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Mindfulness in Early Buddhism

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Abstract

The purpose of the present paper is to try to contribute to our understanding of one out of various types of mindfulness descriptions in the Buddhist traditions, namely the notion of mindfulness as reflected in the early Buddhist discourses.

Introduction

A recent survey of research on meditation, prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, comes to the rather disconcerting conclusion that "scientific research on meditation practices does not appear to have a common theoretical perspective and is characterized by poor methodological quality. Firm conclusions on the effects of meditation practices in healthcare cannot be drawn based on the available evidence. Future research on meditation practices must be more rigorous in the design and execution of studies", in particular "specific attention must be paid to developing definitions for these [meditation] techniques that are both conceptually and operationally useful. Such definitions are a prerequisite for scientific research". In the case of mindfulness practices, "general descriptions of mindfulness vary from investigator to investigator and there is no consensus on the defining components or processes".[1]

This finding clearly points to a need to invest more time into the conceptual models that stand behind research into the effects of mindfulness practice.[2] While we do have excellent operational definitions of mindfulness that capture the modern day clinical perspective on this particular mental quality,[3] our understanding of mindfulness could be broadened by turning to its definition and mode of function in the Buddhist traditions. Examining the historical roots of mindfulness in its traditional context would enable ascertaining similarities and differences vis-à-vis the notion of mindfulness in the

modern day setting and perhaps open up new avenues for research into the significance and effects of its cultivation.

The theoretical construct of mindfulness and the practices informed by this notion have gone through considerable development during nearly 2500 years in the history of Buddhist thought, making it practically impossible to speak of "Buddhist mindfulness" as if this were a monolithic concept. Moreover, a proper assessment of any specific form of mindfulness needs to be based on a comparative study that takes into account all extant traditions pertaining to a particular historical period, instead of uncritically relying on a certain school or line of textual transmission because that happens to be the one with which one is personally familiar.

Hence, as a starting point for further research into the theoretical foundations of the multiple 'mindfulnesses' found in the Buddhist traditions, in the present paper I take up the notion of mindfulness as reflected in the historically earliest stages of Buddhist thought that is accessible to us through textual records. These are the early discourses that according to tradition were spoken by the Buddha and his disciples, which have come down to us as part of the canonical scriptures of various Buddhist schools in the *Nikāya*s or *Āgama*s. In terms of school affiliation, while this material has been transmitted within reciter lineages that eventually came to be part of the Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda or Theravāda schools, etc., its origins are earlier than the formation of schools. Hence comparative study of parallel versions, preserved in a variety of Buddhist languages such as Chinese, Pāli, Sanskrit and Tibetan, offers us a window on the earliest stages in the development of Buddhist conceptions of mindfulness, in as much as these have left their traces in literature.[4] These in turn would have been the starting point for later conceptions of this mental quality and how to cultivate it.

1. The Four Ways of Establishing Mindfulness

Central for my present purposes are descriptions of mindfulness in action, which instruct how establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna/ smṛtyupasthāna*) functions as a form of meditation practice. Independent of whether such instructions are descriptive or prescriptive, they do

allow us an assessment of the notion(s) of mindfulness held by those responsible for the formulation of these descriptions.

The early discourses describe four main areas of practice for the establishing of mindfulness, which are:

- the body,
- feelings,
- mental states,
- dharmas.

A detailed exposition of these four is found in the S*atipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (as well as in the longer *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*) of the Pāli canon of the Theravāda tradition, with parallel versions found in the *Madhyama-āgama* and in the *Ekottarika-āgama*, two discourse collections preserved in Chinese translation.[5] Regarding the first of these two Chinese *Āgama*s, scholarly opinion generally tends to consider this discourse collection to have been transmitted within the Sarvāstivāda tradition(s).[6] The school affiliation of the *Ekottarika-āgama*, however, is still a subject of continued discussion and thus is best considered uncertain.[7]

Comparison of the three versions brings to light several differences.[8] In relation to the first area of body contemplation, the three parallel versions agree on taking up the following three topics: the body's anatomical constitution, the body as made up of material elements, and the stages of decay of a corpse that has been left out in the open to rot away.[9]

In the case of the first of these three, according to the fairly similar instructions given in the parallel versions, contemplation of the anatomical constitution of the body requires reviewing its various parts, such as its hair, nails, teeth, etc.[10] Such reviewing could presumably take place by way of an internal meditative scanning of the body or else as a reflective recollection. This exercise can act as an antidote to conceit and to sensual desire.

The parallel versions agree that an examination of the body's anatomy should be undertaken from the perspective of the "impure" or "unclean" nature of some of its parts.[11] The term "impure" or "unclean" reflects

conceptions prevalent in ancient Indian.[12] At times the discourses employ the alternative term "not beautiful",[13] which in a less provocative manner still conveys the basic objective of deconstructing the attraction of bodily beauty.

Whether "impure" or "not beautiful", there can be little doubt that carrying out this instruction involves a purposive element of evaluation.[14] At the background of this stands the early Buddhist notion that the attraction of sensuality is based on an erroneous perception.[15] This erroneous or even distorted perception is seen as requiring a form of de-conditioning by inculcating a perception of the body as lacking beauty or even as being impure.

The point of this mode of evaluation is not to nurture in the practitioner an attitude of negativity towards the body.[16] The evaluation introduced into mindfulness practice in this way is meant as a detergent that purifies the mind from sensual attachment to the body, a cleansing process whose final aim is a balanced attitude.

