of an atom. The rhythmic ostinato reflects the charge of the quarks within the nucleus' hadrons:

> *"…the weird thing about hadrons is that most of their mass comes not from the particles but from their kinetic and potential energy… Even the dense nucleus is mostly empty space, thick with intelligent, positive energy… I*

wonder if this fractional charge (overall +ve) could provide a rhythmic motif for this movement?" (Journal p.13)

The solo string parts' monotone rhythmic figure was also rationally created, consciously borrowed from a Tibetan mantra: after lengthy experimentation to find the right "feel", the pitches were settled on as A, D and G, providing an ego-made feeling of safety and abundance. The whole section was crafted within the dualistic realm and created a portrait of the dis-ease of the "real" world:

"…the solo string players are representing filling of space with intelligent, compassionate energy while the wind and brass solo parts represent much more the ego's manifesting of this underlying energy with just occasional flashes of understanding… Altogether, we get this very sticky mess…" (Journal p.21)

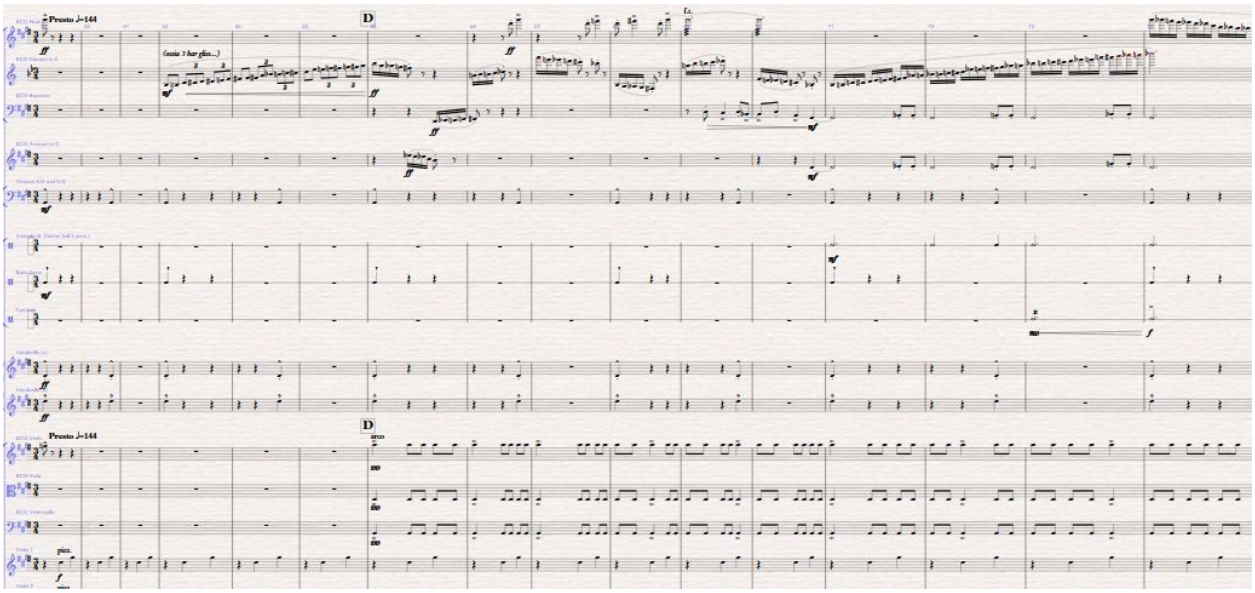

Illustration 2: Final scoring of the Presto

That this music was "self" created became clear when, two days after the initial sketch, the author returned to it and *"felt a little horrified by the 'random' nature of it…. With fresh ears it sounded like a clumsy collage created by a three-year-old, new to scissors!"* (Journal, p.22)

This evidence of egocentric insecurity demonstrates that the author here was holding on to a firm belief in the autonomous self. The composer's feeling-tone of constriction manifests in the music of this section, which describes the underlying sense of fear, dis-ease, lack and separation which could be said to form the essence of the nature of mindfulness viewed from within the dualistic realm. Even a sense of exclusivity is represented in the ostentatious nature of the woodwind parts.

Examining the journal, however, it seems that this "sticky mess" portrayal was actually *subconsciously* created. The composer's original *intention* had been to explore "space using pizzicato strings" (Journal, p.17), but instead the music became a stressful representation of dualistic, everyday life. This might be considered evidence of the immanence of the nondual operating secretly within a seemingly dualistic framework.

5.3.2 Mindfulness of Composing Experience within the Middle Ground

The opening section of the second movement (2' 25" to 3' 48" on YouTube) provides evidence of creation within the middle ground of the Spiral of Duality (pp. 45-6).

This section was composed at the piano, in one sitting, very early in the project. Inspired directly by the chanting of Benedictine monks, the theme and the underlying harmonic concept came effortlessly, quickly, and **demanded** to be included before there was a place appointed for it in the structure of the work. The sketch below illustrates that almost the entire section arrived in one package:

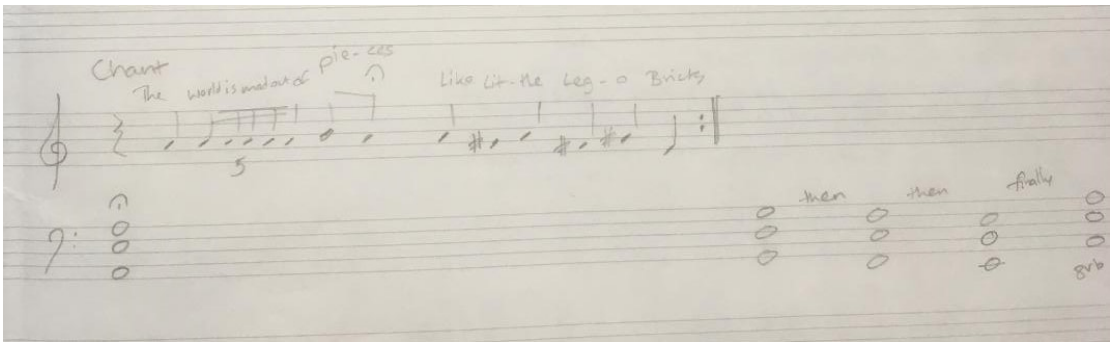

Illustration 3: "Lego Bricks" theme, inspired by Benedictine chanting

The melody, the harmonic idea and the key appear in this initial sketch almost exactly as in the final performance: this sense of spacious completeness illustrates an ego-free, mindful, creative process within nondual experience (fig.4, p.46). By contrast, mindfulness of the lyric-writing felt more constricted: "I", my "self", carefully wrote this mantra whilst worrying whether audience members, either religious and scientific, might be somehow offended by it, therefore this is an example of a dualistic mindful creative experience (ibid.).

The author's ego wrote the lyrics but the music was channelled from a much deeper and more significant place, suggesting that mindful experience in one moment can be co-incidentally dual and nondual.

As this section was orchestrated, the journal stated:

> *"Suddenly everything makes sense again! The acute [mindful] process of sensing-in, which focuses so gently during the quiet chant, evolves tangibly if you sing along. With each bass note, a different "feel" to the same song. Some surprise feelings there, but all gentle… the orchestra and audience members are enticed into opening their hearts and sensing the [metaxological] feeling of the between – it's not the song that changes, it's the vibration in the space around and within the song which changes the feel – the space." (p.22)*

This effect surprised the composer – the music showed her, made her understand. It felt like this music was making, and teaching, the composer, rather than vice versa. While she maintained control of her ability to be mindful, she was not in full control of the resulting creative output, some of which appeared from beyond her "self".

With the lesson learned, the composer mindfully experimented with the order of the chords to maximise the "felt sense" effect to the audience, so there was a mix of intuition and rational intervention, as described here by a fellow composer:

> *"The core of creating and articulating musical ideas seems to be 100% instinctive. Like an intuition… it feels like an active interplay between unconscious and conscious experience."* (Douek, 2013, p. 1)

Therefore, this part of the composition and its creation show all the hallmarks of the nature of experience in the middle ground: while there was some rational attention, this was built on a foundation of open, intuitive awareness (fig. 4, p. 46).

Supporting journaled evidence describes a temporal anomaly, suggesting the composer entered a flow-state whilst orchestrating this section:

> *"As I wrote this music, yet again, 'real time' vanished… Reality, as everyone else perceived it that morning, vanished to me… No thirst. No hunger. No toilet break. No physical sensations or discomfort. At the end it feels a bit like waking from a nap, or surfacing having been underwater for some time. I'm not sure what brings me back."* (Journal, p.23)

This mindfulness of a detachment from linear time, loss of solidity and fading of sense of ego all point to the creation of this section of music stepping beyond duality into the middle ground of the spiral (pp. 45-6).

