Ninth Annual Summer Session on Contemplative Pedagogy

August 4-9, 2013
Smith College, Northampton, MA

The Summer Session on Contemplative Pedagogy is an intense week-long investigation led by pioneers in contemplative education. It prepares higher education professionals with resources to support innovation in curriculum development, course design, and the incorporation of contemplative awareness and practice within all aspects of higher education.

The 2013 Summer Session was exceptional in its size and the range of academic disciplines and institutional roles represented at the event. With 80 participants and 10 faculty and staff attending, the 9th Summer Session convened our largest group ever, though the intimate and community-oriented environment was maintained through small-group introductions and the incorporation of discussion-based Open Space Sessions. The event continues to draw professionals working outside the classroom, with over 10% of participants from college and university administration, counseling services, student services, and religious life. This year’s group included a substantial presence of faculty and administration involved in Service Learning and Civic Engagement, an area of higher education that is emerging as fertile ground for contemplative methods and personal/social transformation.

The Summer Session offers opportunities to explore other ways of knowing through various forms of contemplative practice which complement lectures, discussions, and workshops about the application of practices and methods in the classroom or on campuses. Each day began with a different seated meditation led by Mirabai Bush and other Summer Session faculty members. Movement practices are on the growing edge of academic applications of contemplative methods, and the 2013 Summer Session emphasized the exploration of somatic, embodied ways of knowing through tai chi instruction with Yin Mei each morning and Authentic Movement sessions led by Paula Sager which concluded each day.

Morning Sessions

Summer Session faculty gave morning presentations exploring the design principles of contemplative pedagogy, the relation between course content and contemplative practice, and the benefits of stabilized attention and other qualities of mind fostered by contemplative exercises.
Contemplative Practices and the Transformation of Higher Education

Daniel Barbezat, Professor, Amherst College
Director, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Daniel Barbezat opened with a session on contemplative pedagogy and transformation. He examined the ways in which contemplative methods can affect all areas of higher education and noted that all actions cultivate something—no area is "extra-curricular." Every act, thought and intention reinforces and instructs. Contemplative modes of connection can create and foster environments for us to examine what it is that we would like to cultivate and enact in the world. This examination is essential and is largely lacking from most applications of teaching and learning throughout higher education. It will require working together across all areas—the classroom, student services, administration, athletics, etc. All parts of our institutions must work together to foster these environments, and contemplative practices can be a powerful means for this inquiry.

This is especially important as we challenge the traditional ways in which education has been provided and note the danger of not taking these issues to focus. Parker Palmer has poignantly expressed the concern with treating education as mere training:

When I think about the reforms needed if higher education is to serve our students and our world faithfully and well, these chilling words from Hitler’s Death Camps by Konnilyn G. Feig are never far from my mind:

We have identified certain “civilizing” aspects of the modern world—music, art, a sense of family, love, appreciation of beauty, intellect, education . . . . [But] after Auschwitz we must realize that being a killer, a family man, and a lover of Beethoven are not contradictions. The killers did not belong to a gutter society of misfits, nor could they be dismissed as just a collection of rabble. They were scholars, artists, lawyers, theologians and aristocrats.

That paragraph suggests a litmus test for every project that claims to strengthen the mission of our colleges and universities. Does this proposal deepen our capacity to educate students in a way that supports the inseparable causes of truth, love and justice? If the answer is no, we should take a pass and redouble our efforts to find a proposal that does.

Preface to Contemplative Practices in Higher Education
We have to guide education to address questions of meaning and implication so that both we and our students can challenge the ways in which we apply the techniques and concepts that we are teaching and learning. Otherwise, we are destined to continue the cycle of harm and suffering that so much learning has perpetuated.

Daniel then outlined the various ways in which contemplative methods can 1) cultivate attention, 2) deepen students’ understanding of the material covered, 3) foster compassion and connection, 4) stimulate creativity and insight, and 5) sustain inquiry into contradiction. He provided examples of these and then conducted an exercise into the nature of wanting.

He first invited the audience (an invitation is different from a command—he noted that so many times people make “requests” or “invitations” which are really commands) to engage in an exercise:

You are, of course, free to engage in any quiet activity if the exercise doesn’t work for you. Please identify something that you want—any material object, something that can be bought in a store or ordered over the internet. If several arise, note them and select the one that has the most energy for you. If no object arises, allow some time and look to see if anything at all arises. Have you identified something? Ok, now ask yourself, “If I had this object, what would I have?” Write down the question and the answer that arises. And then, “If I had that which arose, what would I then have?” Continue asking until you come to a still point of wanting—a want that arises for no other reason but itself.

