
Title	Mindfulness and morality: Educational insights from Confucius
Author(s)	Charlene Tan
Source	<i>Journal of Moral Education</i> , (2020)
Published by	Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

Copyright © 2020 Taylor & Francis

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Journal of Moral Education* on 19/06/2020, available online:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03057240.2020.1779045>

Notice: Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source.

DRAFT

Mindfulness and Morality: Educational Insights from Confucius

Abstract

Addressing a research gap on the relationship between mindfulness and morality, this paper draws insights from Confucius' notion of *jing*. I explain how *jing* essentially refers to maintaining a full, respectful and humanity-centred attention towards others. To illustrate the application of Confucius' conception of mindfulness, I use the current coronavirus pandemic as an example. On the one hand, mindfulness is useful as a coping mechanism to reduce stress for individuals during the crisis. But an amoral and atomistic approach to mindfulness is inadequate in addressing social problems such as selfishness that stems from panic buying and community infection caused by inconsiderate behaviours. In this regard, Confucius' concept of respectful attention has the potential to motivate everyone to go beyond self-interest to demonstrate deference, empathy and love towards others. A Confucian orientation of mindfulness extends the existing literature on the ethical foundations and dimensions of mindfulness for educational institutions.

Keywords: Confucius; humanity; mindfulness; respectful attention

Introduction

Mindfulness has become a mainstay in many educational institutions through an array of initiatives, programmes and activities (Condon, Dunne & Wilson-Mendenhall, 2019; Ergas, 2015; Lewis & Rozelle, 2016; Tan, 2019; Zajonc, 2016). Training organisations for schools such as 'Mindfulness in Schools Project' (MiSP) in the UK and 'Association for Mindfulness Education' in the US have proliferated (Reveley, 2015). Despite the growing corpus of literature on mindfulness, there is still limited research on the moral aspects of mindfulness. As a case in point, a review of articles published in the *Journal of Moral Education* reveals only two papers that explicitly discuss the connection between mindfulness and ethics. In the first paper, Condon, Dunne and Wilson-Mendenhall (2019) explore the link between mindfulness and compassion for individual flourishing in the context of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. In the second paper, Gregory (2000) lists mindfulness as a caring virtue that supports democratic co-operation. What is still lacking is a more extensive inquiry into the normative bases and dimensions of mindfulness beyond the traditional Buddhist and Hindu influences on mindfulness.

Addressing a research gap on the relationship between mindfulness and morality, this article examines a conception of mindfulness from Confucius' perspective. In the first part of this paper, I briefly survey the extant literature on mindfulness, highlighting the insufficient

attention on the ethical underpinnings and aspects of mindfulness. Next, I offer a values-centric model of mindfulness by turning to the ideas of Confucius as recorded in the *Analects*. The *Analects* is a Confucian classic that compiles the sayings and conduct of Confucius and his disciples. In the last part of the paper, I explicate the key educational implications of Confucius' notion of mindfulness using the current coronavirus pandemic as an illustrative example.

Introduction to Mindfulness

Coined by T. W. Rhys Davids in 1881 who translated the Pali word 'sati' as mindfulness, this term has gained mass appeal in educational institutions around the world. But there is no consensus on what mindfulness means, consists of and entails. Van Dam and colleagues (2018) summarise the existing definitions of mindfulness by noting that it is "an umbrella term used to characterise a large number of practices, processes, and characteristics, largely defined in relation to the capacities of attention, awareness, memory/retention, and acceptance/discernment" (p. 37; for a good review of the diverse definitions and evolution of mindfulness, see Dryden & Still, 2006; Gethin, 2011; Hayes & Shenk, 2004). A survey of the existing literature on mindfulness in the English-speaking world shows that its focus is primarily on the cognitive and emotional components of the individual.