5.3.3 Mindfulness of Nondual Experience

The final experience to be analysed is the creation of the third movement (5' 00" to 8' 15" on YouTube). Again, this movement appeared very early on in the process of the project and **demanded** to be included. Its process of creation was unprecedented in the composer's experience: what was to become movement three arrived, unexpectedly, during Tara practice. Its arrival was journaled immediately:

> *"…to my surprise, in one of the most profound silences of the practice, an insight appeared from nowhere… a full technicolour surround-sound 3D vision of my orchestra, playing a beautiful melody, fully harmonised… while the trumpeter effortlessly and flawlessly walked between their ranks whilst playing a long, quiet, smooth pedal note. It continued throughout the piece as he wove through the sea of musicians, never touching or distracting a*

single one, and emerged from the other side as the music finished. As he exited the room, his pedal note became the last phrase of the Last Post…

Bizarre. Flawless. Hilarious. Possible??? Maybe…

I take the music fairies seriously when they speak to me and they have rarely spoken so clearly as they did this morning. So it's a definite 'maybe'." (Journal, p.6-7)

What the composer did not fully understand at the time was that this was a nondual insight – the performance appeared **as a whole** and the parts were not then discernible: the melody, the harmony, the rhythm, the orchestration, the time signature, the key – none of these was consciously "known" by the composer immediately after the event, despite having mindfully soaked up the complete vision.

Four days later, the journal reflects this dilemma:

"Although the latter [vision of mvt3] is actually an awesome experience, the capturing of that experience is an issue… It's just not possible to transcribe that kind of communication into our little 3D world, without losing something. I'll need to meditate a lot, open my heart and empty my mind a lot, to be able to revisit the music fairies and respectfully ask for them to repeat m…o…r…e… s…l…o…w…l…y… so that I can do the dictation… But the original is captured in my heart. I have the <u>feel</u> of it and that will inspire and inform my writing and crafting of the score." (Journal, p.16)

The following day, the composer sat at the piano with "absolutely no expectation and only the tiniest glimmer of hope" of being able to write down what was now planned to become movement three, but to her surprise, the exact, complete melody of the vision returned:

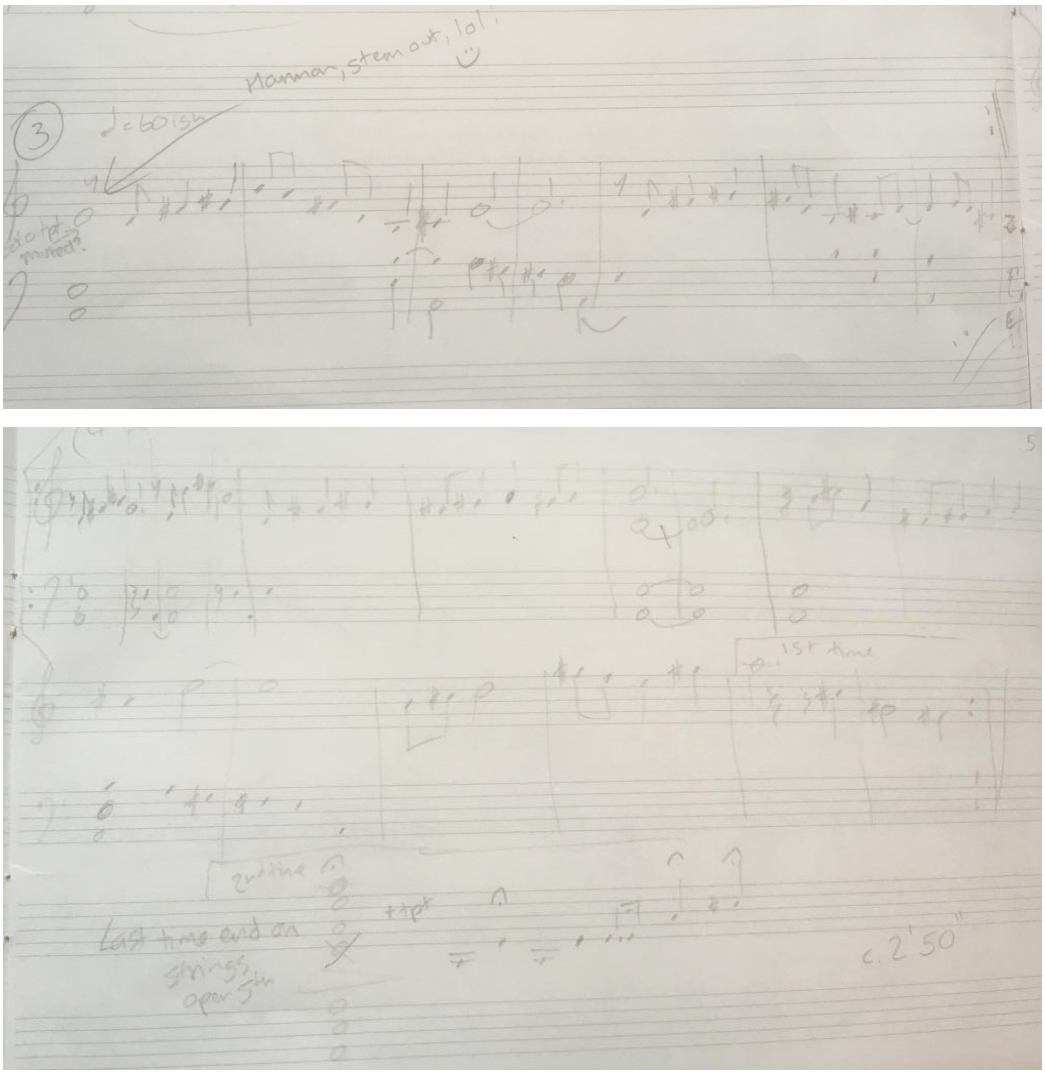

Illustration 4: Sketch of movement three

"*I sat quietly at the piano, only for a few moments, before my left hand was guided to the open 5th and my right foot to the pedal. As that chord opened up, the rest re-appeared in my head, eyes closed, heart wide open…*

..all thoughts were fleeting and insignificant compared to the bizarre experience of giving birth to this tune <u>through my heart.</u> I felt it. A tangible buzzing, actually so powerful as to be slightly uncomfortable energy, working away – bypassing my thinking brain almost entirely – this piece was written by a hand guided, not <u>by</u> the heart, but <u>through</u> the heart…. Buzzing, right through every atom, and almost like forceps to the heart, forcing it gently

open enough to allow the music to flow through. Bizarre. I can still feel the echoes of that sensation now, 30 minutes since I stepped away from the piano. I don't know where that came from. Sincerely. No idea. But I feel very grateful. It's a real beauty.

…there was a highly skewed sense of real-time awareness as I wrote… It was like working in a little, safe, time capsule - protected from all possible distraction until the job was done." (Journal, p. 18-19)

This describes a nondual, mindfully-lived experience of non-linear time as Being (see p.26 and fig. 4, p. 46). It felt as though time was literally tying itself and space into knots in order to manifest the music through the composer's being. It was a wholesome if slightly uncomfortable experience, open and without fear, like a holistic experience of giving birth.

During the process of orchestration of this movement several days later, the composer journaled her nondual, mindful experience of no-self during composition:

"I do, often feel like more of an observer than an active participant in the composing process, which I guess might seem like a strange comment to anyone who's not had that experience. Clearly, in this reality, no-one but me is involved, and the score is created, so you'd think it would be obvious that "I" made the music. But it isn't really that way at all, and how it actually is is very difficult to put into words. In this way, composing is startlingly similar to insight, and no amount of "mindful presence" seems to be able to help in pinning down a process which emerges from <u>beyond</u> "I"" (Journal p.23).

Again, the sense of the music having its own independent intention, and a feeling that the composer was somehow being slowly educated by the music, was apparent. Nearly a month after the initial appearance of this movement, on completion of orchestration, the composer was surprised to understand, suddenly, what the piece was really about:

"It broke my heart to hear this movement again today. It's filled with global compassion from another place. Like a lullaby for a dying child, this is a

compassionate lullaby for our self-destructing human race. I'll perhaps not tell the children that. Perhaps not anyone. It hurts my little heart to look there so I'm guessing most other folk just won't see it. Some things are best left to immeasurable compassion and I'll let the music speak for itself. Most will just hear a pretty tune. Maybe they're the lucky ones? (So much for mindfulness!) xxx"

This is evidence of an uncomfortable return from the nondual realm: constriction back towards duality voicing a sense of otherness. "My little heart" indicates an autonomous self which has lost its connection with the nondual realm, experiencing genuine physical pain in a world which seems all too solid and real.

Interestingly, at the premiere performance, the composer experienced a return towards nondual experience, becoming one with the trumpet part as a manifestation of immeasurable compassion in space, and thus reconnecting with the nondual source of the music. When the "little heart" was reconnected in this way, the ache vanished and was replaced with a deep sense of peace.