Now write down “May I be _______________” (whatever you have come to after the inquiry) and sit quietly with that. Then extend that to “May all beings be _______________.” Note how it feels to extend to all beings and then from there consider one way in which you might foster that wish over this week. You may want to start very simply, nothing grandiose required.

He then provided some time for the participants to talk a bit with each other about the process and to reflect what they noticed through the exercise.

He ended by wishing everyone well.

**Contemplative Pedagogy: Design Principles and Path**

*Arthur Zajonc, President, Mind & Life Institute*  
*(Summary by Daniel Barbezat)*

As he has done in his book on meditation, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry*, Arthur used the metaphor of doorways to illustrate the different stages and parts of his meditation practice. He emphasized the importance of both intention and serene attention. Without the cultivation of calm serenity, we are far more likely to fall prey to our reactivity and not be guided by clear, ethical intentions. Of course, if we are not clear about our intentions, then even if we have focus, we cannot follow them. This is especially important in a secular context without the external guidance of a traditional and given set of beliefs.

He described introductory exercises and then explained how he developed and illustrated his notion of “cognitive breathing,” the interac-

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At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement.

T.S. Eliot, from “Burnt Norton” in *Four Quartets*
tion between focused attention and open awareness, and how this can create the space of a new way of knowing grounded in love. Arthur confided, “When I begin a practice, I think of it as turning towards a door. When you step inside the door, it is serene and calm.” This is not to say, of course, that we do not face hardship and stress; however, we can find a place of calm abiding and continue to strengthen our resources so that we can weather the most difficult storms. He told the participants about the work of Marian Wright Edelman with the Children’s Defense Fund’s Freedom Schools. Students would go into communities, providing meals to young students and supporting them and come back shattered from those communities’ challenges. Marian would counsel them that: “No matter what the turmoil in one’s life, there is always a way to find a place with equanimity, peace and steadfastness, even under duress…It’s not only a place where you come to a location to practice, it’s a place where you can be located.”

However, this sense can only be known through practice and experience. With his students, Arthur begins with a simple exercise to allow them to begin to know their inner world. In one of the first assignments in his “Eros and Insight” seminar, Arthur reads Basho’s haiku:

Breaking the silence
Of an ancient pond
A frog jumped into the water --
A deep resonance

After a long silence, Arthur explained the assignment:

Go and be silent. Write a phenomenology of your consciousness during that silence—not a theory of silence, derived from authoritative sources, but a careful and clear paragraph-long description of your own experience. Describe it with care and precision. Allow it to go through four drafts, so it is a polished gem by the time you hand it in.

With this exercise, students begin to recognize the rich and largely unknown territory of their own interiority.

Arthur moved on to talk about the relationship between directed attention and open awareness. He illustrated the work through an exercise of focusing, remembering and reflecting on a simple object. He invited the participants to regard a simple object like a paper clip or a key:

Regard it closely and remember it exactly. Begin to think about how it was produced, how would it be used, disposed of, etc. Examine the object closely for five minutes. Then after the five minutes, remove the object and recall it and hold it in your mind. See whether you can recreate it closely and clearly. After this, simply let all the concentration go, and calmly abide in an open awareness of your inner experience. After a time, attend to what arises in this open space. This process breaks the normal way of our thinking and brings us to a new relationship with the objects around us.

This process initiates the possibility of discovery, of a type of grace. As Simone Weil wrote, “All the natural movements of the soul are controlled by laws analogous to those of physical gravity. Grace is the only exception. Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void.” This open sense of discovery was described by T.S. Eliot in “East Coker” from Four Quartets:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.
From this darkness and stillness, another type of knowing emerges: a knowledge from which insight arises, bringing us deeper into our lives. Parker Palmer has noted that “Every way of knowing is a way of living. Every epistemology becomes an ethic.” Contemplative inquiry is an extraordinarily important complement to analytic modes of thinking and knowing. Traditional modes of thought have sought to control and reduce, creating what Parker has called a “mythology of power.” If people proceed with only partial information, thinking that they can reduce the world to their control, they will do harm—not intentionally, but their lack of reflection and wholeness will produce suffering. Contemplative modes of inquiry allow us to go beyond and deeper, establishing a fuller, more engaged understanding of what we know.