On the cognitive dimension, Brazier (2013) observes that mindfulness "as a term is now used, refers to a set of techniques in which one gives deliberate sustained attention to presently occurring ambient, somatic or subjective phenomena" (p. 117). In the schooling contexts, this means positively affecting the mental functions of students such as attention, close observation, drawing novel distinctions, information-processing and working memory (Adriansen & Krohn, 2016; Bush, 2011; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Research has shown improvements in the learners such as their "learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective-taking" (Zajonc, 2016, p. 19; also see Brown & Creswell, 2007; Farb et al, 2007; Lutz, Dunne & Davidson, 2007; Napoli, Krech & Holley, 2005; Tang & Posner, 2009). Bellinger, DeCaro and Ralston (2015) report that mindfulness benefitted the students' performance in mathematics in the midst of high-stakes academic testing environments. Besides the cognitive element, other scholars have emphasised the emotional aspect of mindfulness that is aimed at stress management and resilience (Kirmayer, 2015; Hölzel et al, 2011; Sauer et al, 2013). Bishop and colleagues (2004) combine the attentive factor with an emotion regulation factor under their two-factor model of mindfulness (also see Brown & Ryan, 2003). Hölzel and colleagues (2011) explain that mindfulness contributes to emotional regulation by helping the individual to reconstruct stressful events as "beneficial, meaningful, or benign" (p. 544; for details of stress-reduction applications of mindfulness meditation, see Salmon et al., 2004).

Whether cognitive or emotional, what is common in most accounts of mindfulness is a propensity to regard mindfulness as individualistic, amoral and acontextual. Mindfulness is generally viewed as "the ability to dispassionately observe the experience of the present moment with non-judgemental openness" (Sauer et al., 2013, p. 3; also see Adriansen & Krohn, 2016; Tan, 2019, 2020). What is overlooked are the value systems, normative frameworks and cultural worldviews that buttress, shape and accompany mindfulness in practice. A non-evaluative and normatively neutral approach to mindfulness has been critiqued by some researchers and practitioners. It is a significant point that mindfulness originates from spiritual systems such as Buddhism where ethical teachings such as eliminating craving are an integral

component of mindfulness. Objecting to the non-judgemental element of mindfulness, Gethin (2011) posits that this is a “distortion of traditional Buddhism that loses sight of the Buddhist goal of rooting out greed, hatred and delusion” (p. 268). Arguing along the same line, Kirmayer (2015) cautions that a formulation of mindfulness that is stripped of its moral foundation “runs the risk of simply becoming a tool of pursuing goals that in themselves are unhealthy” (p. 462).

Scholars have therefore called for more research, discussions and debates on the ethical bases, systems and presuppositions pertaining to mindfulness (Brazier, 2013; Hyde & LaPrad, 2015; Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; Samuel, 2015; Sharf, 2015; Tan, 2020). It is instructive that the mindfulness movement in schools and other learning organisations has become what Purser and Loy (2013) call ‘McMindfulness programmes’ – the instrumentalisation of mindfulness as a technique to deliver quick results (Bazzano, 2014; Hyland, 2015). Brazier (2013) asserts that “the contemporary condition of Western thinking and culture, which is increasingly focused on finding technical solutions to utilitarian problems and also being less oriented towards questions of wider purpose and meaning” (p. 117). It should be added that the foregoing critique of mindfulness applies more to the non-secular movements for mindfulness. As mentioned earlier, mindfulness originates from spiritual traditions such as Buddhism that underscores compassion and generosity. This does not mean that mindfulness must always be tethered to a non-secular tradition or religious system. The point here, rather, is the centrality of a moral foundation for mindfulness. Bereft of its ethical foundation, mindfulness may engender or reinforce self-centred values where individuals privilege their personal wellbeing over care and love for others (Hyde & LaPrad, 2015; O’Donnell, 2015). In light of the proliferation of mindfulness curriculum and activities in educational institutions, it is pertinent to consider this question raised by O’Donnell (2015): “Given the increasing interest in mindfulness in schools, how ought we think about, conceptualise, and critically reflect upon the promotion of mindfulness interventions in educational settings?” (p. 188). To answer this question, I shall turn to Confucius and his approach to mindfulness.

Confucius and Mindfulness

The English word ‘mindfulness’ is not found in the available translated works of the *Analects*. But this does not mean that mindfulness has no place in Confucius’ outlook or teaching. On the contrary, a close examination of his teachings, behaviours and interactions with people around him reveals that mindfulness is pivotal to his philosophy and life. It is worthy of note that scholars such as de Bary (1981) and Hwang (2013), in their exposition of the ideas of the neo-Confucian Zhu Xi, have rendered the Confucian virtue of *jing* as ‘mindfulness’ (Tan, 2019). *Jing* is a major Confucian concept taught by Confucius himself. In what follows, I shall elucidate Confucius’ notion of mindfulness as *jing* based on a textual study of the *Analects*.