This much can be seen from a simile that in two out of the three versions comes together with the actual instructions. This simile illustrates the reviewing of the anatomical constitution of the body with the example of reviewing various grains in what appears to be an implement used for sowing.[17] Given that looking at various grains will normally not result in aversion or desire, the simile conveys the impression that a properly carried out examination of the body's anatomy is meant to result in surmounting desire without leading to the other extreme of loathing or aversion.

The same becomes even more evident in the third of the canonical versions, which does not have the simile. At the end of its description of this particular contemplation, this version indicates that contemplating the body like this "one experiences joy in oneself by removing evil thoughts and being free from worry and dejection".[18] In other words, the intentional evaluation of the body as "impure" or "not beautiful" is here described as a mode of practice that results in joy. Such joy would come from being free from mental negativity regarding the body and free from reactions of worry or dejection in relation to it.

Contemplation of the body is not necessarily accompanied by an element of evaluation, however, in fact the next exercise, which turns to the existence of basic material qualities in the body, does not contain a comparable qualification.

Contemplation of the body in terms of the elements is in most versions based on the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind, with the *Madhyama-āgama* version additionally mentioning space and consciousness.[19] The point of such contemplation is to recognize the presence of these elements as qualities like hardness, wetness, temperature and motion within the body. Undertaking this exercise can lead to insight into the not-self nature of the body, which is but a combination of material elements and thereby no different from any other manifestation of these elements found outside in nature.

Elsewhere in the early discourses contemplation of the body's elements receives a more detailed exposition, which employs the same anatomical parts as listed in the previous exercise. These are divided into two lists according to whether they represent the element of earth qua solidity or the element of water qua fluidity. Even though the listings of the anatomical parts are the same, when the task is to see these as instances of a particular material element in the body there is no longer any reference to their being "impure" or "not beautiful".[20]

The circumstance that the qualification "impure" or "not beautiful" is introduced on purpose in the context of the first of the body contemplation, but is absent from the second body contemplation, demonstrates that mindfulness practice can, but does not have to, be combined with an element of evaluation. Needless to say, the deliberate evaluation that in this way features as an aspect of mindfulness practice in the canonical sources takes its rationale from the soteriological orientation of the practice as a whole and is thus quite different from compulsory reacting to experience in a judgmental way.[21]

The third of the three body contemplations requires being aware of the stages of decay through which a corpse would go when left out in the open. These stages are then applied to oneself, generating the understanding that one's own body is bound to pass away and fall apart. Undertaking such contemplation can be based on having seen a rotting

corpse,[22] a vision that can later be recalled and applied to one's own body or that of others, reflecting that they all share the same nature.[23] This exercise quite vividly documents the impermanent nature of the body, whose final destination is none other than death.

While in the ancient Indian context this type of practice would presumably have been based on earlier having actually seen the gradual decay of a corpse, in as much as its topic is the decay of one's own body it clearly involves an element of imaginative reflection, perhaps even visualization. The canonical sources are in concord that such contemplative elements should be considered as a mode of practicing *satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna*.

Besides directing mindfulness to exploring the nature of the body, the instructions in the three parallel versions also take up the need to recognize the affective tone of present moment experience as well as the nature of one's present state of mind, these being the second and third area for the deployment of mindfulness. The instructions given in these two cases belong to a more familiar terrain than the exercises discussed so far, as they correspond closer to the common understanding of the type of task that mindfulness executes. When contemplating feelings and mental states, this task of mindfulness is predominantly one of bare awareness, of mere recognition.[24]

According to the instructions found in all parallel versions, the second of the four ways for establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna*) requires distinguishing feelings according to their affective quality into pleasant, unpleasant and neutral types. Here the task is to be aware of the affective input provided by feeling during the early stages of the process of perception, before the onset of reactions, projections and mental elaborations regarding what has been experienced.

These three types of feelings should, moreover, be differentiated into worldly or unworldly types.[25] In this way an element of evaluation is introduced, in as much as a practitioner should also realize if the feelings experienced are of a worldly or an unworldly type. This introduces an ethical appraisal aimed at the difference between worldly feelings

caused by mundane or carnal experiences and unworldly feelings related to renunciation or spiritual practice.

Contemplation of the mind as the third of the modes for establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna*) covers the presence or absence of unwholesome states of mind, enjoining clear recognition of those occasions when the mind is under the influence of lust, anger or delusion. The main task here is to avoid being carried off by any particular train of thought. Instead, one recognizes clearly the state of mind underlying such thoughts. In this way, the motivating forces at work in the mind are uncovered and insight into the workings of the mind becomes possible. Contemplation of the mind also involves recognizing the presence or absence of higher states of mind, thereby including experiences that take place during more advanced stages of meditation practice.

With the fourth area of mindfulness practice – contemplation of dharmas – the soteriological orientation of early Buddhist meditation theory becomes particularly prominent. The two topics that are common to the canonical discourse versions are two sets of mental qualities known in the Buddhist tradition under the header of being "hindrances" and "awakening factors".

The first of these two sets comprises sensual desire, ill-will, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-worry and doubt. These are considered to be 'hindrances' because they obstruct the proper functioning of the mind. Such obstruction can occur in relation to a task like, for example, trying to learn something,[26] but also, and from an early Buddhist viewpoint more importantly, in relation to the successful undertaking of meditation practice.