In conclusion, the author's extraordinary mindful experience of the creation of the third movement resided mostly in the outer section of the Spiral of Duality model (p. 45), on the nondual side of the middle ground.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the arts-based findings regarding the nature of mindfulness within the Spiral of Duality are discussed in relation to the research question, the literature review findings and with direct reference to the theoretical framework of the study.

Within this discussion, the experiential claims made within the Spiral of Duality model are also treated as findings and will first be interrogated by the literature in a process of validation. This author's experience was reached through active, secular mindfulness of experience whereas, more usually, this nondual realm is accessed through meditative, religious mindfulness, therefore confirmation of these claims is required to validate the model as a useful tool.

Although this dissertation concerns the nature of mindfulness, rather than the nature of the spectrum of duality, that spectrum is highly relevant to any holistic understanding of the myriad interpretations of mindfulness represented in the literature. For example, John Dunne (2011) writes about nondual mindfulness as though this is different from dualistic mindfulness, but is it mindfulness itself, or perhaps the perspective, and thus the content, of our awareness which is different, according to one's situation within the Spiral of Duality?

For this author, mindfulness itself did not change throughout the arts-based project: always *simply noticing, with open curiosity*, whether the ground felt solid, seemed shaky, or appeared to vanish altogether. However, the author's sense of Being **did** change, and therefore the *feeling* of *being* mindful was different in these three realms.

The table summarising the essence of the author's mindful experience includes a variety of ontological experiences relating to being within space and being within time (fig. 4, p. 46). Many can alternatively be viewed as epistemological experiences, relating to insight, knowledge and ways of knowing, and sometimes indicating belief, hope or fear where knowing seemed impossible.

Firstly, this chapter investigates to what extent these epistemological and ontological claims about the nondual realm are validated or contradicted by the literature.

Subsequently, the findings surrounding mindfulness of experience are related directly to the research question, discussing “What is the nature of mindfulness?” within each realm. Both the dual / nondual nature and the epistemological / ontological nature of mindfulness will be examined and discussed.

6.2 Interrogation of the “Spiral of Duality” model

Although this model is drawn from the author’s personal experience, there is evidence within the literature that others have also described a similar threefold pathway of knowing and being from dual to nondual.

Notably, Hegel described logic as comprising three *moments*; these may provide a validating lens for the author’s experiences described in the three columns of figure 4 (p. 46). According to Hegel,

- the first *moment of understanding* is where concepts of reality seem fixed, restricted and dualistic [cf. fig. 4, column 1]
- the second *dialectic moment* is where the initial determination *self-sublates* and an opposite truth reveals itself, which both contains and contradicts the original understanding, creating instability [cf. fig. 4, column 2]
- the third *speculative moment* negates this contradiction and reveals the unity of the two opposing perspectives; differentiation of subject and object vanishes revealing a more stable (nondual) perspective [cf. fig. 4, column 3] (Maybee, 2016)

The nondual realm is problematic to describe because of the complete lack of boundaries involved: this also makes it difficult to validate nondual experience. However, various authors have investigated this realm both experientially and academically and so there is some evidence within the literature to compare with the author’s experiences in an effort to validate this model.

The journaled evidence of the author's nondual experiences includes reports of the "self" detaching, fading, or even vanishing, and of the music appearing to write itself or come from another source, e.g.:

> *"with mvt 3 I felt like a knowing conduit for the music. With this mvt 5 I felt more like being possessed. "I" was barely there… My thinking brain occasionally tried to escape… But no. I couldn't. There was no other option available. The whole experience was terrifying, in a passive sort of way… This tune didn't drift in on a wisp. It appeared, fully formed, and <u>demanded</u> to stay in this work."* (p.36-7)

Loy has studied other composers' experiences, which he has identified to be nondual, and has identified the same features: that the music seems to create itself, and that the process often occurs without the direction of a consciously operating ego. He cites Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Richard Strauss in support of this claim (Loy, 2019, pp. 157–8): the author's experience appears to provide further supporting evidence that this type of experience is nondual.

One of the composers in another study also reported a quasi-vanishing of self and of the music appearing all by itself, confirming that such experiences are not unusual:

> *"… you feel as though you almost don't exist. I've experienced this time and time again. My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening. I just sit there watching it in a state of awe and wonderment. And it just flows out by itself."* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 142)

These nondual experiences equate with a softening of the ego: this lightening of one's sense of identity undermines the manifestation of ignorance. (Tsoknyi, 2012, pp. 91–92). It is not unusual for composers to experience introspective auditory inspiration during the composition process (Nass, 1975). However, the author argues that the self-arising manifestation of fully-formed music can be understood as an arising of nondual insight. Returning to Nairn's definitions of mindfulness and insight (Nairn, Choden and Regan-Addis, 2019, p. 7), we see that the move

from mindfulness within the dualistic realm towards mindfulness of nondual insight represents a significant step, from simply being able to see, towards understanding the way things really are. Furthermore, a softening of the ego is a vital prerequisite to the awakening of this understanding (Tsoknyi, 2012, p. 110).

Loy cites evidence from Brahms, Puccini and Wagner of feeling "vibrations" as the force of this self-creating music flowed through them (2019, p. 159) which exactly reflects the experience of the author during the writing of the third movement (pp. 53-4). Although Loy implies that this evidences nondual experience, vibrations are not mentioned elsewhere in his book, so one must question whether this may be a musical rather than purely nondual phenomenon.

Yates et al. equate flow-states (p. 29) with states of meditative absorption or *jhāna* (2017, pp. 229–232). They describe types of *jhāna,* including the experience *Pīti*, which describes the development and recognition of "strange sensations… and energy currents" (ibid., p. 251). Although Yates et al. do not use dual / nondual terminology, their description of "*pervading pīti",* which describes the composer's experience (pp. 53-4), marks "entry into Stage Nine" of the ten-stage mastery of meditation, and so it can be assumed to be an advanced experience, likely to be somewhat nondual.

Tarthang Tulku's description of nondual time may also go some way towards explaining the phenomenon of the sensation of vibrational energy associated with manifestation within the nondual realm:

> *"Whatever power or energy we may now harness or employ actually derives from 'time'… Even the physical fabric of our world ultimately derives from the energy of 'time' (in our special sense of the term)."* (1977, pp. 129–30)

This description concurs with the author's experiences, both of a buzzing energy sensation during the manifestation of music and of a nondual insight experience which revealed the non-linear nature of time:

> *"…a sudden and profound understanding that the present moment <u>contains</u> the entirety of the past and all possible futures. This was not a thought, but*

an understanding. Not a belief but an absolutely clear presentation of the absolute truth of mindfulness, and of reality." (Journal, p.46)

That this perspective regarding time had not arisen within the literature reviewed thus far was surprising. Further reading revealed that Thich Nhat Hahn's teachings on inter-being stem from his understanding of the tenth penetration of the Avatamsaka Sutra. His interpretation validates the author's insight:

"All times penetrate one time. One time penetrates all time... In one second, you can find the past, present, and future... They "inter-contain" each other. Space contains time, time contains space." (Kotler, 1996, p. 169)

This nondual connection *"beyond space and time"* has also been recognised by composer Terry Riley. He argues that, whilst this transcendental connection is usually beyond human knowing:

"… very occasionally, when we have an inspiration, we do know – because the inspiration comes to us so strongly that we are convinced by the experience. This isn't a matter of belief but of experience – an experience that's filled with awareness and truth and love." (Green, 2005, p. 261)

Riley's experience concords strongly with the author's and strengthens the argument to regard musical manifestation as nondual insight.

Preceding the insight regarding non-linear time, descriptions of minor temporal anomalies and concurrent vanishing of sensations of bodily solidity appeared within the journal:

"yet again 'real time' vanished… no physical sensations…" (p.23)

"It's clear when the music fairies are in charge, because 'clock time' stands still and I lose touch with any sense of material reality… (p.25)

Within flow-state, distortions in the experience of time passing are common (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, pp. 142, 243). Tarthang Tulku also describes similar non-linear experiences as being part of what he labels a "second stage" experience of time, describing these as "a limitless range of possible breakthroughs" (Tarthang,

1977, pp. 203–4). He claims that “most religious visions and awakenings throughout history have fallen into this category of experience” (ibid.). This equates with the author’s experience of the bizarre middle ground of the Spiral of Duality model (p, 46), and Tarthang urges practitioners to move on to what he describes as a “third stage, Great Time [nondual] view” (ibid., p205).

This discussion confirms that the author’s experiences have sometimes taken her to a perspective which, in light of the literature, could be considered to be somewhat nondual. This lends credibility to the Spiral of Duality as a potentially useful model within which to examine experience of mindfulness.