Based on a textual analysis of the *Analects*, the best translation of Confucius’ understanding of *jing*, in my view, is ‘respectful attention’. *Jing* has been variously translated as ‘full attention’ (see *Analects* 15.38) and ‘respect’ in the *Analects* (14.42, 15.6, 15.33, 19.1). First, Confucius teaches that *jing* is about giving “full attention to one’s duties” (*Analects* 15.38, this and all subsequent citations are taken from this book and translated by Ames & Rosemont, 1998, unless otherwise stated). *Jing* as devotion to carry out one’s task entails doing one’s utmost (*zhong*). Confucius teaches that we should be focused in speaking (16.10), making good on our word (15.6) and building relationships with others (13.19). Paying attention also implies exercising caution (*shen*) in what one says and does (1.6, 1.14, 2.18). *Jing* as complete attention

to one's duties ensures that one does not get side-tracked or give up half way. This point is illustrated in Confucius' conversation with his disciple Ranyou. The latter told Confucius: "It is not that I do not rejoice in the way of the Master, but that I do not have the strength to walk in it" (6.12). Confucius responded by telling him, "you have drawn your own line before you start" (6.12), i.e., Ranyou had failed because he lacked *jing*: full attention and giving his utmost.

Jing as undivided and whole-hearted attentiveness, for Confucius, is not non-judgemental and amoral where one is simply aware of the present moment. Supporting and driving the full attention to one's duties is the virtue of respect. Confucius avers that proper conduct is not just "do[ing] your utmost" but also being "respectful [*jing*] in your conduct" (15.6). We could further understand *jing* as respect by identifying the negative and positive components. Negatively, *jing* is about "not impos[ing] upon others what you yourself do not want (12.2). Although phrased as a prohibition ("do not impose"), what Confucius is urging everyone to do is to exercise empathy – by putting oneself in the shoes of others. That *jing* is not merely about passivity and avoidance is found in Confucius' injunction to "behave as though you are receiving important visitors; employ the common people as though you are overseeing a great sacrifice"(12.2). Being respectful towards others, to put it another way, is treating others the same way you wish to be treated and holding everyone in high regard regardless of their backgrounds. It implies showing deference towards others, as demonstrated by Confucius. The *Analects* records him evincing deference in his home village (10.1), respectful when speaking with higher officials and reverent in the presence of his lord (10.2) (also see 1.10, 12.5). That *jing* should be demonstrated in all areas of our lives is amplified by Confucius when he was asked by a disciple on what constitutes proper conduct:

When standing, see these words – 'do your utmost to make good on your word, be earnest and respectful [*jing*] in your conduct' – in front of you, and when riding in your carriage, see them propped against the stanchion. Only then will your conduct be proper (15.6).

The above passage points out that we should practise *jing* not only when carrying out our duties (15.38) but also in everything that we do, whether standing or riding in one's carriage. Beyond actions, *jing* encompasses one's beliefs, values, attitudes and dispositions. Confucius describes the priorities of exemplary persons as follows: "in bearing and attitude they think about deference, in speaking they think about doing their utmost, in conducting affairs they think about due respect" (16.10). The word 'si', translated by Ames and Rosemont as 'thinking about' in the before-mentioned passage, is more accurately rendered 'reflecting', signifying a personal, mindful and reflexive process of internalising and displaying *jing*. Putting together the earlier sections, Confucius' notion of mindfulness is respectful attention where one gives one's utmost to manifest empathy and deference towards others all the time.