Regarding these hindrances, one of the three canonical versions just bluntly enjoins that these detrimental mental conditions need to be overcome, an indication given right at the outset of the discourse and thus strictly speaking not as an aspect of contemplation of dharmas.[27] The other two versions provide more detailed instructions, which reveal a two stage approach.[28] The first of these two stages is to recognize the presence or the absence of a hindrance in the mind. Such recognition requires an ability to face the presence of a hindrance in one's mind

without immediately reacting to it and trying to push it out. This could be conceptualized as to some degree involving an "embracing" of the fact that the mind is at present in a condition quite different from one's idealized image of oneself. This element of passive receptivity, being an indispensable requirement for honest recognition, is then the building platform for further practice where mindfulness uncovers what has led to the arising of this particular hindrance and how it can be overcome. That the hindrances need not only be recognized, but also have to be removed, is further emphasized in another discourse, according to which meditating without knowing a way out of a hindrance is a form of mis-meditating that would not have met with the Buddha's approval.[29]

The overcoming of the hindrances is then a precondition for the second of the two above mentioned sets, the awakening factors. These take their name from the fact that tradition considers these particular mental qualities to be indispensable requirements for progress to awakening. Contemplation of the awakening factors requires to be aware of their presence or absence, and to know how they can be brought into being and further developed.[30] Mindfulness is the first in the list, serving the function of providing a foundation for the cultivation of the remaining awakening factors, which are investigation-of-phenomena, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

The fact that mindfulness takes a leading position in this set reflects the soteriological orientation that informs the cultivation of mindfulness in early Buddhist thought, where the overall emphasis is on mindfulness as the foundation for progress on the path to awakening.

2. Mindfulness of Breathing

The practice of mindfulness of breathing is taken up in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, which has parallels in discourses in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and in the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya*.[31] The three versions agree in describing how awareness of the breath can proceed through sixteen steps: four sets of four steps, with each tetrad corresponding with one way of establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna*).[32] This results in the following presentation:

0. become aware of breath
(body:) 1. long breath,
2. short breath,[33]
3. experience / pervade whole body,[34]
4. calm / let go of bodily activities.[35]
(feelings:) 5. experience joy,
6. experience happiness,
7. experience mental activities,
8. calm/let go of mental activities.
(mind:) 9. experience/know the mind,
10. gladden the mind,
11. concentrate the mind,
12. free the mind.
(dharmas): 13. impermanence,
14. fading away / eradication,
15. cessation / dispassion,
16. let go / cessation.[36]

The rationale given in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* version for correlating these four tetrads of mindfulness of breathing with the four ways of establishing mindfulness appears quite straightforward,[37] in that with each of these tetrads the object of contemplation is the body, feelings, the mind and dharmas respectively. Therefore they are instances of each of the four ways of establishing mindfulness.

In other words, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* and its *Saṃyukta-āgama* parallel provide the important indication that the entire practice of the four ways of establishing mindfulness can be developed with a single meditation object. Even though this object might be the breath and thus a bodily phenomena, all four ways of establishing mindfulness can be developed based on being aware of the breath.

To put this into practice, however, would not simply be a by-product of just being aware of the breath. Rather, to implement the sixteen-fold scheme appears to require a conscious effort at broadening one's awareness which, based on having established mindfulness of the breath, proceeds to awareness of the whole physical body, of feelings, of the condition of the mind and of impermanence, etc.

In this way, mindfulness of breathing could be undertaken as a comprehensive meditation practice that proceeds through the four ways of establishing mindfulness. This mode of practice begins by contemplating the breath and its relation to the body as bodily phenomena. Becoming aware of joy and happiness as effects of the calm generated through mindfulness of breathing then becomes an instance of contemplation of feelings, which in turn leads over to awareness of the mind, gladdening, concentrating and freeing it as a form of contemplation of the mind. Contemplation of dharmas is then implemented by giving attention to impermanence and other related insight-perspectives.

This points to a rather flexible mode of developing the four ways of establishing mindfulness, showing how, based on the breath as the main meditation object, the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s/*smṛtyupasthāna*s can unfold as a four-faceted contemplation.

In addition to these four ways of establishing mindfulness, the discourses also speak of three *satipaṭṭhāna*s/*smṛtyupasthāna*s as a form of practice undertaken by the Buddha himself, to which I turn next.

3. Three Ways of Establishing Mindfulness

Besides the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s/*smṛtyupasthāna*s, the early discourses also mention another set of three ways of establishing mindfulness, referred to with the same Indic term *satipaṭṭhāna*/*smṛtyupasthāna*. These three are described in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels preserved in Chinese and Tibetan.[38] These three ways of establishing mindfulness are associated with the Buddha himself in his role as a teacher, where he might be confronted with three different situations:

- his disciples do not listen to him,
- his disciples listen to him,
- some listen, some do not listen.

In regard to the Buddha's attitude towards these three situations, a significant difference between the parallel versions of the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* can be found. According to the *Madhyama-āgama* version, preserved in Chinese, and according to a discourse

quotation in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā*, extant in Tibetan translation, the Buddha's attitude in each of these three cases is invariably marked by equanimity. That is, he is not sad when all disciples do not listen, he is neither sad nor joyful when some listen and some do not listen, and he is not joyful when all listen to what he teaches.[39] Needless to say, in all three cases the Buddha is endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension.

According to the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, however, when all disciples do not listen, the Buddha is not satisfied, when some listen, the Buddha is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and when all listen, the Buddha is satisfied.[40] In other words, according to the Pāli account there is a difference in the Buddha's attitude, depending on whether his disciples listen or not.