The following sections discuss the nature of mindfulness as experienced within each of the three realms of duality in light of the literature.

6.3 The nature of mindfulness from a nondual perspective

The obvious question to ask of mindfulness within the nondual realm is whether this is even possible: without differentiation of subject and object, who is there to be mindful, and what is there to notice?

6.3.1 The ontological nature of mindfulness from a nondual perspective

The author’s experience of being mindful throughout this project has led her to an intuitively-won understanding that mindfulness, from a nondual perspective, is a state of pure Being – when all sense of “otherness” and “self” has dissipated, “simply noticing, with curiosity” takes on a pure form. There are no separate “things” to notice: it becomes possible only *to Be.*

Re-examining the literature, it becomes clear that Kabat-Zinn has long known this: in a very early chapter of his book on mindfulness meditation, he recommends that, occasionally, one should stop “doing” and spend more time “being” (1994, p. 11). Within the purely nondual realm, this is unavoidable – Being is the only option from a nondual perspective.

Tarthang Tulku, using different terminology, discusses the nature of Being as the essence of the nondual realm (he capitalises terms which are expressions of nonduality):

> *"The openness of Space, the lively, expressive quality of Time, the clarity of Knowledge,* ***are Being****... Being is not something else, behind these three… Yet, they are not* ***three things****, and in fact each is all three and all three remain uneffected [sic] synthesis. This is the nature of Being, a mystery when stated in first level [dualistic] terms but quintessentially natural and forthright from a third level [nondual] view."* (1977, p. 294 (original emphasis))

This statement concurs wholeheartedly with the author's experience of mindfulness within the nondual realm. The nature of mindfulness at this level is one of simply Being.

6.3.2 Judgement and mindfulness from this ontological perspective

Kabat-Zinn's understanding of this situation explains the origin of the "non-judgemental" inclusion in his definition of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4); similarly, Rob Nairn's "without preference" (Nairn, Choden and Regan-Addis, 2019, p. 7). Both are wise men, sharing the author's understanding that being mindful within the nondual realm can be no other way – it is impossible for preference or judgement to exist in a realm where there is no subject-object duality.

The author's insight that the nondual realm infuses the dualistic realm (p. 44) is relevant to understanding non-judgement here. This insight is similar to a core Buddhist teaching, "Buddha nature" (Tsoknyi, 2012, p. 42), which suggests that the "awakened state" of the nondual realm can always be found within the dualistic realm if we can but notice it. For the author, it was not the Buddhist teaching but the following of the metaxological approach which led directly to this insight, for when we constantly and consistently look "between", even in the most dualistic of worlds, particle physics tells us that all material things are connected by vast quantities of energy-filled space (Smetham, 2010, p. 129). The author's felt sense of this space facilitated her intuitively-won understanding of its nature as nondual.

The non-judgemental nature of mindfulness within a purely nondual realm is inescapable: yet within a dualistic realm, one must search "between" in order to find the porous nondual space where nonjudgement becomes easy and obvious.

As soon as “this” and “that” are differentiated in the dualistic realm, judgement appears. Therefore the “feel” of mindfulness changes depending on the practitioner’s position within the Spiral of Duality.

When music was manifesting within the nondual realm, there was no need for the composer’s judgement. In fact, there was no option for editing. The composer became scribe rather than author, writing without any scrutiny of the content, because in that moment there was very little of the ego left with which to scrutinise. This experience has also been voiced by another composer and recognised as a nondual experience by Loy:

> *“I heard, and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which the* Rite of Spring *passed.”* (Stravinsky, cited by Loy, 2019, p. 159)

6.3.3 The epistemological nature of mindfulness from a nondual perspective

Examined from a nondual perspective, even the most contrasting definitions of mindfulness are acceptable because at a basic level they each describe some small aspect of a state of nondual Being.

Another nondual insight revealed how this Being was related to Knowing:

> *“The insight appeared… in a complete package which makes it hard to describe. Here, suddenly, were all the definitions of mindfulness that have ever been and ever will be. Discrete, yet simultaneous, which is the tricky thing to describe…”* (Journal, p.45)

In this vision, which appeared during the few seconds of the most profound silence of the Tara practice, the author was able to peruse a vast library, slowly picking out and opening books to reveal definition after definition… There was no sense of time, no sense of solidity, and, interestingly, no sense of judgement whatsoever. In that moment, a complete fusion of epistemology and ontology was experienced – being and knowing were one, just as Hegel had suggested (1817).

This state of knowing without discrimination has parallels with Hegel's *speculative moment* of unity (Maybee, 2016) and also with the Yogacara Buddhist state of "thusness" (Scarfe, 2006, p. 54).

While Hegel and Tarthang Tulku seem to agree that mindfulness, or Being, is infused with the possibility of Knowing in the nondual realm, how does this compare to the Integrative Knowledge Model (p. 14)?

Cherman and Azeredo (2018) have allocated 50% of their model to dualistic ways of knowing, generously providing an accessible route to intuitive Knowledge for those readers who currently reside wholly in the rational realm. In fact, the solid boundaries of the rational realm form only a tiny portion of the nondual realm, as it has porous boundaries throughout. This reflects our ability to know: most of the authors cited in section 2.2 (pp.13-17) agreed that, within our "real" world, the first step towards accessing intuitive knowledge is to accept the dualistic state of "not knowing".

The only author to claim unrestricted Knowledge was Tarthang Tulku: it must therefore be assumed he has constant access to the nondual realm through a porous boundary (1977, p. 41). Unlimited access to nondual Knowledge offers exciting possibilities for mankind. The missing ingredient, for most, is insight which is developed in the middle ground of the Spiral of Duality.

6.4 The nature of mindfulness within the middle ground

The musical experiences detailed in section 5.3.2 (pp. 49-51) illustrate the perspective of a composer who has grappled in the middle ground for years, who has come to trust the musical gifts of the nondual and is able to accept the ebb and flow of duality which occurs here. Figure 4 (p. 46), however, indicates that the author's daily life experience of mindfulness within the middle ground of the Spiral of Duality was often clouded by confusion. Whenever the rational mind touched the realm of nonduality unexpectedly, a constricting sense of fear subsequently arose. The author first experienced this when, as a novice meditator, she unwittingly fell into a state of depersonalisation during an early morning meditative walk. The nondual experience itself was strange but not frightening, however the

journal documents an explosion of fear as the mind returned to its habitual dualistic state:

> *"Wednesday 11th Nov: [directly following the incident] I don't think I'm really insane. It feels more like radical sanity. Perhaps it's a circle..? Confused, confused… xx*
>
> *Thursday 12th Nov: Last night I read too much about my experience. Yesterday I was not at all frightened… but by the time I had read "Meditation & Psychosis – trigger or cure?" (Dyga and Stupak, 2015) I was properly scared… I feel this very real fear and embrace it but I cannot allow the fear to win…* (Personal Journal, 2015)

Buddhist scholar John Dunne recognises that on the journey towards becoming mindful of the nondual state, mental health can be disturbed, and recommends the need for a clear context to be able to cope with the nature of mindfulness practice in this confusing middle ground:

> *"..a clear spiritual goal, embodied by the living human teacher… and a thorough understanding of how the present mind is karmically conditioned… [these provide] a context to interpret the difficulties of practice, including anxieties, intense ecstasies and moments of depersonalization that are the side effects of the practice"* (2011, p. 85)

Tarthang Tulku similarly describes the conflict which arises through clinging to the habit of dualistic labelling when faced with unexpected, profound insight:

> *"Though many types of awareness and experience arise which actually bear very useful and incisive energies, because they are a little too dynamic or unusual for the sedentary 'self', they seem threatening and are accordingly labelled as 'paranoia', 'schizophrenia', and so on… we lose sight of their inner value and become very upset… We may suffer far more severe disorientation from* ***identifying with the associations of our labels*** *than from the potency of the experiences themselves."* (1977, p. 267 (original emphasis))

This accurately describes the author's depersonalisation experience: Dunne's words were of no comfort to a practitioner who was disinclined to approach any religious group for support. Religions offer teachings to help overcome fear (e.g. Hanh, 2012; McDaniel, 2016). However, for practitioners who do not identify with religion, how can this hurdle of mental instability in the middle ground be overcome?

The issues of how practitioners cope with the variety of contemplative experience in this middle ground is being researched, and practical solutions are being considered (Lindahl *et al.*, 2017; Britton and Treleavan, 2018). It is interesting to note that attitude, of the practitioner and the teacher, seems to be a factor in coping: simply sharing the information that others have had similar experiences and understanding that unusual experiences can be a normal part of the path towards clarity and insight seems helpful.

The author, having been fortunate to have tasted "no-fear" in her initial nondual experiences, now incorporates the cultivation of this spacious feeling into her daily formal practice (Appendix Three), which helps to stabilise any daily-life emotional upset swiftly.