Arthur then turned toward a practice. This would be an exercise in the “cognitive breathing,” the movement between close attention and open awareness.

He asked the participants to take a position that supports their practice and calmly settle—settle the body, settle the mind. After a time, he asked them to set their intention and turn toward the doorway of their stillness, perhaps calling to mind some scene from Nature that evokes wonder and awe. He then told them that he would strike the bell two times. After the bell sound, he asked that they focus closely on the sound, from beginning to end, so that they could reproduce the sound of the bell in their minds. After a time of silence, he invited them, at their own pace, to let go of the bell sound and sit in open awareness, allowing the awareness to go wide and deep. If they became distracted, they could return to the sound of the bell. After some silence, he again invited them to move with ease back and forth between the concentrated attention and the open awareness. He noted that grace enters the empty spaces, and that participants should allow images to arise as they moved back and forth.

Arthur rang the bell again to end the exercise and asked that the participants finish with a practice of gratitude for this mind and heart. He then said that he normally finishes with allowing students some time to journal about their experience. He invited the participants to do this. After some time, he asked that they each turn to a neighbor and speak a bit about the exercise in a manner comfortable to them.

After lively interactions, the session took a break. After the break, Arthur gave space for comments and sharing and then moved back to his discussion of contemplative inquiry. This process of contemplative inquiry and knowing is essential to our teaching and learning and can be cultivated by the exercises that play with the “cognitive breathing” that Arthur introduced.

Arthur then introduced the image of the lemniscate—a symbol that looks like a sideways 8. Arthur used the symbol to demonstrate moving from attention to awareness. In the space on the left, he said, we
could think of placing the object of our attention; in the space on the right, our open awareness. Cognitive breathing—shifting back and forth between a focus on the object of our attention and open awareness—can bring light to new insights.

To emphasize the importance of continued practice, he used the image of Cezanne’s paintings of Montagne Sainte Victoire. The many, many paintings of this same scene are each an examination not only of a mountain but a specific time and place. Each time Cezanne returned to paint, he was different, the colors on the mountain were different, and only through the dedicated practice of returning and returning and allowing the mountain to present itself could Cezanne render his incredible oeuvre.

From Compassion to Solidarity: Antiracism as Contemplative Practice
Raúl Quiñones-Rosado, Ph.D., c-Integral

This 90-minute session revolved around three critical questions: (1) “Why is racism relevant, important, if not urgent, to contemplative practitioners in higher education?,” (2) “What can contemplative practice and pedagogy bring to antiracism work?,” and (3) “What can antiracism bring to contemplative practitioners?”

In my talk with participants, I posed that racism—the cultural, institutional, interpersonal and psychological system of oppression that presumes the superiority of whites in our society—is a major force that hinders human well-being and the integral development of all people. Within the context of the consciousness-in-action framework, I sought to present how structural racism severely hinders our constant striving for balance and harmony, qualities and conditions required for individual and collective well-being. I also went on to briefly explain how cultural racism (dominant and pervasive myths, distorted histories and stereotypes favorable toward whites and detrimental toward People of Color intergeneration-ally conveyed via the socialization process) is psychologically internalized and later socially manifested as racial superiority or inferiority—both of which reflect psycho-spiritual contraction and emotional reactivity, and lead to relational dissonance and distance.

The consideration of what contemplative practitioners and educators have to offer antiracism movements or even people affected by racism, seemed to be territory much more familiar to most participants. Among other things, we mentioned access to a large body of knowledge and millennia of practice of the various spiritual traditions, including practices that seek to foster our capacity to move beyond psycho-spiritual contraction and emotional reactivity, and that foster greater empathy and compassion in relationship to others.