Besides being found in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels, the three ways of establishing mindfulness occur also in a range of other works. Often such texts just refer to these three, without spelling out the details.[41] Nevertheless, descriptions of the implications of these three can be found in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, as well as in the *Mahāvyutpatti*. These works all support the presentation in the parallels to the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta*, in as much as they depict the Buddha's attitude as remaining unaffected in each of these three situations.[42]

The presentation in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* not only differs from its parallels and these other works, but also stands to some degree in contrast to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, belonging to the Pāli canon of the same Theravāda tradition. According to this discourse, the Buddha's attitude when instructing others was free from attraction or repulsion.[43]

An explanation of this difference could be found by assuming an error during textual transmission, as negative and positive forms in a repetitive passage are easily confused with each other.[44] Such an error could have affected the presentation in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta*.[45] In other words, a textual error probably occurred in the Pāli version, which originally would have been similar to what is now found in the other versions. Whatever may be the last word on this assumption, at

least in the case of the parallel versions the point of the three ways of establishing mindfulness is clearly that the Buddha maintains equanimity, independent of how his disciples behave.

Compared to the earlier mentioned four areas of mindfulness practice, at first sight there seems to be little in common between these two descriptions. Yet, these three attitudes of the Buddha as an awakened teacher are referred to with the same term *satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna* that is used for mindfulness practice in general.

What appears to be common to both schemes is not so much the object, what one is mindful of, but the mental attitude that ideally comes with properly established mindfulness. This attitude requires a form of mental presence that does not easily give rise to reactions coloured by likes and dislikes. This thus appears to be a key characteristic of the early Buddhist notion of establishing mindfulness.

The need to stay aloof from reacting with likes and dislikes is in fact explicitly taken up in two of the three canonical descriptions of the four areas of mindfulness practice, according to which practice should be carried out free from desires or dejection in regard to the world,[46] or free from worry and dejection.[47]

In sum, then, being established in mindfulness in the way this is described in early Buddhist canonical texts appears to require a combination of being fully aware of what is happening with the maintenance of mental balance.

Conclusions

The above survey suggests a conception of mindfulness that does vary in some respects from conceptions of mindfulness in later Buddhist tradition as well as in modern clinical usage, in spite of considerable common ground. Thus mindfulness in the *vipassanā* traditions, for example, is based on a theory of mind-moments and a definition of mindfulness as invariably wholesome,[48] as a result of which mindfulness is held to be incapable of co-existing with the presence of a defilement in the same state of mind.[49] The perspective afforded by the early discourses gives a different impression, as the instructions given for

contemplation of the hindrances, for example, clearly speak of being aware of the presence of a hindrance like sensual desire or anger within one's own mind in the present moment.[50] That is, from an early Buddhist perspective mindfulness of defiled states of mind does not appear to be retrospective, much rather mindfulness appears to be able to co-exist with a mental state like anger. In fact the presence of mindfulness is not seen as being the self-sufficient solution to a condition of anger, for example, which requires the additional cultivation of an antidote to anger: *mettā*.[51]

The description of contemplation of the hindrances in fact makes it clear that, alongside an element of non-interference at an initial stage in order to enable receptivity and recognition, more active measures are required in order to overcome states like sensual desire or aversion. While the actual removal of defiled states of mind is the task of another factor in the eightfold path to liberation, right effort, mindfulness nevertheless makes an active contribution to such removal by monitoring the countermeasures taken to overcome any unwholesome mental condition.[52]

It is also worthy of note that the instructions for contemplation of the hindrances make use of conceptual labels to facilitate recognition of what is taking place in the mind, thus unmistakably envisioning that mindfulness involves the use of concepts. In fact the actual instructions for contemplation of feelings or of states of mind use direct speech to present the conceptual labels to be used when practicing,[53] making it fairly clear that a minimum use of concepts is required. Hence the notion of mindfulness as requiring a non-conceptual state of mind, found in some later Buddhist traditions, clearly involves a different conception of the nature of mindfulness.[54]

The same holds for the notion of mindfulness as a non-dual mental quality.[55] While early Buddhist thought recognizes the possibility of non-dual forms of mindfulness during the experience of meditative absorption, where non-dual mindfulness manifests in a particularly pure form in the fourth absorption,[56] the meditative practice of establishing mindfulness discussed above clearly does not involve a non-dual form of awareness.

The instructions also make it clear that the actual presence of mindfulness can coexist with an element of deliberate evaluation.[57] Thus according to all canonical versions the body should be contemplated from the perspective of its anatomical constitution as something that is not beautiful or even impure. Feelings are to be evaluated in terms of their worldly or unworldly nature.

In sum, then, alongside considerable overlap in meaning, the early Buddhist conception of mindfulness shows features that are distinct from how this quality is perceived in later Buddhist traditions as well as from the way mindfulness is defined in modern day clinical usage. Needless to say, each of these definitions has its rationale and significance within its particular context, hence distinguishing these different 'mindfulnesses' does not imply a value judgement of any kind. Drawing such distinctions is only an attempt to sharpen our understanding and clarify what type of mindfulness is being practiced or researched in a particular case. Thus in future research it might be helpful to define precisely what type of mindfulness is being investigated, which could be, for example, "MBSR mindfulness", or "early Buddhist mindfulness", or "*vipassanā* mindfulness", or "Zen mindfulness", etc. Each of these has its specific features, which inevitably will influence the type of practice undertaken as well as the effects being researched.