Using artistic endeavour as an alternative platform to religion in the exploration of this middle ground may seem controversial, but Desmond's view supports this possibility: *"Human 'art' comes to assume roles previously accorded to religion"* in terms of *"transobjective and transsubjective transcendence"* (Desmond and Simpson, 2012, p. 7). Ingold also concurs in his writing about the divine nature of music in various cultures (2011, p. 206). Placing artistic endeavour in this quasi-sacred position offers new possibilities for the secular practice and understanding of mindfulness within the Spiral of Duality. Artistic endeavour visits those porous boundaries, enabling practitioners to become open to accessing nondual knowledge through the space which is created by their practice and to develop a trust in the nature of their being.

6.5 The nature of mindfulness in the dualistic or "real" world

The musical experience detailed in 5.3.1 (pp. 47-9) illustrates a composer trying to be in control but failing to meet her intention. In her focus on duality, she ignored the nondual aspect of creation, but it did not ignore her: the music which arose painted an unexpectedly clear picture of the dis-ease of duality; an unintentional "self" portrait. This is evidence that, in being dualistically mindful, the nondual can manifest unnoticed – an uncomfortable paradox for secular dualists. It seems that one's intuition always operates: the choice is whether or not to notice it.

Concerns have been voiced amongst some Buddhists about the recent surge in the dualistic commodification and secularisation of mindfulness (Purser, 2019). Mindfulness has become a multi-million-dollar industry and has broken free of its Buddhist roots, and therefore also its Buddhist ethical framework, in the "real" world (Monteiro, Musten and Compson, 2015).

The difficulty with well-intentioned secular Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) is that, although they have a nondual origin (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 292), they are being delivered to, and sometimes from, the entirely dualistic perspective of our everyday "reality".

Dunne argues that if mindfulness is cultivated through focussed attention on any seemingly real object or concept, then that strengthening of subject-object differentiation actually fuels ignorance rather than overcoming it, so it's a starting point, not a destination (2011, p. 77). Purser argues that some MBIs encourage employees to accept and cope with toxic working conditions rather than actually helping them to overcome their suffering, by teaching them to stop at this starting point (2019). In avoiding facing up to the sacred, secular MBIs may deny their nondual roots and enforce dualistic belief.

6.5.1 The limiting role of belief

Despite being an increasingly secular society (King, 2004), much of our modern life remains based on *belief* in a scientifically "proven" reality. In truth, science still faces many fundamental, unanswered questions, especially in the realm of quantum physics (Smetham, 2010). In the author's early research for "The

Astonishment of Being", she explored some of the unknowns of particle physics (Berkeley_Lab, 2019). The most fundamental of these is Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, a fundamental of Quantum Mechanics, which states that **it is not possible to know** both a particle's position and its momentum in the same moment: the more precisely we measure one, the less we know about the other (Britannica.com, 2019).

This may seem irrelevant, but it is important for secular mindfulness practitioners to realise that much of the physics of our "reality" is based on belief, whether we are religious or not. And so, "The Astonishment of Being" was born:

> *"30th August 2018: …this piece, rather than being a celebration of what we do know about particle physics, it turns out to be more of a philosophical work, encouraging both players and listeners to "settle in" to the normal, human state of not knowing and not being able to know everything."*
> (Journal, p.4)

Originally the author did not understand that this limiting state of not being able to know was perpetuated by her own dualistic perspective. However, "simply noticing" the music manifesting, from a space *between* dualities, educated her in an unexpected way. 15 weeks later, the author illustrated a profound insight in her journal regarding the role of the ego in access to dual and nondual knowledge:

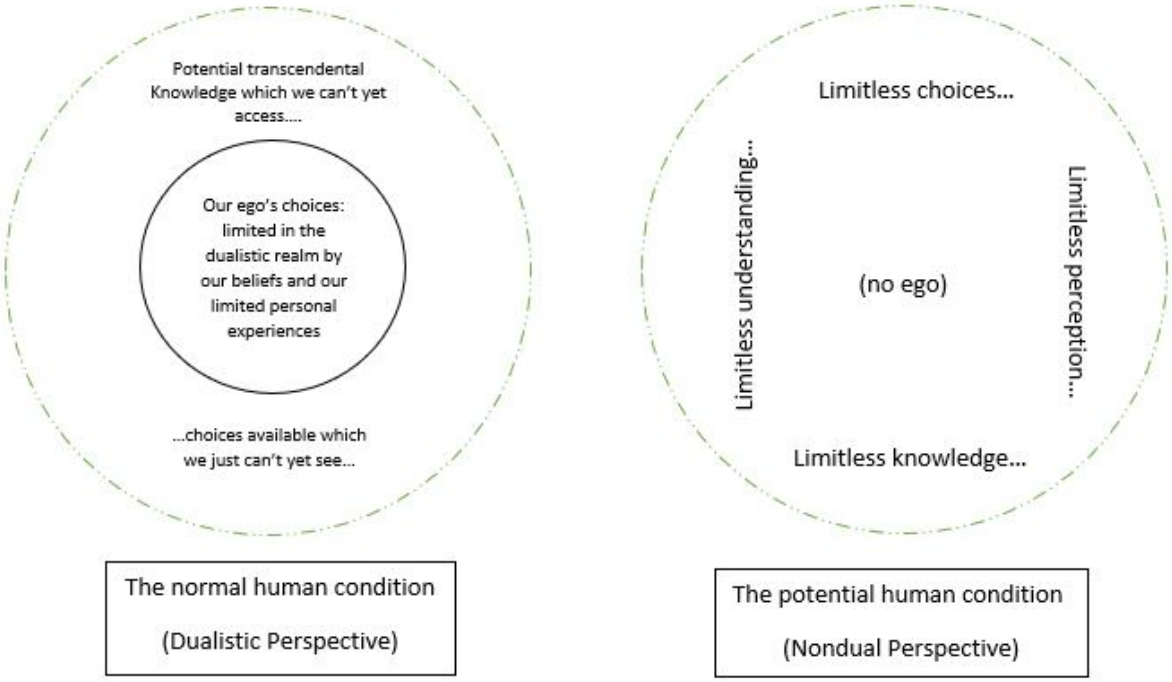

Figure 5: Human Potential for Insight

Although the Buddha allegedly realised this over 2000 years ago, humankind, as a species, still fails to recognise and fulfil this potential. Tarthang Tulku agrees that untested belief is a root cause of this failure:

> *"Our fundamental difficulties are* not *being resolved, and we can see this clearly… Neither technological progress nor religious teachings are going to work unless we take a hand, actively engaging our faculties of discernment, testing ideas and beliefs for ourselves."* (1977, p. 230)

The author argues that secular mindfulness is currently being stymied by a cultural *belief* in the dualistic nature of reality, despite experiential evidence to the contrary being available through the practice itself.

6.5.2 Staying safe as one's mindfulness practice develops

Dualistic attention training brings benefit, developing stability of mind. This is what Tsoknyi Rinpoche calls the "baby steps" of mindfulness (2012, p. 121). However, sustained attention training, e.g. decades of meditation or music practice, results in an inevitable expansion of awareness (Trungpa, 2013b, p. 369), leading the

practitioner, sometimes unwittingly, towards experience of the nondual. This is a realm which has previously been considered religious territory (Loy, 2019), and religions provide ethical frameworks which help practitioners to move safely in this liberating direction.

For composers, the central part our work habit is nondual and, for the most part, we learn to work there and come “home” to duality each day, without needing words or a framework to describe this experience. However, it is hypothesised that the increased mental health problems associated with creativity may, in part, stem from this constant traversing of the middle ground in the absence of a supportive ethical framework (Kyaga *et al.*, 2011; Frey, 2016).

Finding a safe, secular path to help dualistic mindfulness practitioners to develop their practice through the middle ground towards the nondual perspective is both a challenge and a responsibility, not only for practitioners themselves, but for all of those who provide secular mindfulness training in this “real” world of ours.

7 Conclusion

7.1 What is the Nature of Mindfulness?

It seemed throughout much of this project that the nature of mindfulness might be beyond human knowing. However, by integrating a practical, intuitive approach with an academic, rational approach, and by maintaining a metaxological curiosity throughout the project, an unexpected level of clarity has arisen.

This author now understands that a healthy, balanced mindfulness is concurrently ontological (a beneficial way of Being) and epistemological (an insightful way of Knowing) and that these two aspects of mindfulness are inextricably intertwined. Beyond that, being purposefully mindful has usefully revealed the nondual porosity of Being within her own daily, dualistic life.

Attention has been understood as a dualistic mindfulness practice which stabilises the mind, releasing the potential of the more transformative mindfulness practice of nondual awareness. Both are valuable in daily life.