Confucius further points to the moral basis of mindfulness by averring that *jing* is part of *ren* (humanity or benevolence) (13.19). An all-encompassing and supreme virtue, *ren* should be treasured by human beings as more important than water and fire (15.35). It is noteworthy that the Chinese character for *ren* is comprised of "person" and "two", which indicates that *ren* is fundamentally interpersonal. Confucius puts an emphasis on the collective element of *ren* by asserting: "In helping oneself take a stand, one helps others to take their stand; in desiring to reach a goal, one helps others to reach their goal" (6.30, my translation). The expression "taking a stand" refers to carrying oneself appropriately in accordance with one's social roles (2.4). When a person takes a stand, he or she is modelling and influencing others to do likewise. When asked what *ren* is, Confucius replies that it is to love others (12.22) by bringing out the best rather than the worst in others (12.16). *Ren* is "an achieved state of humanity manifested as a signatory feature of all one's behaviours and identified as a source of admiration from and

inspiration for one's community" (Hall & Ames, 1987, p. 114). A *ren* person, to put it simply, is authentic, fully human and perfectly realized (Tan, 2018).

A person who realises *jing* and *ren* is an exemplary person (*junzi*). A quick explanation of the concept of *junzi* is instructive here. Originally denoting the children of aristocrats, Confucius appropriated the term *junzi* and added an ethical characteristic to it (Tan, 2013). According to him, a truly exemplary person is not determined by one's birth but moral cultivation and attainment. A *junzi* is the ideal person all human beings and not just those of noble birth should aspire to become. Furthermore, everyone can become a *junzi* if one sets one's heart and mind to it. Confucius holds that human beings are similar in their nature but differ in their habits (17.2). This explains why individual effort through *jing* as full attention and total devotion to performing one's duties is paramount (Tan & Tan, 2016). When asked by a disciple what exemplary persons are like, Confucius replied, "They cultivate themselves by being respectful [*jing*]" (14.42). Confucius elaborates that an exemplary person "does not leave *ren* even for the space of one meal" (4.5, my translation). It follows that mindfulness as a lifelong concentration on cultivating *ren* is critical. Confucius praises his disciple Yan Hui for not departing from *ren*, unlike others who are half-hearted and inconsistent in their cultivation of *ren* (6.7).

The preceding shows that Confucius' notion of *jing* is concerned with maintaining a full, humanity-centred and respectful attention towards others. When we compare Confucius' formulation of mindfulness to the dominant understanding of the term in the existing literature, we can identify both similarities and differences. In terms of convergence, Confucius' notion of *jing* as respectful attention is aligned with the dominant interpretation of mindfulness as the capacities of attention, awareness, memory/retention and acceptance/discernment (Van Dam et al, 2018). Confucius' accent on giving one's utmost, being cautious about what one says and does, and taking the time to reflect on one's words and actions entails personal awareness, memory and acceptance of one's encounters, surroundings and relationships. But Confucius' construal of mindfulness is not limited to a total, non-judgemental and personal attention and present state awareness. Rather, the pivot of Confucius' *jing* is respect towards others that testifies to one's achievement as an exemplary person. Rather than amoral and individualistic, Confucius' vision of mindfulness is grounded in and motivated by *ren* (humanity) that requires loving and serving others.

The Example of the Coronavirus Pandemic

This section discusses the major educational implications arising from Confucius' notion of mindfulness. To illustrate the contemporary relevance of Confucius' approach to mindfulness, I shall use the ongoing coronavirus pandemic as an example. The coronavirus outbreak has ushered in massive economic damage, healthcare crisis and social disruptions throughout the world. With growing number of illness and deaths, many people are experiencing anxieties, uncertainties and other forms of physical, emotional and psychological stresses. With respect to the current promotion of mindfulness in educational institutions, mindfulness can be an efficacious form of stress reduction for students. As noted earlier, research has shown that individuals who learn mindfulness succeed in reframing distressing events as "beneficial, meaningful, or benign" (Hölzel et al, 2011, p. 544). By directing one's attention on present moment experience coupled with a mindset of openness, curiosity and acceptance, students can obtain stress management, psychological relief and emotional support (Sauer et al., 2013).