The question of what antiracism might bring to contemplative practice, education and practitioners was a less familiar consideration and seemed to present a bit more of a challenge. Not so much an intellec-
tual challenge, as participants appeared to readily grasp the conceptual models presented regarding consciousness-in-action (the process of moving beyond unconscious emotional reactivity to conscious appropriate response) as well as the stages of relational development: the expansion from self-centeredness to other-centeredness to unity, from feelings of apathy (or antipathy) to sympathy to empathy to compassion, and beyond to heartfelt-actions of solidarity and love. Nor did there seem to be resistance to the idea of antiracism work providing a context for contemplative practice in community. Not surprisingly, though, a closer examination of the personal implications, at the level of self-identity, of the working definition of racism as “race prejudice plus privileged access to institutional power” produced not uncommon patterns of self-contraction and emotional reactivity, even among some individuals who are long-time contemplative practitioners and, presumably, with skills of self-observation and emotional management their practices offer.

My sincerest hope is that this presentation served, not only as a [much too] brief consideration of the significance of racism relative to the stages of relational development and spiritual consciousness beyond compassion, but perhaps also served as a preliminary “lab” that demonstrates the need for truly in-depth examination by contemplative educators. Racism, like sexism, heterosexism, classism and all other forms of oppression, continues to be a force at the center of the problems faced by humanity and the Planet. And while there is plenty of knowledge about its harmful dynamics, as there is about contemplative practice, we—personally and collectively—still must find ways to integrate our knowledge and skill, and bring our collective wisdom to both areas of human development. For the good of all Beings!

Physicality and Somatic Practices: Alternative ways of understanding complexity

Vaishali Mamgain, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, University of Southern Maine

Concept
My presentation is based on the idea that students can be taught to use their physical and somatic responses as a way to deepen their cognitive understanding. This is particularly true when discussing subjects such as intercultural/ interspecies diversity. Based on ideas by Merleau-Ponty (2013), research by Bennett and Castiglioni (2003) into how space is “felt” in different cultures, and ideas of embodiment that have been discussed in the philosophy of education by O’Loughlin (2006) and Ergas (2011), I draw on activities that students are already familiar with—walking, running, weightlifting, and use these as a way to introduce students to the practice of cultivating attention.

Method
The purpose of these exercises—often called mindfulness of form—is to help students discover that they can use somatic sensing to complement cognitive knowing. To do so, students have to become familiar with how they sense or feel in a neutral situation. I model this in class where we begin by doing a simple exercise. Known in the mindfulness literature as a body-scan, I ask students to sit comfortably—with their backs straight but not rigidly so—with their feet planted firmly on the floor—I ask them to observe the bottom of their feet as they press lightly against the floor and feel the floor pressing back. Then I ask them to bring their attention to their calves and ask them to feel the space between their calves and the back wall. (This helps students relate to their physical form within the context of a larger space). Then once more I ask them to feel themselves sitting on the chair, the chair supporting them—moving up to the shoulders, the neck, the head, I invite them to feel their left ear, the right eye, and so on. The basic instruction is be mindful of ones physical form—to be present—relaxed yet alert!
When we begin the exercise I invite students to keep their eyes open at a 45 degree angle looking down but they are welcome to close their eyes if they are more comfortable doing so. I also let them know that they can modulate their experience by noting the position of their chin—a neutral (slightly tucked chin) is ideal. If they are daydreaming it is likely that their chin has floated up and outwards, so tucking it slightly will help them bring their attention back to the present moment. If they are feeling dull and sleepy it is likely their chin is tucked in too much and they are looking downwards and they can self-correct.

An important caveat: I specify when we first begin this exercise that the entire guided meditation is optional—and students can simply sit quietly while others do the exercise.

**Exploring complexity**
Once students become accustomed to these exercises then the next step is to ask them to observe their physical reactions in the context of a provocative topic—say issues of race, ethnicity, immigration… For instance, in one class I asked students how they start a conversation with someone who is of a different ethnicity. Most of the students replied, “I ask them where they’re from.” “Why?” I asked. “Well, they’re a minority, so they must be from away,” said one student. Since I teach in a state where minorities constitute only three percent of the population, probabilistically the students have a point. But I persisted. “No really, why do you ask that?” Their answers varied: “Oh, I’m just being friendly and curious;” or “I don’t know much about the world so I hope they’ll tell me something.” “Oh!” I said, “Anybody else?” “Well,” said a student, “when I meet someone who is ethnically different, I sort of feel at a loss so I am just trying to get some ground.” This answer just stopped us all in our tracks. It was such a courageous statement of fear and it cut through all self-deception. First, it identified a physical sensation of “losing ground” and based on that it allowed the student to articulate so clearly what he was doing: asking someone “Where are you from?” immediately pulls the ground out from under them! In conjunction with cognitive processes, this “physical” feedback can be crucial in exploring sensitive issues. This student’s awareness of his own physical reaction and his mind opened a space for the rest of the class to be able to examine their own minds in a non-reactive, non-judgmental way.