The “present moment” has been recognised as a portal to intuitive understanding, which reveals that each present moment transcends linear concepts of space and time; an understanding which is impossible to gain from a purely rational perspective.

In light of these experiential findings, the contentious nature of the academic debate surrounding the meaning of mindfulness is more clearly understood: anyone who purports to be able to “define” mindfulness in concrete terms is expressing a dualistic perspective. Without also incorporating a nondual perspective, their definition will always be incomplete. Duality and nonduality are not opposites, but rather harmoniously co-existing aspects of mindfulness and of being: the Spiral of Duality is a useful model to illustrate this.

The musical nature of this study has also informed some specific recommendations relating to the mental health of musicians (Appendix Four), although further research is required in this field.

As for the “nature of mindfulness”, a simile may be helpful: the nature of the sea changes from hour to hour and day to day and continent to continent; it can be blue, green, grey, warm, freezing, calm, or stormy; but it remains the sea from all perspectives, whatever is going on, within, or around it. The nature of mindfulness is similar: it can look and feel very different because, like the weather, the content of one’s awareness changes depending on the perspective of the practitioner within the Spiral of Duality. But mindfulness itself does not actually change. In the early stages it looks like focussed attention, later it looks like spacious awareness, but always it is just a pure noticing of our state of Being.

For all mindfulness practitioners and teachers, this author recommends adopting a radically explicit approach towards developing a personal, experiential and theoretical understanding of *mindfulness of duality* and *mindfulness of nonduality* in order to develop practice habits which are balanced, healthy and beneficial.

There is global benefit to be gained through individuals taking personal responsibility to develop a clearer understanding: becoming mindful firstly of their dualistic habits, and then gradually opening to a mindfulness of that space which cannot be seen, touched or measured but which, and science agrees, comprises most of everything in every moment. This is certainly not exclusively the responsibility of religious groups. The secular mindfulness movement must face up to the constant reality of nondual awareness, not as a belief, but as an immediately accessible experience of Being.

Kabat-Zinn revealed this to be his intention in interview:

> *p302 "MBSR is really meant to be from the non-dual perspective, but grounded in real people and real life. And I think a lot of MBSR teachers don’t realise that, because the people who are teaching them don’t emphasise non-duality. And that’s really hard to emphasise, because… If you put it into words, you’ve already killed it."* (cited by Husgafvel, 2018, p. 302)

The orchestra is a useful metaphor for all human experience (Sprigge, 1983, p. 253); involving the development of high levels of cognitive, dualistic attention focused on technique *at the same time as* a wide, heartfelt open awareness and communication of emotion and sound which transcends dualistic boundaries. This study has shown the creation and performance of orchestral music to be a useful secular vehicle for observing and understanding the holistic nature of mindfulness.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Submitted Ethics Approval Form

Code and Title of Course/Project:

MSc Work Based Project and Dissertation / A MUSICIAN'S APPROACH: TAKING THE DEFINITION OF MINDFULNESS BEYOND WORDS

Name of Principal Investigator or Course Co-ordinator:

Katrina Gordon supervised by Liz Curtis under David Johnston

Project/Course Start Date: Sept 2017

Additional Research staff (if applicable):

Recruitment procedures

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Does your research activity involve persons less than 18 years of age? If yes, please provide further information.		✓	
2	Does your research activity involve people with learning or communication difficulties? (**Note:** all research involving participants for whom provision is made under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 must be ethically reviewed by NHS NRES). If yes, please provide further information.		✓	
3	Is your research activity likely to involve people involved in illegal activities? If yes, please provide further information.		✓	
4	Does your research activity involve people belonging to a vulnerable group, other than those noted above? If yes, please provide further information.		✓	
5	Does your research activity involve people who are, or are likely to become your clients or clients of the section in which you work? If yes, please provide further information.		✓	
6	Does your research activity provide for people for whom English is not their first language? Please provide further information on how this will be provided, or, if it will not be provided, please explain why not.		✓	
7	Does your research activity require access to personal information about participants from other parties (e.g. teachers, employers), databanks or files? If yes, please explain how you will ensure that use of this data does not contravene the Data Protection Act and protects the anonymity of subjects.		✓	
8	Do you plan to conceal your own identity during the course of the research activity? If yes, please provide further information (e.g. that this is necessary for the nature of the research, whether subjects will be contacted directly after the period of observation).		✓	

9	Does your research activity provide for people for whom English is not their first language? If yes, please provide further information on how this will be provided, or if it will not be provided, please explain why not.		✓	

Consent Procedures

10	Please provide details of the consent procedures that you intend to use for obtaining informed consent from all subjects (including parental consent for children). You should provide details of how you will let subjects know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time. You should also provide details of the processes for giving potential subjects adequate time for considering participation and for obtaining written consent. If research is observational, please advise how subjects will provide consent for being observed. If any of these issues are not applicable to your research or if you do not intend to address them for reasons of research methodology, please provide further information.
N/A – This project is entirely desk based and all data will be collected from the literature	

Possible Harm to Researchers/Participants

11	Are there any safety issues for you in conducting this research? If so, please provide details of what these might be and how you intend to address such issues.
None	

12	Is there any realistic risk of any subjects experiencing either physical or psychological discomfort or distress? Or any realistic risk of them experiencing a detriment to their interests as a result of participation? If so, please provide details of what this might be and how you intend to address such issues.
N/A	

Data Protection

13	Please provide details of how you intend to ensure that data is stored securely and in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Please give specific consideration to whether any non-anonymised and/or personalised data will be generated and/or stored and what precautions you will put in place regarding access you might have to documents containing sensitive data about living individuals that is not publicly available elsewhere? If your research relates to the latter, please consider the consent of the subjects including instances where consent is not sought.

N/A – All literature sources are already in the public domain.

It is the responsibility of all researchers to ensure that they follow the College and University's various policies designed to ensure good research practice. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research activity should be notified to your School Research Ethics Officer and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Please attach the following with this form:

- **Full proposal of relevant research project/course elements. In order to speed up the process of review, applicants are advised to pay particular attention to those areas for which a 'Yes' has been ticked in the following form, either by providing an account of the procedures or training to be employed to ensure ethical practice, or an academic justification for the research strategy employed (or both).**
- **Participant information form and consent form (where appropriate)**

9.2 Appendix 2: A sample selection of expert understandings of mindfulness

Reference	Source text	Definition of Mindfulness
(Akong, 1994, p. 73)	Taming the Tiger – Tibetan Teachings for Everyday Life	"whenever unwholesome tendencies arise and threaten to find expression, we slow down, steady ourselves, and try just to do one thing at a time, thoroughly and completely. That is mindfulness."
(Amaro, 2015, p. 65)	A Holistic Mindfulness	"The term *sati,* or mindfulness, is commonly being used as a shorthand for three distinct psychological qualities, referred to in Pāli by different terms. First, *sati* is the simple act of paying attention to an object or action…. Second, *sati-sampajañña* means mindfulness and clear comprehension… Third, *sati-paññā* means mindfulness conjoined with wisdom and is regarded as the quality that leads to the full blossoming of human well-being."
(Bodhi, 2011, p. 21)	Quoting "the Sattipatthana Sutta, the 'Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness'" from the Pali Canon	"Here, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body… feelings in feelings… mind in mind… phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world… that is, the four establishments of mindfulness."
(Chiesa, 2013, pp. 258–9)	The Difficulty of Defining Mindfulness: Current Thought and Critical Issues	"In stark contrast with the complex and multifaceted definitions of mindfulness employed by classical authors, several of current mindfulness questionnaires suggest that mindfulness could be conceptualized as

		a single-faceted construct which main feature is “present-centred attention.””
(Chödrön, 2001, p. 44)	The Wisdom of No Escape	“Mindfulness is loving all the details of our lives, and awareness is the natural thing that happens: life begins to open up and you realize that you’re always standing at the center of the world.”
(Dreyfus, 2011, p. 52)	Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Non-judgemental?	“the modern understanding of mindfulness as present-centred non-judgemental awareness although not completely mistaken reflects only a partial understanding... it is important not to lose sight that mindfulness is not just a therapeutic technique but is a natural capacity that plays a central role in the cognitive process. It is this aspect that seems to be ignored when mindfulness is reduced to a form of non-judgemental present-centred awareness.”
(Dunne, 2011, p. 84)	Toward an Understanding of Non-dual Mindfulness	“effortless Mindfulness of mere non-distraction lies at the core Mahamudra practice. And, in comparison to more dualistic approaches drawn from the *Abhidharma,* this Mahamudra approach to Mindfulness seems a much better candidate for comparison with many contemporary approaches for cultivating mindfulness such as those found in MBSR.”
(Gethin, 2011, p. 267)	On Some Definitions of Mindfulness	“while he [Nyaponika] may have been careful to present it [bare attention] as merely an elementary aspect of the practice

	(Here, Gethin examines Burmese 20th century Theravada monk Nyaponika's perspective)	of mindfulness and to distinguish it from a fuller understanding of mindfulness proper… there has sometimes been a tendency for those who have written on mindfulness subsequently to assimilate it to 'bare attention'. [Nyaponika's] tradition was disseminated and developed in the West by a number of meditation teachers… including Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, to name but two."
(Gordon *et al.*, 2015, p. 55)	There is Only One Mindfulness: Why Science and Buddhism Need to Work Together	"The Buddha was entirely consistent in his teachings, and any alleged differences in the meaning of his instructions ultimately arise as a result of conceptual elaborations that, in general, are often of limited scriptural or logical soundness."
(Hanh and Weare, 2017, p. xviii)	Happy Teachers Change the World	Thich Nhat Hanh: "Mindfulness is a kind of energy that helps us to be fully present in the here and now, aware of what is going on in our body, in our feelings, in our mind, and in the world, so that we can get in touch with the wonders of life that can nourish and heal us."
(Hanson and Mendius, 2009, p. 83)	Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom	"Mindfulness just means being fully aware of something, in the moment with it, and not judging or resisting it. Be attentive to physical sensations; that's all there is to it."

(Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4)	Wherever You Go, There You Are	"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."
(Langer, 2005, p. 16)	On Becoming an Artist	"Becoming mindful does not involve achieving some altered state of consciousness through years of meditation… Mindfulness is simply the process of noticing new things. It is seeing the similarities in things thought different and the differences in things taken to be similar."
(Maex, 2011, p. 169)	The Buddhist Roots of Mindfulness Training: A Practitioner's View	"Virtue *(sila)* is the element we are probably least at ease with. Isn't science to be value-free? Mindfulness definitely is not. Without kindness, respect and dignity it is not right *(samma)* mindfulness at all… Ethics in Buddhism is completely different from what we are used to in the West in that it is defined in relation to suffering: wholesome is what leads to wellbeing, unwholesome is what leads to suffering."
(Nairn, 1999)	Diamond Mind: A Psychology of Meditation	"Mindfulness is this amazingly versatile, flexible quality which is not dependent upon the arising and changing of different mind states, moods, thought patterns, and so on. It is something in itself – the ability, the power of knowing or observing."
(Olendzki, 2011, p. 66)	The Construction of Mindfulness: ref (4) is a quote from Abhidharmakosa	"Mindfulness practice serves the function of *transforming the mind (4)* by simultaneously blocking all unwholesome states and developing and strengthening wholesome states." (p66) (n.b. in this statement,

	2:24 (Pruden, 1991, 189-90)	Olendzki is describing formal mindfulness meditation practice and using “mindfulness practice” as a shorthand for this.)
(Tsoknyi, 2012, pp. 121, 130)	Open Heart, Open Mind	Tsoknyi Rinpoche asked his teacher Adeu Rinpoche about his experience of western mindfulness teachings: “He explained to me that what passes for mindfulness in many modern cultures were very useful baby steps… “Always remember,” he told me, “that the main goal of any practice is to awaken the heart.”… Baby steps may be useful, but most of the people I’d be teaching weren’t babies.” (p121) “That’s the intention behind mindfulness: to help, to serve, to love.” (p130)
(Siegel, Germer and Olendzki, 2009, pp. 19, 21)	The Neurobiology of Mindfulness	“As mindfulness is adopted by Western psychotherapy and migrates away from its ancient roots, its meaning is expanding. Most notably, mental qualities beyond *sati* (awareness, attention, and remembering) are being included in “mindfulness” as we adapt it to alleviate clinical conditions. These qualities include nonjudgment, acceptance, and compassion.” (p19) “Mindfulness practices all involve some form of meditation.” (p21)
(Steinfeld and Brewer, 2015, p. 88)	The Psychological Benefits from Reconceptualizing Music-Making as	“Any human action can be performed as mindfulness meditation; it just depends on how one applies their mind to that given task. It has been proposed that mindfulness

	Mindfulness Practice	meditation is a formalized de-specialization of the infinite number of other activities that people can achieve mindfulness in, which has particular relevance to the phenomenology of music-making."
(Teasdale and (Kulananda), 2011, p. 111)	How Does Mindfulness Transform Suffering? II: The Transformation of *Dukkha*	"consciously processing Implicational meanings is associated with a more experiential quality: "knowing with the heart," "gut-level knowing" and so forth… We can see mindfulness as a way to access and "work" with Implicational working memory."
(Trungpa, 2013b, pp. 287, 295, 304–5, 316)	The Path of Individual Liberation	"In the first foundation, mindfulness of body, you relate with the bodily sensations, the sense perceptions, and the eight types of consciousness. You don't have to build anything up; you just pay attention to what is happening…. There is no suggestion of anything other than paying attention to your breathing or your walking." (p287) "In mindfulness of life [the second foundation], the meditative state is tangible, but at the same time there is a letting go. You are there, and then you let yourself go… in mindfulness practice – both meditation and postmeditation…" (p295) "Mindfulness of effort [the third foundation] is about the meeting point of instinct and ethics, and how they can be put together…" (p304-5) "The fourth foundation of mindfulness, mindfulness of mind, is the self-conscious

		awareness of what is happening to us as we sit and meditate… Mindfulness is being watchful, rather than watching… It has both a light-heartedness and balance. It is like opening the windows and doors a little bit to allow in the freshness from outside." (p316)
(XIV, 2011, p. 46)	HH Dalai Lama: How to be compassionate	**The word mindfulness does not appear, even once, in this 143 page book.** The closest is p46: "It is crucial to be mindful of impermanence – to contemplate that you will not remain long in this life." The word "mindful" appears twice more, in association with being mindful to restrain self-destructive emotions (p60, 131)
(Yates, Immergut and Graves, 2017, p. 425)	The Mind Illuminated	"**Mindfulness** *(sati):* An optimal interaction between ***attention*** and ***peripheral awareness***. **Mindfulness with clear comprehension** *(satisampajanna):* An important aspect of ***mindfulness*** is being aware of *what* you are doing, saying, thinking and feeling. Mindfulness with clear comprehension also has two other important aspects… clear comprehension of purpose, which means being metacognitively aware of *why* you're doing, saying, thinking… The second is clear comprehension of suitability – of whether what you're doing, saying, thinking… is *appropriate* to this particular situation, to your goals and purposes, and in accordance with your personal beliefs and values.**"**

9.3 Appendix 3: The author's approach to Green Tara practice

Initially, I observed this group practice at Samye Ling Monastery and Holy Isle occasionally over a period of two years without active participation, with curiosity as to its likeness to orchestral music making and the language of classical music. I noticed similarities in terms of communication through non-verbal methods: the feeling-tone of the sounds and resulting emotions which would arise; the ensemble setting and associated close-focussed attention alongside a wider extrospective awareness. At this time, I would either actively listen (as a classical musician would during a rest period in the score), or would practice mindfulness of feeling-tone, noticing the physical feelings arising within me and the energies changing within the space of the room as the monastics were chanting.

Fascinated by the phenomenon of their ability to communicate with me without me having to understand their words, I then decided to begin to participate in the practice in a more active way, "learning" the practice in the same way a musician would learn a new piece: treating the phonetic Tibetan syllables as one would treat notes on the page (i.e. having no meaning in themselves), practising slowly and deliberately, listening to recordings to assess the tempo, pitch, rhythm and intonation of various different practitioners' renditions, and sometimes choosing passages to "work on", repeating them several times until they became fluent.

Keeping an open mind as to whether the communication of the practice was entirely beyond words (as with classical music) or whether the Buddhist sacred text might itself contain some further meaning which was communicable without conscious understanding, I have always been careful to replicate the nuance of the sounds of the Tibetan text as closely as possible, demonstrating respect for the fact that it clearly has meaning to Tibetans, even though it remains meaningless to me in a literal sense.

I was grateful to receive some brief instruction in Tara practice on Holy Isle in 2017 and then became able to join in with the hand gestures and gained a better understanding of the Buddhists' intention-plan during the practice. At no time did I engage with the traditional visualisation of Tara as a green lady or goddess,

however I did adopt a felt sense of the mythical Tara's positive qualities as detailed in the 21 Praises section of the practice: these include the human qualities of courage; compassion; generosity; patience (but with ability to act swiftly and wisely when required); diligence; wisdom; a genuine sense of humour; determination; embodiment of peace. An alternative intention-plan for the practice, with which I personally could feel comfortable as a non-believer, was developed over time. The following summary details approximately how my plan for the Tara practice stood during the period of this study.