Exploring the historical roots of mindfulness conceptions in the Buddhist traditions shows the common ground out of which the different notions of mindfulness would have developed over time. Descriptions of mindfulness in early Buddhism suggest that a key aspect of properly establishing mindfulness could be found in the presence of mental balance or equanimity. In this way, whatever happens should be met with clear awareness of the situation, combined with maintaining the inner mental balance of equanimity.[58] In the words of early Buddhist poetry:

> "Those who always proceed with mindfulness ...
> proceed evenly among what is uneven".[59]

Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
B^e	Burmese edition
C^e	Ceylonese edition
D	Derge edition
DĀ	*Dīrgha-āgama* (T 1)
DN	*Dīgha-nikāya*
EĀ	*Ekottarika-āgama* (T 125)
MĀ	*Madhyama-āgama* (T 26)
MN	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Q	*Qian-long* (Peking) edition
SĀ	*Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 99)
$SĀ^2$	(partial) *Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 100)
S^e	Siamese edition
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
T	Taishō edition
Th	*Theragāthā*

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Notes

1. Ospina 2007: v, 209 and 32.
2. Baer 2011: 245 notes that a basis for measuring the effects of mindfulness "is to develop a detailed description of the variable to be measured … this step is uniquely challenging in the case of mindfulness … [as] numerous definitions and descriptions of mindfulness are available". Schmidt 2011: 24 comments that "what we see today is that the meaning of mindfulness is more and more diluted the more popular mindfulness becomes."
3. Cf., e.g., Bishop 2004.
4. The historical validity of the early discourses and the principle that parallelisms point to a common early core have been questioned by Schopen 1985; for a critical reply cf. Anālayo 2012a.
5. DN 22 at DN II 290–315, MN 10 at MN I 55–63, MĀ 98 at T I 582b–584b and EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a–569b. MĀ 98 has been translated by Minh Chau 1964/1991: 87–95, Saddhāloka 1983: 9–15, Nhat Hanh 1990: 151–167, Kuan 2008: 146–154 and Anālayo 2013a: 269 –286. EĀ 12.1 has been translated by Huyen-Vi 1989: 39–45, Nhat Hanh 1990: 168–177, Pāsādika 1998: 495–502 and Anālayo 2013a: 286–295. For translations of the Pāli commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* cf. Ñāṇaponika 1951/1973 and Soma 1941/1981.
6. Cf., e.g., Lü 1963: 242, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Enomoto 1984, Mayeda 1985: 98, Enomoto 1986: 21, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Minh Chau 1991: 27 and Oberlies 2003: 48. The general consensus by scholars on this school affiliation has recently be called into question by Chung and Fukita 2011: 13–34, for a critical reply cf. Anālayo 2012b: 516ff
7. Cf. Mayeda 1985: 102f and for recent contributions in favour of a Mahāsāṃghika affiliation cf. Pāsādika 2010, Kuan 2012a, Kuan 2013a, Kuan 2013b and Kuan (forthcoming). A brief survey of basic features of the *Ekottarika-āgama* can be found in Anālayo 2009b, a more detailed study in Anālayo 2013b.
8. In addition to the publications mentioned above in note 5, comparative studies of the different versions of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*/*smṛtyupasthāna*s can be found in Schmithausen 1976, Bronkhorst 1985: 310–312, Sujāto 2005 and Anālayo 2011: 73–97; for a more detailed study of their practical implications, together with translations of the relevant texts, cf. Anālayo 2013a.
9. DN 22 at DN II 293,10, 294,14 and 295,6, MN 10 at MN I 57,13+35 and 58,9, MĀ 98 at T I 583b4+17+23 and EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a17+23 and b3.
10. For various listings of anatomical parts cf. the survey in Dhammajoti 2009: 250–252, on contemplation of *aśubha* cf. also Hayashima 1958 and Giustarini 2011.
11. MN 10 at MN I 57,15 (= DN 22 at DN II 293,12) uses the term *asuci*, "impure", when describing such contemplation, which Bronkhorst 1985: 311 suggests could be a later addition. His comment that "no trace of it is found in the comparison" with the parallels does not appear to be correct, as MĀ 98 at T I 583b6 and EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a19 do employ the expression 不淨, although it remains uncertain if this renders "impure" or else "not beautiful", *aśubha*; cf. Hirakawa 1997: 54 s.v., who lists *aśubha* alongside *aśuddhi* and *aśuci* as possible Sanskrit equivalents for 不淨. In fact EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a19 continues after the

qualification 不淨 by indicating that this body "has nothing worth desiring", 無有可貪, which would fit the notion of a lack of beauty quite well. As Shulman 2010: 402 points out, "the seeing of the body as unclean ... this vision of the body is strikingly negative". In contrast, to consider the different parts of the body as not in themselves beautiful would be considerably less negative, even though it does involve an element of evaluation.