But it is clearly not sufficient to merely focus on oneself in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. The global crisis has brought out the worst in human beings such as selfishness that stems from panic buying and community infection through inconsiderate social behaviours. An example is the case of two women who were charged for fighting over toilet paper in a supermarket in Sydney (*The Guardian*, Mar 8 2020). Another instance is a man from Wuhan who ordered to be under quarantine while in Singapore. But he intentionally violated the quarantine order and lied to the health authorities about his movements and whereabouts. What made this case disturbing was that he was subsequently found to have been infected with coronavirus, raising concern that he might have spread the virus to others (*New Straits Times*, Mar 24 2020). The example of coronavirus pandemic serves to illustrate the centrality of morality in real life. Although mindfulness as cognitive and emotional enhancement could help individuals cope with the pressures, uncertainties and distresses generated by the pandemic, an amoral form of mindfulness is insufficient for humans to ride over the storm. What is essential is to support and fortify mindfulness with altruistic and prosocial values, especially the virtue of *ren* (humanity). Without a due regard to the moral aspect of mindfulness, it is tempting for an individual practising mindfulness to become self-absorbed and fail to see how one's action or the lack of it can cause harm to others. This moral oversight is well illustrated in the above-mentioned examples of the women causing a ruckus in public and the irresponsible action of the person who violated the quarantine order. They exemplify the concerns scholars have about mindfulness encouraging or condoning "individual wellbeing over compassion and concern for the happiness of others" (O' Donnell, 2015, p. 187).

In citing the examples of the women in Sydney and the man in Singapore, I am not claiming that they have practised mindfulness in their lives. My point, rather, is that *even if* they had embraced mindfulness by attending to their cognitive and emotional states, they would still have behaved in an egoistic manner without consideration for others. At this juncture, I should add that not all formulations of mindfulness are confined to present and non-judgemental state awareness. For example, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) define mindfulness as the "willingness and capability to invent new expectations that make sense of unprecedented events, a more nuanced appreciation of context and ways to deal with it" (p. 516; also see Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). But given that human expectations, responses and strategies necessarily bring with them ethical implications, what moral principles should guide the person to invent the "new expectations" and develop "a more nuanced appreciation of context and ways to deal with it"? Stripped of an ethical foundation, mindfulness during uncertain times such as the coronavirus pandemic may become, to quote Kirmayer (2015), "a tool of pursuing goals that in themselves are unhealthy" (p. 462).

Confucius' response to the coronavirus pandemic, it can be argued, is to champion mindfulness as respect. This means treating others the way one wishes to be treated and displaying deference, empathy and love towards others. He teaches that we are to treat everyone as though they are "important visitors" (12.2), demonstrating our love of others (12.22) by bringing out the best rather than the worse in others (12.16). Rather than an approach to mindfulness that is limited to one's own present state awareness, stress reduction and emotional management, Confucius' notion of *jing* point to human interdependence and mutual accountability. As noted earlier, Confucius' ideal of *ren* is about helping others as part of helping oneself. When "one helps others to take their stand; in desiring to reach a goal, one helps others to reach their goal" (6.30). With respect to the incident of the two women who fought over the toilet paper, an application of Confucian *jing* means not giving in to panic buying but exercising respect and consideration towards others. In the case of the person who disregarded the quarantine order although he was at risk of being infected with the coronavirus,

his action signals a lack of *jing* as respect towards others. Applying Confucius' exhortation of not imposing upon others what one does not want (12.2), the man, had he been virus-free, would certainly not wish to come into contact with an infected person who violated the quarantine order.

Teachers who wish to use the coronavirus pandemic as a case study for the mindfulness programme could refer to inspiring stories of people who exhibit Confucius' notion of respectful attention. Examples are the heroic behaviours of doctors and other healthcare workers in the frontline, such as the doctor in Wuhan who alerted the authorities of the virus and died in the course of work (*BBC News*, Feb 7 2020). Another instance is the news that nearly 8,000 doctors have volunteered to help out in Italy which is more than 25 times the number the authorities had requested (*The Local*, Mar 23 2020). These sacrificial doctors are exemplary persons who express *ren* through their love for fellow human beings. Their mindfulness is evidently not self-directed and engaged at the expense of the well-being of others. Instead, as envisaged by Confucius, they are fully attentive and devoted to performing their duties empathetically, deferentially and lovingly. Students could be asked to discuss how they could enact mindfulness as respectful attention in their lives, such as performing giving out face masks and hand sanitisers as well as buying food for the elderly and sick.