It should be noted that this is a plan for my *intention* during the practice – it is not a thought-plan nor an action-plan nor a visualisation-plan. Rather it is a plan to rest my mind (while chanting) in a stable, porous space with intention; for example, to notice how it *feels* to be one human in the history of humanity or to notice how it *feels* to notice that the sound of music appears to emerge from nothing and vanish back to nothing. Inevitably, during this practice thoughts arise and the plan includes an intention to notice but not engage with those thoughts; so there is very little linear thought going on when I stick to my intention.

- 6am or nearest possible time (daily with very few exceptions): begin with close focus of attention on 21 breaths in silence
- During the first section of the text (Guru Rinpoche), having a felt sense of my history as a human being: e.g. a feeling of shared DNA; comprising re-used atoms which each have a history of their own; possessing instinctive knowledge gained genetically from the lessons of our ancestors and their teachers; a sense of the space within and between atoms which is shared by all beings and which is connected to the infinite space between planets and solar systems.
- During the next section which is repeated 3 times (Green Tara refuge & bodhicitta): 1. Sensing an aspiration for clarity within my own mind; 2. An aspiration for those people I know and have met to gain more clarity of mind; 3. An aspiration for those people I have not yet met to gain clarity of mind.

- During the next section (Gathering the Accumulations): a sense of the timeless nature of the gifts which the Buddhists choose to offer (water, flowers, incense, lights, perfumed water, food and music)
- During the Seven Branch Prayer: focus attention entirely on the syllables of the text in this section without distraction, with awareness of body sensations
- 100 syllable mantra (this I choose to repeat 3 times which is not traditional but feels right to me): 1. A sense of having all of the qualities which are required in order to act in an accomplished, skilful, wise and loving way in all circumstances; 2. A sense of those people I have met also having those qualities, abilities and skills within them; 3. A sense of those people I have not yet met also having those qualities, abilities and skills within them.
- During the following section: A sense of it being possible, together, to create a peaceful, harmonious world.
- During the next section (offerings and praise to Tara): a sense of wisdom and compassion arising within the porous, expansive, limitless space which lies between subatomic particles and also between planets and galaxies.
- During General Offerings: a sense that all the offerings (listed above) can appear to manifest from nothing and decay into nothing (just as music does every day in my life).
- 2 repetitions of the 21 Praises: 1. A sense of drawing from that porous, expansive space to find, within myself, the legendary qualities of Tara (listed above); 2. A sense that all others can also access these positive qualities at will as required
- General Offerings: as above
- 3 repetitions of the 21 Praises: 1. A sense of finding the courage to act wisely, again drawn from that porous space; 2. A sense of others who are known to me also being able to find this courage to act wisely; 3. A sense of all others who are not yet known to me also being able to find the courage to act wisely.
- General Offerings: as above

- 7 repetitions of the 21 Praises using chakra colours and felt sense to progress through repetitions rather than cognitive counting [A full explanation of the history of the chakra system can be found at (Sharma, 2006, pp. 193–196) but in all honesty, I literally just chose this strategy for my mind-plan because it conveniently offers seven points of focus for the mind and a sense of common humanity without having to keep count of repetitions. I have no affiliation to its Hindu / Vedic background.]: 1. A focus on the base chakra (colour red) and the sense that everyone else on the planet also has this energy centre at the base of their torso; 2. A similar focus on the 2nd chakra (colour orange); 3. A similar focus on the 3rd chakra (at the navel, colour yellow); 4. Similarly for 4th chakra (at the heart, colour green); 5. Similarly for 5th chakra (at the throat, colour blue); 6. Similarly for 6th chakra (between eyes & the central part of the brain where brainstem meets brain, colour midnight blue); 7. Similarly for 7th chakra (at the crown of the head, colour white) [There is no doubt that my felt sense of these 7 physical areas are very different from one another, so my mind remains open regarding eastern beliefs in the chakra system…]
- During the Benefits: a focus of attention on the syllables without distraction and a felt sense of the body
- During the Torma Offering: a sense of the offerings (music, water, light, etc) being freely available for all to manifest and/or consume
- Prayer for the fulfilment of wishes: One of the only places in the practice where the text offers a translation within which I can wholeheartedly focus attention on exactly the same wish or aspiration as the Buddhists, i.e. "*End illness, starvation, fighting and quarrelling… increase good fortune… cause negative views not to appear."* All sounds good to me…
- Dissolving the Deity: As I never visualised the deity in the first place, here I just notice the qualities of Tara in myself and all others. I chant the mantra while experimenting with an interesting Russian mind-technique detailed by a French Catholic-turned-Buddhist monk (Abhishiktananda, 1967, pp. 98–100). The mantra is linked with the felt sense of place; first chanted with lips

and vocal chords; then silently and felt within the head or mind; finally, the silent reciting of the mantra physically slips to the heart, where it has a very different feel. For the record, I still have no idea of the meaning of this mantra but it does have a very pleasant, warm, vibrant feeling-tone when recited in the heart.

- 100 syllable mantra again (3 repetitions): 1. A sense that all people in the world have all of the qualities which are required in order to act in an accomplished, skilful, wise and loving way in all circumstances; 2. A sense of those people to whom I am close also having those qualities within them; 3. A sense of that I also have those qualities within. (This has the effect of beginning to bring "me" back to my physical job of existing in this physical world – see (Tsoknyi, 2012, pp. 108–110))
- Confession of Errors and Prayer to Remain: perhaps the most confusing section for me because of the overt duality within the translation of the text at this point. Instead of asking a visualised Green Tara for forgiveness for errors in my rendition, I simply forgive myself for them. And instead of asking Tara to remain within a statue / picture / image, I just ask the qualities I have found within myself to remain available for the rest of the day.
- Dissolving Oneself as the Deity: The most profound silence of the practice, within which for me, occasionally, bizarre multidimensional insights will arise without warning or invitation. But more usually, this is simply a few moments or minutes of complete stillness, silence and non-action. The mind rests. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go. I am at peace and one with the world and the world is at peace and one with me. This usually has a neutral feeling tone. Buddhists apparently end this silence when a thought arises for them. Sometimes I do too, but sometimes if I'm not in a rush, I play at the edge of this space, consciously letting go of the arising thought and returning to rest in the empty space for a while longer, repeating this pattern of noticing thoughts as they arise, letting go and returning to rest, for maybe 5 or 10 minutes.

- The remaining verses of Green Tara: I have a felt sense of gratitude for all who have gone before me throughout history and a sense of wishing well to all who share this planet and all who are still to come.
- White Tara: For me, this chant has a very different, pleasant but less profound feeling. I focus on the text and treat it as a "warm down" to bring me back to this body and this physical life.
- At the end of the practice, I sit in rest for a few more minutes, reconnecting with the sounds of the house and garden and enjoying the spacious feeling of having woken up for the day.

The entire practice takes between 50 minutes and an hour, depending on how long I sit silently and how fast I recite. I do not use any musical instruments (bells, cymbals or drums) during the practice out of respect for my neighbours at this early hour and the fact that my daily life is already jam-packed with musical offerings of many types. Throughout, there is a light focus on the Tibetan chanting, a soaking up of the sound, and a keen, bright awareness of the activity of my mind and the feeling-tone within my being.

9.4 Appendix 4: Specific Recommendations for Professional Orchestral Musicians

This research has enhanced understanding of the mindful nature of music practice with a view to developing practical strategies to protect mental health and well-being. Further research in this field is recommended. Meanwhile, in light of this study five immediate recommendations are made specifically for professional orchestral musicians. These may also be relevant to other experienced arts practitioners:

1. Notice with curiosity the training of *attention* and *awareness* (of body, mental activity, feelings and the wider environment) which is already built into your music practice and teaching; notice the unavoidable dualism of focused attention (e.g. on technique) and, for more advanced practitioners, the felt sense of the nondual experience of wider awareness within the

orchestra, within the music itself, and in the porosity of boundaries between the musicians involved.

2. Consider the relationship between rational knowledge (technique) and intuitive knowledge (interpretation and communication) in your music practice and try to maintain a healthy balance between these;
3. Notice the eternal nondual Space from which music arises and watch out for the buzzing feeling of nondual Time through which the energy of music's message is communicated; practise noticing the feeling of this Space / Time realm both during music-making and in life.
4. Notice whether you achieve flow-state during either practice or performance and consider how this might be harnessed as an invaluable route to insight. If you never achieve flow-state, consider why this might be – is music-making still an autotelic (enjoyable) activity for you, as it is for many amateur musicians? How much do you *love* making music?
5. Consider the potential role of the brain's Default Mode Network in your practice (see section 2.5.2, pp. 30-31). Work towards training a positivity bias into your personal default mode through your daily music practice, in order to protect your potentially vulnerable mental health (Gross and Musgrave, 2016, 2017). This can be achieved by practising appreciation, kindness and generosity at every possible opportunity, both in music practice and in life, and should always be applied to self and others.