12. Hamilton 1995: 55 comments: "I suspect that 'impure', when used in connection with the body and its functions, is present in the [Buddhist] canon as the result of the Brahmanical background". Olivelle 2002: 190 explains that in ancient India in general "ascetic discourse presents the body as impure in its very essence, the source indeed of all pollution".
13. AN 10.60 at AN V 109,18 introduces the contemplation of anatomical parts as a "perception of [what is] not beautiful", even though the listing of the actual parts itself then begins with the standard phrase on reviewing impurity. The corresponding passage in a parallel to this discourse preserved in Tibetan, D 38 *ka* 277a1 or Q 754 *tsi* 293b5, speaks in both instances of impurity. In spite of being extant in two different languages, both versions stem from the Theravāda tradition, cf. Skilling 1993. Considered together this gives the impression that the two terms "impure" and "not beautiful" were at times used in a somewhat interchangeable manner.
14. As already pointed out by Bodhi 2011: 26 in regard to "the common interpretation of mindfulness as a type of awareness intrinsically devoid of discrimination, evaluation, and judgment", this "does not square well with the canonical texts".
15. MN 75 at MN I 507,30 and MĀ 153 at T I 672a20.
16. Cf. in more detail Anālayo 2014.
17. MN 10 at MN I 57,20 (= DN 22 at DN II 293,18) and MĀ 98 at T I 583b9; a simile also found in the *Śāriputrābhidharma*, T 1548 at T XXVIII 613b13, and in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya,* Bendall 1902/1970: 210,8; cf. also the *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*, Samtani 1971: 24,4. On the significance of the implement described in this simile cf. Schlingloff 1964: 33f note 10.
18. EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a23: 自娛樂, 除去惡念, 無有愁憂.
19. MĀ 98 at T I 583b18; this appears to be a later development, since the element "consciousness" does not fit well under the heading of "contemplation of the body".
20. Cf., e.g., MN 28 at MN I 185,17 and its parallel MĀ 30 at T I 464c8; a feature already noted by Greene 2006: 34.
21. In fact Kabat-Zinn 2011: 291 explains that to speak of mindfulness practice as "non-judgemental does not mean … that there is some ideal state in which judgements no longer arise". The point is only to avoid habitual judgmental reactions to what is experienced.
22. Xuánzàng (玄奘) in his travel records notes that corpses were left out in the open for wild beasts to be devoured, which he presents as one of three different methods found in seventh century India for disposing of the dead; cf. T 2087 at T LI 877c27, translated in Beal 1884/2001: 86; cf. also Rhys Davids 1903/1997: 80. Cousins 2003: 4 notes that apparently "cemetery meditation on the stages of decomposition of a corpse is not recorded as a Jain practice and may well have

been typically or even uniquely Buddhist at this time".

23. The formulation *seyyathā pi passeyya* in MN 10 at MN I 58,9 (= DN 22 at DN II 295,6) suggests that the actual practice of this meditation involves a form of recollection or even visualization; cf. also Yamabe 1999: 6f. Ñāṇamoli 1956/1991: 760 note 27 comments that the different stages of decay of a corpse "are not necessarily intended as contemplations of actual corpses", but "as mental images to be created". The formulation in MĀ 98 at T I 583b24: 比丘者觀彼死屍 and in EĀ 12.1 at T II 568b4: 比丘觀死屍, however, reads as if the practitioner is actually contemplating a corpse. Actual meditation practice in a charnel ground appears to be also implicit in Th 315f and Th 393f.
24. The suggestion that bare awareness is a central aspect of the practice of mindfulness according to the canonical sources has recently been criticized by Ṭhānissaro 2012: 61, who holds that "there is no role for bare attention or bare awareness on the path." His position appears to be based on considering bare awareness to be necessarily an unconditioned form of awareness, cf., e.g., Ṭhānissaro 2012: 53. This is not the case. The type of bare awareness required for progress on the path is of course a conditioned mental quality. Yet, by remaining with bare and receptive awareness the conditioning of one's mind will not automatically result in habitual reactions, which only too often are of the unwholesome type. Such bare awareness has a rather crucial role on the path.
25. The distinction between worldly and unworldly in DN 22 at DN II 298,15 and MN 10 at MN I 59,16 is literally between being "with flesh", *sāmisa*, and "without flesh", *nirāmisa*, a distinction which MĀ 98 at T I 583c28 and EĀ 12.1 at T II 568c1 render as "with food", 食, and "without food", 無食 or 不食.
26. SN 46.55 at SN V 121,17; cf. Tripāṭhī 1995: 127ff for a Sanskrit fragment parallel to the similes in SN 46.55.
27. EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a4.
28. MN 10 at MN I 60,11 (= DN 22 at DN II 300,10) and MĀ 98 at T I 584a24.
29. MN 108 at MN III 14,1, MĀ 145 at T I 655b28 and D 4094 *nyu* 67b7 or Q 5595 *thu* 111b8.
30. DN 22 at DN II 303,21, MN 10 at MN I 61,32 and MĀ 98 at T I 584b4. EĀ 12.1 at T II 569a19 differs, as here the task is to develop the awakening factors in dependence on insight, dispassion, cessation, discarding evil states. This part of EĀ 12.1 also appears to have suffered from an error in textual transmission, since EĀ 12.1 at T II 569a21 mentions the awakening factor of mindfulness in place of the awakening factor of joy, thus it has mindfulness twice and does not refer to joy at all. Curiously enough, the same pattern recurs in EĀ 21.2 at T II 602c4.
31. MN 118 at MN III 78–88, SĀ 803 at T II 206a–b and SĀ 810 at T II 208a–c, and T 1425 at T XXII 254c to 255a; for a translation of the Chinese versions cf. Anālayo 2013a: 228–230.
32. The suggestion by Hartranft 2011: 7 that the correlation between the four ways of establishing mindfulness and the four tetrads of mindfulness of breathing is a "later scholastic" presentation "without much personal grounding in practice" is not supported by a comparative study, as the main elements of this correlation are found similarly in the parallel versions, which in fact seems to be very much

grounded in actual practice.