I also presented another example of how cultivating a sense of embodied-ness can help create a genuine learning experience when studying the political economy of food. Given the horrific conditions in which most of our meat/fish/poultry are reared and slaughtered, students sometimes react in the only way they feel is possible: they get de-sensitized. Contemplating the inescapable truth that eating flesh inflicts...
pain on other sentient beings puts the imperative our bodies lay on us (eating beings as a way to pursue health) at odds with our minds that can comprehend the suffering of other sentient beings. And yet, it is complicated—cognitive processes can be very quickly co-opted by a narrative woven by generations of flesh-eaters—(we need to eat meat to be healthy!). Before this narrative takes over completely, there is a gap where students can be taught to just observe their own physical reactions—as they witness through text or film the death camps that are factory farms or fishing operations. One resource I use to highlight this poignant issue is a video clip of a persistence hunt narrated by the famous BBC narrator Richard Attenborough.

As before, by teaching them how to observe their conflicting thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations in a non-judgmental way, students are more able to stay open to the idea of complex moral issues, without rushing to judgment.

**Extending care: Developing Empathy and Compassion**

While contemplative practices can help students cultivate an understanding of complexity, this should not in any way imply apathy or an inability to act in the face of injustice. Some of the mindfulness exercises are derived from the Buddhist tradition and as Dreyfuss (1995) observes, meditation in the Buddhist tradition cannot be de-contextualized from an understanding of ethics. Practices used to promote compassion and loving kindness to oneself and others can also be grounded in physical form. One begins by checking in with oneself and by wishing compassion and kindness to oneself—and then gradually developing the concept of body boundary to include others and wish for them to be happy and free from suffering.

Another more concrete method that I have used to help students cultivate empathy and compassion, is by inviting them to participate in a “Lobster Release,” where we buy and release 300-400 lobsters back into Casco Bay, Maine. (The funds are donated by a worldwide Buddhist community.) For students in Maine, it is a real challenge to see something they perceive as “food” swim away. Conceptually, they disagree, and since Maine lore says that lobsters do not “feel” pain students think nothing of the fact that lobsters are boiled alive.

Armed with these concepts, students arrive at the “lobster pound” where they notch the female lobsters’ tails. The lobsters twitch and it unnerves the students even though they try to rationalize it. (Under Maine law females with notches, if caught, must be put back into the ocean thus giving female lobsters an additional year of freedom till the tail grows out). If students choose to participate in this exercise there is no escape from the physical reality of having a squirming, twitching, live lobster in their hands! And the idea that this sentient being will be boiled alive and served as a celebratory Maine dinner has now got a corollary—a physical sensation associated with holding the living thing. And the sensation of seeing that same lobster—its tail notched, its rubber-banded claws un-banded, swim away—a physical sensation many students relate to their own love of the ocean and their personal sensation of freedom and play as they swim.

And yet, there are no easy answers. Physical participation in this activity allows students to be fully present to the tremendous complexity of the issue—the point of view of the lobsterman, the environment, the lobster-eating public—the lobster! When they actually witness this—the lobster is not just “food,” the lobstermen are not just businesspeople (nor are they purely evil)—students cannot really stay indifferent and neither is it is possible for them to revert to a polarized position.

I do not ask students to contribute any money to this release yet many insist on offering a few precious dollars to buy a few more lobsters. I have witnessed some students—grown men in their late 20s—start naming lobsters as they release them. When asked to journal about it students list this experience as one of the most meaningful in their college careers. In discussing this particular practice some participants at the Summer Session volunteered other “release” activities they had engaged in. A “two-for-one” approach is to buy worms intended as bait and release them in gardens. This saves the worms and
saves the fish that would have been caught by using those worms. (It is of course crucial that one not introduce non-native species.)

I ended my presentation by reiterating some of the important points raised by Daniel Barbezat in his presentation. One has to understand the audience—to bring people along at a pace they are comfortable with—to give students the option to opt out, and for those who participate—to help them process by journaling or by discussing in groups. Finally and most importantly—this is a collaborative process. The journey to self-awareness and discovery is ongoing—so to truly support this in our students, our own contemplative practice needs to be consistent and deep with a vision to helping all beings.