It is appropriate to return to O'Donnell's (2015) question on how ought we think about, conceptualise, and critically reflect upon the promotion of mindfulness interventions in educational settings. Confucius' notion of mindfulness addresses the moral deficiency in the dominant conceptions of mindfulness by foregrounding respect, *ren* (humanity) and the cultivation of exemplary persons. A mindful person, according to Confucius, is one who is constantly respectful towards others. This means holding others in high regard by demonstrating deference towards them (12.5). His ideal of respectful attention is instrumental in motivating everyone to go beyond self-interest to demonstrate deference, empathy and love towards others. Confucius' orientation of mindfulness mirrors a holistic approach to mindfulness. Gause and Coholic (2010) point out that a holistic approach "takes into account the whole person including physical, mental/psychological, emotional and spiritual/transpersonal/existential dimensions of life experience" (p. 2). In sum, Confucius' *jing* involves physical acts of giving one's full attention to one's duties. It transcends mere action to underline the cultivation of *ren* that involves the totality of one's mental, emotional and transpersonal capabilities. A mindful person is an exemplary person who is concerned with not just one's own needs and moral cultivation but also that of other people, endeavouring to bring out the best in others.

Beyond the mindfulness movement in schools, Confucius' notion of mindfulness could also be integrated into the moral education programme as part of values inculcation. That Confucius' notion of mindfulness is non-religious makes it more acceptable to educators and parents who are wary of any religious influences. By religiosity, I refer to "a spiritual, aesthetic individual commitment to the transcendental, eternal, and divine" (Fisher, Hotam & Wexler, 2012, p. 262, cited in Ergas, 2014, p. 60). Most educators today would agree that the moral education is critical for students as it informs and guides them to know and do what is right. An effective moral education programme should go beyond inculcating beliefs and values in students to the intentions, attitudes, dispositions, behaviours and personal reflections on one's moral character (Halstead, 2010). A mindful and values-centric orientation for students is made more urgent in our modern world where the youths are bombarded with information and worldviews, particularly from the social media, that challenge or influence their moral values and way of life. As articulated by Halstead (2010),

Postmodernism has also destabilised many ‘grand narratives’ about shared values and universal moral truths by exposing young people to a greater diversity of moral beliefs and practices, an increase in moral uncertainty and scepticism, and an ironic, almost playful detachment on the part of some moral thinkers. Moral educators believe that although many young people can handle large influxes of such stimuli, others may become confused or distraught by such exposure. Young people may require help integrating such information and making decisions about whether to retain or discard certain values, and how to retain their core values in a contemporary world (pp. 630-631).

Confucius ideal of mindfulness includes both executive virtues such as doing one’s utmost as well as substantive virtues such as respect and *ren* (humanity). According to Kupfer (1994), executive virtues are qualities related to one’s self-mastery such as determination, courage and patience which are necessary for us to execute our plans and achieve our goals. Substantive virtues, on the other hand, are qualities such as compassion, generosity, loyalty and kindness which provide the motivation for our actions. Executive and substantive virtues are not mutually exclusive but interdependent: substantive virtues motivate us to act while executive virtues are the means by which we perform these actions. To put it simply, executive virtues without the substantive virtues are directionless while substantive virtues without the executive virtues are without efficacy (Kupfer, 1994).

Confucius’ notion of mindfulness as respectful attention is helpful to remedy a prevailing tendency to adopt technical and amoral approaches to mindfulness in a neo-liberal educational backdrop (Hyland, 2014; Kirmayer, 2015; O’Donnell, 2015; Samuel, 2015; Tan, 2019). Brazier (2013) observes “the contemporary condition of Western thinking and culture, which is increasingly focused on finding technical solutions to utilitarian problems and also on seeking comfort and stress-reduction, which being less oriented towards questions of wider purpose and meaning” (p. 117). O’Donnell (2015) concurs that mindfulness is increasingly subsumed under an ‘evidence-based’ and ‘what works’ agenda that “risks instrumentalising what is a rich existential and ethical practice and using inappropriate forms of evaluation” (p. 196).