33. MN 118 at MN III 82,28 presents the instructions for long and short breath as alternatives, marked by the use of the disjunctive particle *vā*. From a practical perspective, I take it that steps 1 and 2 involve a single task, in that one knows if the breath is either long or short. Understood in this way, practice of the first tetrad would not require a progression from longer breaths to shorter breaths, but simply a recognition of the length of one's breath as it is right now, in terms of being either long or short. In the actual instructions, such recognition is preceded by just becoming aware of the breath (step 0). Thus actual practice of the first tetrad of mindfulness of breathing would still amount to four steps: (0) — (1 or 2) — (3) — (4), although it needs to be noted that MN 118 at MN III 83,21 only counts steps (1) to (4) as corresponding to contemplation of the body.
34. The instructions in MN 118 at MN III 83,26 are about "experiencing the whole body", *sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī*, an expression found similarly in SĀ 803 at T II 208a28: 覺知一切身. The third step in T 1425 at T XXII 254c17 is concerned with "pervading the body", 遍身. The instruction for this third step in MĀ 98 at T I 582c16 agrees in this respect with MN 118, as it enjoins "to experience the whole body", 覺一切身 (adopting the variant 覺 instead of 學). The same is the case for EĀ 17.1 at T II 582a18 which instructs to "contemplate the body completely", 盡觀身體. The *Śrāvakabhūmi*, Śrāvakabhūmi Study Group 2007: 96,3 (= Shukla 1973: 230,3), also instructs to experience the whole body, *sarvakāyapratisaṃvedī* (rendered as "experience the body pervasively", 了遍身, in T 1579 at T XXX 432b2), as does the corresponding instruction in the *Mahāvyutpatti* no. 1177, Sakaki 1926: 89, and the so-called Yogalehrbuch, see fragments 118V4 and 122R5 in Schlingloff 1964: 69 and 75. The **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, T 1509 at T XXV 138a11, also follows awareness of long and short breaths with awareness of the whole body, though in its presentation this forms the fourth step. Comparing the different versions of this step, the overall impression that results points to an awareness of the whole physical body.
35. A reference to bodily activities could in principle be understood to stand for the breath in particular; cf. SN 41.6 at SN IV 293,15: *assāsapassāsā ... kāyasaṅkhāro* and SĀ 568 at T II 150a24: 出息入息名為身行. Alternatively, the same reference can be understood to cover any activity that goes on within the body. Griffiths 1986/1991: 148 note 17 comments that "it seems more likely ... that we are supposed to regard the process of respiration (*assāsapassāsa*) as an example of physical activity rather than an exhaustive account of it". In a similar vein, Jayatilleke 1948: 217 suggests to consider breathing just as one concrete instance of bodily formations in general.
36. MN 118 at MN III 84,28 lists *aniccānupassī, virāgānupassī, nirodhānupassī, paṭinissaggānupassī,* whereas SĀ 803 at T II 206b9 lists 無常, 斷, 無欲, 滅, the same terms are found in the corresponding section in the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya*, T 1425 at T XXII 254c29. The *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra* in Samtani 1971: 45,1 and the *Vimuttimagga*, T 1648 at T XXXII 430a5, agree in this respect with MN 118. The pattern found in SĀ 810 recurs in the *Śravakabhūmi,* Śrāvakabhūmi Study Group 2007: 96,14 (= Shukla 1973: 231,6), which lists *anityānudarśī*, *prahāṇānudarśī*, *virāgānudarśī* and *nirodhānudarśī* (corresponding to contemplating 無常, 斷, 離

欲 and 滅 in the Chinese version, T 1579 at T XXX 432b21). The relevant parts in the so-called Yogalehrbuch in Schlingloff 1964: 82f are fragment 128V1: *prahāṇānu[pa]śyanāyām* and 128V2: *(vi)rāgānupaśya[n](āyām)*, followed by *nirodhānupaśyanāyām*. A reference to *a[ni](tyānupaśyī)* in the context of instructions on mindfulness of breathing can also be found in fragment SHT IX 3091Rz, Bechert and Wille 2004: 348. For variations in the sixteen-fold scheme in other texts preserved in Chinese cf. Deleanu 1992: 51–52.

37. For a more detailed discussion of the way the Pāli version explains these correlations, which in comparison to the presentation in SĀ 810 seems considerably less straightforward, cf. Anālayo 2007: 147f.
38. MN 137 at MN III 221,3, MĀ 163 at T I 693c23 and D 4094 *nyu* 59a1 or Q 5595 *thu* 101a8.
39. MĀ 163 at T I 693c29, 694a7 and 694a17, as well as D 4094 *nyu* 59a4, 59a7 and 59b3 or Q 5595 *thu* 101b4, 101b8 and 102a5.
40. MN 137 at MN III 221,10 (all disciples do not listen): "he is not satisfied and feels no satisfaction, yet he dwells without being defiled by it", *na c' eva attamano hoti na ca attamanataṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, anavassuto ca viharati*, although in this case the Burmese edition indicates that "he is not dissatisfied and feels no dissatisfaction", B^{e}: *na c' eva anattamano hoti na ca anattamanataṃ paṭisaṃvedeti*. MN 137 at MN III 221,21 (some listen and some do not listen): "he is not satisfied and feels no satisfaction, and he is not dissatisfied and feels not dissatisfaction, leaving behind both satisfaction and dissatisfaction he dwells in equanimity", *na c' eva attamano hoti na ca attamanataṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, na ca anattamano hoti na ca anattamanataṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, attamanatañ ca anattamanatañ ca tad ubhayaṃ abhinivajjetvā so upekhako viharati* (B^{e} follows the opposite sequence in so far as it begins with *na c' eva anattamano hoti*, etc., followed by *na ca attamano hoti*, etc., and then in the third part reads *anattamanatā ca attamanatā ca tad ubhayaṃ*, etc., furthermore B^{e}, C^{e}, and S^{e} read *upekkhako*, and B^{e} and S^{e} also do not have *so*). MN 137 at MN III 221,30 (all listen): "he is satisfied and feels satisfaction, yet he dwells without being defiled by it", *attamano c' eva hoti attamanatañ ca paṭisaṃvedeti, anavassuto ca viharati*.
41. In addition to the works mentioned in the next note, references to the three *smṛtyupasthāna*s can be found, e.g., in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-prajñāparāmitā-upadeśa-śāstra*, Stcherbatsky 1929: 34,7, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Pradhan 1950: 98,15, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Wogihara 1971: 403,10, the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 126,13, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, Lévi 1907: 186,20, the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1977: 179,22, and in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 1579 at T XXX 573c18.
42. The relevant sections are: the Chinese translations of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, T 1558 at T XXIX 140c26 and T 1559 at T XXIX 292a6 (the Sanskrit version in Pradhan 1967: 414,11 does not give all three cases in full), the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, T 1509 at T XXV 91b24, the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 160b20 and again T XXVII 942b16, and the *Mahāvyutpatti* no. 188–190, Sakaki 1926: 16–17; cf. also the **Tattvasiddhi*, T 1646 at T XXXII 243a1, which only explicitly examines the two cases where attention is being paid and where no attention is being paid to what the Buddha teaches. Further