Information and Contemplation
David Levy, Professor, the Information School, University of Washington

I began my presentation by explaining that I have lived a life in both the “fast world” and the “slow world,” borrowing these phrases from Thomas Friedman’s 1999 book, The Lexus and the Olive Tree. “Today, Friedman says, there is no more First World, Second World or Third World. There’s now just the Fast World—the world of the wide-open plain—and the Slow World—the world of those who either fall by the wayside or choose to live away from the plain in some artificially walled-off valley of their own, because they find the Fast World to be too fast, too scary, too homogenizing or too demanding.” I noted that I reject Friedman’s dismissal of the slow world and believe that our challenge today is to live lives that integrate the best of both worlds. My fast-world life is as a technologist, and my slow-world life is as a contemplative, and I have long worked to establish greater integration of these worlds, both in my personal and professional life. My presentation at the summer session was meant to introduce participants to the ways that I have brought contemplative perspectives to bear on challenges arising from living information-saturated, accelerating lives.

In the first part of the presentation, I addressed the problem of “no time to think,” explaining how a culture devoted primarily, if not solely, to efficient and ever-accelerating production and consumption (which I call a “more-faster-better” attitude) eliminates and disparages activities that aren’t narrowly productive. Thus, activities that are non-instrumental or depend on open, unstructured time (such as long-term relationships and thinking) are increasingly squeezed out of life. From here I talked about some of the professional activities I’ve been engaged in that bring contemplative practices and perspectives into dialogue with digital technologies and digital culture, hoping to push back against our anti-contemplative and anti-reflective attitudes. I focused mainly on a course I teach at the University of Washington Information School called “Information and Contemplation.”

I first taught this course in spring 2006 with support from a Contemplative Mind fellowship, and I have continued to teach it, not only to students (undergraduates and graduate students), but to university
librarians and other staff. I have also been creating shorter workshops based on the materials.

At the heart of the course is a series of exercises that ask students to become more “mindful of” their digital practices (observing their use of email, for example, as well as the way they multitask) and to become more “mindful in” these practices (attempting to do email and to multitask in more concentrated or mindful ways). Student responses have been extremely positive. In the presentation, I showed a number of quotes from students demonstrating the kinds of learning that was occurring.

Along the way, I led participants in two practices that I offer to my students. The first one asks them simply to notice how they are feeling by inquiring, in the moment, into the quality of their breathing, their posture and body sensations, their emotional state, and the quality of their attention. The second asks them to focus on an initial object of attention (e.g. the breath), to notice when attention is pulled away to something else (e.g. a noise in the room or a body sensation), and then at that moment to mindfully choose which of the two objects to attend to.

Daily Movement Practices

The Discipline of Authentic Movement: Cultivating the Witness
Paula C. Sager, Co-Founder, Mariposa

At the heart of my research and teaching as a somatic educator lies an interest in the role of embodied experience and the dynamics of relationship in processes of development and learning. This Summer Session, I shared elements of a contemplative practice I’ve studied and practiced for over twenty years that is devoted to the phenomenology of body and relationship.

The Discipline of Authentic Movement invites exploration of direct experience through the embodiment of two roles—mover and witness. It is the unfolding relationship between mover and witness that gives rise to a developing inner witness. The presence of what Janet Adler, my teacher of the discipline, describes as a “compassionate enough” external witness can be a powerful example and guide for the developing inner witness of the mover.

The mover/witness relationship is a compelling model for the relationship of teacher and student, particularly in the context of contemplative pedagogy. As teachers, it may be useful to think of bearing witness to a potential process of inner growth in our students. At the same time, we are also witness to our own process, our own experience in relation to self, to students, to curriculum, and even to the classroom, our colleagues, and campus.

When we bring contemplative, inward-directed experiences to our students, we are inviting them to experience new ways of seeing and knowing themselves, new ways of seeing and knowing others and the world around them, including the academic subjects that they’re studying. It is a process whereby a student may begin to develop a new relationship within his or her self—contemplative practices demand this. Our students begin to be aware of their own capacity to observe their own inner experience. For some, it may even evoke the discovery that St. Francis of Assisi pointed to when he said:

What you are looking for is what is looking.