Conclusion

Despite the currency of mindfulness in educational institutions and burgeoning literature on its benefits, relatively little has been written on the relationship between mindfulness and morality. Addressing a lack of clarity on the ethical justification and elements of mindfulness, this paper draws insights from Confucius’ notion of respectful attention. It is interesting to note that Confucius lived during uncertain times that were not that different from ours – he witnessed and was grieved by the political upheaval, social breakdown and human strife surrounding him (Tan, 2013, 2018). Based on Confucius’ teachings and conduct as recorded in the *Analects*, I have explained how his conception of mindfulness is encapsulated in the virtue of *jing*. *Jing* essentially refers to maintaining a full, humanity-centred and respectful attention towards others. The total attentiveness through *jing* that Confucius has in mind is not a non-judgemental and amoral one where one simply experiences the present moment. Undergirding Confucius’ notion of mindfulness is *ren* that shows up human interdependence, love and support. His notion of mindfulness brings to the fore respect, *ren* (humanity) and the cultivation of exemplary persons. To flesh out the enactment of Confucius’ conception of mindfulness, I have

used the current coronavirus pandemic as an illustrative example. On the one hand, mindfulness is useful as a coping mechanism to reduce stress for individuals during the crisis. But an amoral and atomistic approach to mindfulness is inadequate in addressing social problems such as selfishness that stems from panic buying and community infection through inconsiderate behaviours. In this regard, Confucius' concept of respectful attention has the potential to motivate everyone to go beyond self-interest to demonstrate deference, empathy and love towards others. A Confucian orientation of mindfulness extends the existing literature on the ethical foundations and dimensions of mindfulness for educational institutions. By outlining a Confucian interpretation of mindfulness, I hope to broaden the current understandings of mindfulness beyond 'McMindfulness' to "a holistic practice, an ethics and a philosophy" (O'Donnell, 2015, p. 196). A Confucian orientation of mindfulness, in closing, extends the existing literature on the ethical foundations and dimensions of mindfulness across cultures.

References

- Adriansen, H. K., & Krohn, S. (2016). Mindfulness for group facilitation: An example of Eastern philosophy in Western organisation. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*, 13, 17-28.
- Ames, R. T., & Rosemont, H., Jr. (1998). *The Analects of Confucius: A philosophical translation*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Bazzano, A., Ed. (2014). *After mindfulness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BBC News (Feb 7, 2020). Li Wenliang: Coronavirus death of Wuhan doctor sparks anger. Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51409801>
- Bellinger, D. B., DeCaro, M. S., & Ralston, P. A. S. (2015). Mindfulness, anxiety, and high-stakes mathematics performance in the laboratory and classroom. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 37, 123-132.
- Bishop, S. R. et al. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230-241.
- Brazier, D. (2013). Mindfulness reconsidered. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, 15(2), 115-126.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848.
- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(4), 211-237.
- Bush, M. (2011). Mindfulness in higher education. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12(1), 183-197.
- Condon, P., Dunne, J., & Wilson-Mendenhall, C. (2019). Wisdom and compassion: A new perspective on the science of relationships. *Journal of Moral Education*, 48(1), 98-108.
- de Bary, W. T. (1981) *Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and the learning of the mind-and-heart*. New York, NY, Columbia University Press.
- Dryden, W., & Still, A. (2016). Historical aspects of mindfulness and self-acceptance in psychotherapy. *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 24(1), 3-28.
- Ergas, O. (2014). Mindfulness in education at the intersection of science, religion, and healing. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(1), 58-72.
- Farb, N. A. S. et al. (2007). Attending to the present: Mindfulness meditation reveals distinct neural modes of self-reference. *Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience*, 2(4), 313-322.