relevant occurrences are Sanskrit fragments SHT VI 1252a, Bechert and Wille 1989: 49, SHT VII 1689aR and bV+R as well as SHT VII 1717, Bechert and Wille 1995: 99 and 139, as well as a bilingual Sanskrit and Uighur fragment, Maue 2008: 181, which has preserved parts of the third *smṛtyupasthāna*.

43. SN 4.14 at SN I 111,20, noted by Kuan 2008: 29 as standing in contrast to the presentation in MN 137.
44. For a few examples cf. Anālayo 2009a: 14 note 40.
45. On this assumption, the correct reading could then be that in case all disciples do not listen, the Buddha is not displeased with that, *na anattamano hoti* (the reading found in B^e), and in case all disciples listen, he is not pleased with that, *na attamano hoti*; cf., however, Cicuzza 2004: 401 for an interpretation based on the reading found in MN 137.
46. MN 10 at MN I 56,5 (= DN 22 at DN II 290,12).
47. EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a12. Similar indications are found in a range of different texts, cf. Anālayo 2011: 76f.
48. Olendski 2011: 61 explains that from the perspective of later Theravāda tradition, "as a universal wholesome factor, mindfulness is exclusive of restlessness, delusion and all other unwholesome states, and cannot co-arise with these in the same moment".
49. Olendski 2011: 64 notes that according to the Theravāda model "one cannot be angry and mindful at the same moment, so at whatever point true mindfulness arises the actual anger is already banished".
50. MN 10 at MN I 60,11 (= DN 22 at DN II 300,10): *santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ kāmacchandaṃ, atthi me ajjhattaṃ kāmacchando ti pajānāti,* and *yathā ca anuppannassa kāmacchandassa uppādo hoti, tañ ca pajānāti* (S^e *kāmachandaṃ* etc.), with its counterpart in MĀ 98 at T I 584a24: 內實有欲知有欲如真 and 若未生欲而生者知如真. The same holds for instructions on how to contemplate the hindrances in the *Dharmaskandha*, T 1537 at T XXVI 478b27, the *Jñānaprasthāna*, T 1544 at T XXVI 1023b29, the *Śāriputrābhidharma*, T 1548 at T XXVIII 616a20, and the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, Śrāvakabhūmi Study Group 2007: 186,7 (= Shukla 1973: 298,12); cf. also Anālayo 2003: 52 note 31.
51. SN 10.4 at SN I 208,13; cf. also the discussion in Anālayo 2003: 52. While the formulation in the parallel versions differ, they similarly highlight the importance of loving kindness as an antidote to anger, cf. SĀ 1319 at T II 362a25 and $SĀ^2$ 318 at T II 480b15. From the perspective of the developed Theravāda theory that often stands at the background of conceptions of mindfulness in the *vipassanā* traditions, however, the presence of mindfulness itself suffices to overcome a state of anger; cf., e.g., Olendski 2011: 65f: "if the wholesome attention can be sustained moment after moment, the entire stream of consciousness becomes purified ... mindfulness ... is transformative precisely because the unwholesome quality ... has been replaced with a wholesome attitude".
52. MN 117 at MN III 71,24 and its parallels MĀ 189 at T I 735c13 and D 4094 *nyu* 44b4 or Q 5595 *thu* 84a5 indicate that the overcoming of a wrong path factor requires right view as its basis and then takes place through right effort in combination with right mindfulness.
53. Cf. the discussion in Ñāṇaponika 1968/1986: 13.

54. Bodhi 2011: 27f points out that "it is hard to see 'bare attention' as a valid *theoretical* description of mindfulness applicable to all its modalities" and "it is also hard to see how mindfulness can be essentially non-conceptual and non-discursive".
55. For a discussion of non-dual mindfulness cf. Dunne 2011.
56. The standard description of the fourth absorption indicates that this state of mind is characterized by purity of mindfulness together with equanimity; cf., e.g., MN 19 at MN I 117,16 and its counterpart MĀ 102 at T I 589c14; for a survey of the closely similar descriptions of this state in various text cf. Meisig 1990: 547. On various nuances of equanimity cf. Anālayo 2008.
57. Bodhi 2011: 26 comments, in regard to "the common interpretation of mindfulness as a type of awareness intrinsically devoid of discrimination, evaluation, and judgment", that this "does not square well with the canonical texts and may even lead to a distorted view of how mindfulness is to be practiced".
58. The notion of balance as a central feature of mindfulness underlies to some extent also the role of *sati* among the faculties, *indriya*s; cf. Anālayo 2003: 50.
59. SN 1.18 at SN I 7,20: *ye caranti sadā satā ... caranti visame saman ti*.