As experience unfolds, some part of us is observing, following the experience, although sometimes experience happens without our necessarily being aware of it. It may seem, at times, that the inner witness is not there. It appears and disappears—we’re present, we’re not present.

In Authentic Movement, as in meditative sitting practice, we turn our attention inwards but instead of containing any impulse to move, we
include it. We include it because when we focus our awareness on the body moving (or not moving) there’s something tangible about our experience that manifests in a way we can see and be in relationship to. Turning away from visual stimuli, movers—in the presence of an external witness—close their eyes and follow inner experience as it arises by attending to the body. This turning, without knowing or anticipating what will happen next, is the first move.

Direct experience becomes known through awareness of inner qualities of both movement and stillness; the realm of sensation including touch, balance, temperature, sound, energy, warmth, light, dark, proprioception, spatial dimension, rhythm; the world of emotion; as well as thought, memory, and images.

My intention for the week was to focus on aspects of the discipline that correspond with experiences of self-development found in many other contemplative practices. My intention was not to suggest that teachers do Authentic Movement with their students, but to share a process that could support their own development as they seek to integrate contemplative modalities into their academic curriculum.

We began each time with a warm-up that focused awareness on our hands, inviting one or both hands to move, following whatever spontaneous impulse appeared. Rather than directing a part of the body to move in a predetermined way, we listen to the body, to the possibility of an emerging movement, knowing we can choose to follow what arises or not. The element of choice, of free will, is essential. This is a practice of attending to one’s own sense of what is right in any given moment.
The experience of being a mover offers an opportunity to become aware of non-self-directed agency and the qualitative difference between moving and being moved. We may discover, as witness to our own experience, that there is an emergent quality to the movement and to one’s awareness of the unfolding experience.

We also explored the role of memory, speaking, and listening as ways of cultivating witness consciousness. Taking time to remember our movement and find language for our embodied experience can be challenging. The attempt strengthens our inner witness and our capacity to know what’s true in our experience. Speaking in present tense and staying close to what we remember about where we are in space, what our physical body is doing, what emotions and sensations are present—grounds us in all that is knowable in the face of all that we don’t know.

In partners we listened to each other, silently containing any impulse to respond, interpret, judge, or project our own memories and associations on what was spoken. As silent listener, our self-witnessing expands to include the presence of another. We can practice opening to the field of relationship—staying with our own experience while attending to the presence and experience of another.

In cultivating witness consciousness, we develop the capacity to create and hold a contemplative space for our students to enter. As we become more aware of the ways that associative and unconscious thinking and perceiving may be rooted in our own biases and personal history, we can learn to lovingly hold what arises in us in the presence of others. We can create a space where, for as little as 2 – 3 minutes, the unknown is welcome and each student’s own direct experience, even when it is confusing or uncomfortable, is valued. May we trust that our intention and commitment to our own practice be enough to awaken our students’ receptivity to their own authentic self and path.

Movement of Hands

This 5 minute somatic experience cultivates attention, receptivity, and openness to the unknown.

Place your hands on your desk or on your lap. Close your eyes and let your attention focus on your hands. Notice your experience of each hand, its weight, shape, and position.

For the next two minutes, with your eyes closed, continue to be aware of your hands, noticing if and how they want to move.

Follow the movement of your hands, along with any sensation or emotion or thoughts that arise. If you find there’s no impulse to move your hands, that’s fine too, you can still follow your own experience whether there’s movement or stillness.

Ring bell to end after two minutes.

With your eyes still closed notice where your hands are now and remember where they were a minute ago when you began. Open your eyes and briefly write anything else you can remember about the movement of your hands. What was it like to not know what the movement would be? What is different in your experience now from when you began the exercise?

New Tai Chi for Lie

Yin Mei, Professor of Dance in the Drama, Theater and Dance Department at Queen’s College, CUNY

This course is an introduction to the ancient Chinese philosophy and practice of Tai chi, Dao-yin—a system of living in harmony with nature/self. According to the system, the way of nature is the way of moving balance with unbalance. Yin and Yang, matter and ener-
gy, sky and earth are all considered to be manifestations of a single integrated whole, eternally ever-changing between contradiction and complimentarity. Both specific physical and philosophical precepts underlying Tai Chi aim at giving a means of restoring fundamental balance and rhythm for man to live harmoniously within and with the universe.