- Fisher, S., Hotam, Y., & Wexler, P. (2012). Democracy and education in postsecular society. *Review of Educational Research, 36*, 261–281.
- Gause, R., & Coholic, D. (2010). Mindfulness-based practices as a holistic philosophy and method. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services, 9*(2), 1-23.
- Gethin, R. (2011). On some definitions of mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism, 12*(1), 263-279.
- Gregory, M. (2000). Care as a goal of democratic education. *Journal of Moral Education, 29*(4), 445-461.
- Hall, D. L., & Ames, R. T. (1987) *Thinking through Confucius*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Halstead J. M. (2010). Moral Education. In C. S. Clauss-Ehlers (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Cross-Cultural School Psychology*. Boston, MA: Springer.
- Hayes, S. C., & Shenk, C. C. (2004). Operationalising mindfulness without unnecessary attachments. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 11*(3), 249-254.
- Hölzel, B. K. et al (2011). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6*(6), 537-559.
- Hwang, K. (2013). Educational modes of thinking in Neo-Confucianism: A traditional lens for rethinking modern education, *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*, 243-253.
- Hyde, A. M., & LaPrad, J. G. (2015). Mindfulness, democracy, and education. *Democracy & Education, 23*(2), 1-12.
- Hyland, T. (2014). Mindfulness-based interventions and the affective domain of education. *Educational Studies, 40*(3), 277-291.
- Hyland, T. (2015). On the contemporary applications of mindfulness: Some implications for education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 49*(2), 170-186.
- Keng, S.-L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review, 31*, 1041-1056.
- Kirmayer, L. J. (2015). Mindfulness in cultural context. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 52*(4), 447-469.
- Kupfer, J. 1994. Education, indoctrination, and moral character. In T. Magnell (Ed.), *Values and education*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Lazar, S. W., et al. (2005). Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. *NeuroReport, 16*, 1893-1897.
- Lewis, D. J., & Rozelle, D. (2016). Mindfulness-based interventions: Clinical psychology, Buddhadharma, or both? In R. E. Purser, D. Forbes, & A. Burke (Eds.), *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, context, and social engagement* (pp. 243-268). Switzerland: Springer.
- Lutz, A., Dunne, J. D., & Davidson, R. J. (2007). Meditation and the neuroscience of consciousness. In P. D. Zelazo, M. Moscovitch, & E. Thompson (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of consciousness* (pp. 499-555). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Napoli, M., Krech, P. R., & Holley, L. C. (2005). Mindfulness training for elementary school students. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21*(1), 99-125.
- New Straits Times (Mar 24, 2020). Singapore charges man with coronavirus for lying to health officials. Available online: <https://www.nst.com.my/world/world/2020/02/569379/singapore-charges-man-coronavirus-lying-health-officials>
- O' Donnell, A. (2015). Contemplative pedagogy and mindfulness: Developing creative attention in an age of distraction. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 49*(2), 187-202.

- Purser, R., & Loy, D. (2013). Beyond McMindfulness. Huffington Post, 1 July. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289 (accessed 12 Jan 2019).
- Reveley, J. (2015). School-based mindfulness training and the economisation of attention: A Stieglerian view. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(8), 804-821.
- Salmon, P. et al. (2004). Mindfulness meditation in clinical practice. *Cognitive and Behavioural Practice*, 11, 434-446.
- Samuel, G. (2015). The contemporary mindfulness movement and the question of nonself. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 52(4), 485-500.
- Sauer, S. et al. (2013). Assessment of mindfulness: Review on state of the art. *Mindfulness*, 4, 3-17.
- Sharf, R. H. (2015). Is mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters). *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 52(4), 470-484.
- Tan, C. (2013). *Confucius*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Tan, C. (2018). To be more fully human: Freire and Confucius. *Oxford Review of Education*, 44(3), 370-382.
- Tan, C. (2019). Rethinking the concept of mindfulness: A neo-Confucian approach. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 53(2), 359-373.
- Tan, C. (2020). Beyond high-stakes exam: A neo-Confucian educational programme and its contemporary implications. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(2), 137-148.
- Tan, C. & Tan, L. (2016). A shared vision of human excellence: Confucian spirituality and arts education. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 34(3), 156-166.
- Tang, Y. Y., & Posner, M. I. (2009). Attention training and attention state training. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(5), 222-227.
- The Guardian (Mar 8, 2020). 'It isn't Mad Max': women charged after fight over toilet paper in Sydney. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/07/it-isnt-mad-max-police-warning-after-shoppers-brawl-over-toilet-paper-in-sydney>
- The Local (Mar 23, 2020). Nearly 8,000 doctors volunteer for Italy's coronavirus task force. Available online: <https://www.thelocal.it/20200323/nearly-8000-doctors-volunteer-for-italy-coronavirus-task-force>
- Van Dam, N. T. et al (2018). Mind the hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(1), 36-61.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2001). *Managing the unexpected*. San Francisco, LA: Jossey-Bass.
- Zajonc, A. (2016). Contemplation in Education. In K.A. Schonert-Reichl & R.W. Roeser (Eds.), *The handbook of mindfulness in education: Mindfulness in behavioural health* (pp. 17-28). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.