New Tai Chi for Life is grounded in Chen old-form Tai Chi Quan and ancient Qigong Dao-yin. The technique will provide a basic grounding in the physical and mental consciousness. The method—essentially an inner discipline through repetition—promotes ocean-like quality with gravity and flow of energy aligned with body mechanics. The qualities of movement taught emphasize softness, allow the light energy to connect, and accelerate/decelerate inner rhythms and precision. In order to change the way of moving—give in control—intention through the path of meridians as the bases is central. Meditative breathing methods are intended to attune the body, mind, and heart to the task at hand.

**Additional Program Elements**

**Open Space and Thematic Sessions**

In order to create an environment of open dialogue and connection, a portion of each afternoon was devoted to holding Open Space Sessions. At the beginning of the week, participants were invited to submit ideas or topics they wanted to discuss in a small group setting. The event coordinators chose a number of common themes and assigned them to spaces, where participants gathered to talk about the given subject. Summer Session faculty were also assigned to groups to help facilitate discussions, and participants were able to move between groups, create new ones, or bring theirs to completion.

As contemplative practice and pedagogy become more deeply rooted in our institutions, we continuously seek to better serve the education professionals who attend the Summer Session. Nearly all participants this year reported that they have their own regular contemplative practice, and many were already incorporating contemplative practice and pedagogy into their teaching or work. However, over a third of participants reported that they had only attempted this integration within the past year or had not yet begun the process. With such a range of experience levels, we hope the Summer Session provides an environment that meets the needs of experienced practitioners of contemplative pedagogy as well as those seeking to develop an understanding of fundamental concepts.

A three-part afternoon workshop designed as an introduction to contemplative pedagogy was led by Katja Hahn D’Errico, Adjunct Professor of Social Justice Education and Faculty Director of the IMPACT! Service Learning Residential Academic Program in the Community Engagement and Service Learning Program (CESL) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Katja shared some of her
teaching tools and experience with the 15 participants of “Considerations and Criteria When Integrating Contemplative Practice Into Your Academic Curriculum.” This new breakout group proved useful for the participants, and we are planning for more introductory and thematic sessions to become an integral part of future Summer Sessions.

Performance

On Wednesday night, faculty member and choreographer Yin Mei performed an original piece, “How Does a Fighter Dance?” with Summer Session participants Tim Conner accompanying on trombone, and Pearl Ratunil performing Yin Mei’s spoken-word element. After Yin Mei’s powerful performance, she spoke with the audience about her experiences as a child growing up in China during the Cultural Revolution, and other aspects of her life that strongly influenced her dancing and choreography.

On Thursday evening, the group gathered for an informal Open Mic Night in the Carroll Room. Amiably emceed by Ted DesMaisons—who not only teaches religious studies and philosophy at Northfield Mount Herman, but is also experienced in improvisational theater—participants offered a variety of performances of original poetry, fiddling, folksongs, Latin dance, and spoken word. The night concluded under the stars as the group gathered outside on the wide steps of the Student Center. A saxophone and horn improvisation echoed over nearby Paradise Pond, and a closing dance, orchestrated by Yin Mei’s Open Space breakout group, extended gratitude to the Summer Session organizers and faculty.

Instructional Practice Session

On Thursday afternoon near the end of the Summer Session, participants faced each other silently while Mirabai Bush offered a series of phrases as part of the “Just Like Me” practice:

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**Just Like Me**

**Instructional Practice Session led by Mirabai Bush**

Participants faced each other silently while Mirabai offered a series of phrases:

This person is just like me, in a body, going through life.
This person was once a little child, a little vulnerable child, just like me.
This person has had happy times in her life, just like me.
This person has loved someone, just like me.
Their heart has been broken, just like mine.
This person has also been sad in their life, just like me.
This person has been disappointed by life, just like me.
This person has been hurt by someone, just like me.
This person has been confused by life, just like me.
This person has done some things that he or she regrets, just like me.
This person has known physical pain and suffering, just like me.
This person wishes to be safe, and healthy, and loved, just like me.

I wish you strength and support in your life, so that you can do the things that are right for you to do.
I wish that you be happy, because I know you want to be happy, just like me.
I wish that you may be free from all pain and suffering, because I know that you are a fellow human being, just like me.

(And now, in whatever way feels appropriate, thank your partner for being there for you).