



External Mindfulness

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Abstract

Descriptions of the formal cultivation of mindfulness in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels highlight that such practice has “internal” and “external” dimensions. Later traditions reflect a variety of viewpoints on the implications of these dimensions of establishing mindfulness. Perhaps due to the resultant uncertainty, contemporary research on the potential applicability and benefits of mindfulness has so far predominantly focused on the internal aspects. An examination of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels from the historical viewpoint of their gradual evolution can help to clarify that the chief concern of such external cultivation is directing mindfulness to others.

Keywords Emotion recognition · Empathy · External mindfulness · Prosocial dimensions of mindfulness · *satipaṭṭhāna* · *smṛtyupasthāna* · Telepathy

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* describes a range of implementations of the four establishments of mindfulness (Pāli *satipaṭṭhāna*, Sanskrit *smṛtyupasthāna*, Chinese 念處, Tibetan *dran pa nye bar gzhag pa*), thereby illustrating their actual practice. Comparison of this discourse with two parallels extant in the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama* helps to discern those exercises that are common to the three versions and that thereby likely reflect an early description of the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness (Anālayo 2013). The exercises common to the three discourses cover the following topics:

- anatomical parts
- elements
- decaying corpse
- feeling tones
- mental states
- awakening factors

The first three fall under contemplation of the body, while the remaining three correspond to contemplating feeling tones, mental states, and dharmas respectively. The actual

instructions for these exercises can be evaluated from the various perspectives on the implications of external mindfulness reflected in a range of later texts. These perspectives have conveniently been surveyed by Schmithausen (2012), offering a solid foundation for further investigation.

Of central importance here are early Abhidharma works of the Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Theravāda tradition, namely the **Śāriputrābhidharma* (T 1548), the *Dharmaskandha* (T 1537), and the *Vibhaṅga* (Vibh). Other important texts are the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Dutt 1934), exemplifying the perspective of the scriptures on the perfection of wisdom, and the *Śrāvakabhūmi* (Shukla 1973), an important Yogācāra work attributed to Asaṅga. Of interest is also the scripture on the “Twelve Gates,” an early translation by An Shigao (Zacchetti 2003).

Among these different texts, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* only covers the first establishment of mindfulness, contemplation of the body. However, all four establishments are covered in the related and later **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (T 1509). Representative of mature Sarvāstivāda exegesis is furthermore the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (T 1545).

Within the context of the present study, a comprehensive survey of the perspectives offered in these different works will not be possible. Instead, only selected instances from these later texts are taken up to the extent to which these appear directly relevant to a possible external application of the mindfulness exercises described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its two parallels.

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Anatomical Parts

The first of three contemplations of the body depicted in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its two parallels requires a survey of the anatomical constitution of the body. The relevant part of the instructions proceeds as follows:

In this body there are head hairs ... and urine.
(MN 10: *atthi imasmiṃ kāye kesā ... muttan ti*).

Within this body of mine there are head hairs ... and urine.
(MĀ 98: 我此身中有髮 ... 小便).

In this body there are body hairs ... and gall.
(EĀ 12.1: 觀此身有毛 ... 膽).

The elided parts in the case of each of these three instructions mention various other bodily parts and liquids. Due to the elision, the *Ekottarika-āgama* may at first sight appear to differ more than it actually does. This version also covers head hairs and urine, differing only insofar as it does not have these two as its respective first and last item in the list, for which reason they are not shown explicitly in the above extract.

The actual instructions concern one's own body. This is particularly clear in the *Madhyama-āgama* version, which speaks of "this body of mine." The references to "this body" in the other two discourses imply the same.

The actual listing of bodily parts in the three versions does not proceed in a sequence amenable to a form of body scan that continuously moves from head to feet or alternatively from feet to head (Anālayo 2020a). It is not clear to what extent the original idea of this practice required an actual and direct experience of each of these parts. On the face of it, the instructions could even be understood to involve a form of mental reflection, by way of making it conceptually clear to oneself that the various anatomical parts listed are indeed found in one's own body. Some of the bodily parts and liquids would in fact be more difficult to experience directly, in the sense of distinctly being felt within.

The above discourse versions do not provide information about the possible implications of undertaking this practice in an external way, so it is only with later exegesis that the practical import of external contemplation of the body's anatomy can be fleshed out. Of the texts mentioned above, three Abhidharma works that are fairly close in time to the early discourses are the *Dharmaskandha*, the **Śāriputrābhidharma*, and the *Vibhaṅga*. The **Śāriputrābhidharma* does not offer further details on the external contemplation of the anatomical parts, unlike the other two. This leaves the *Dharmaskandha* and the *Vibhaṅga* as two relatively early works to turn to for an appreciation of external contemplation of the anatomical parts.

Beginning with the latter, it is worthy of note that contemplation of the anatomical parts features as the only body contemplation covered in the *Vibhaṅga* of the Theravāda tradition. The explanation for internal contemplation of the body, found in the *suttantabhājanīya* of this work (Vibh 193) and thereby as an exposition according to the discourses (as distinct from an exposition that follows the methodology of the Abhidharma), employs the expression found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*: "in this body" (*imasmiṃ kāye*). For external contemplation, this work speaks of "the body of another" (*assa kāye*).

The Pāli expression found here has been considered uncertain by Ditrich (2016). Yet, the *Vibhaṅga* is quite consistent in understanding external to refer to others in the case of each of the four establishments of mindfulness. This understanding is also reflected in the commentary on the *Vibhaṅga*, according to which the reference to an external body in the present context intends the body of another (Vibh-a 219: *bahiddhā kāye ti parassa kāye*). There is thus not much room to doubt that the intention of the *Vibhaṅga* is indeed to point to a shift of mindful contemplation from the anatomical constitution of one's own body to contemplating the same in regard to the body of another. From the viewpoint of the actual instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels, such an application to the body of another would not pose major difficulties, as long as the exercise is understood to imply some form of reflection.

The same idea occurs also in the *Dharmaskandha*. However, here this features as one of two alternative explanations of external contemplation. One of these explanations reflects the influence of Sarvāstivāda doctrinal concerns, namely the affirmation of the existence of past, present, and future phenomena. What is present is internal, whereas what is past or future is external. A later part of this article will discuss this further.

The other explanation, however, concords with the *Vibhaṅga*, in that one dwells contemplating the body in relation to another's external body (T XXVI 476b: 於彼外身循身觀者). The *Dharmaskandha* continues by referring in an abbreviated manner to the list of anatomical parts, indicating that the body of the other person should be surveyed from feet to head in this way.

A sense similar to the position taken in the *Dharmaskandha* and the *Vibhaṅga* emerges in the scripture on the "Twelve Gates," an early translation by An Shigao. After referring to the contemplation of the anatomical parts of one's own body, the text continues by indicating that "the same method is to be applied to the observation of another person's body" (Zacchetti 2003, p. 256).

From a practical perspective, the position taken in the texts surveyed above appears quite meaningful. A central thrust of contemplation of the anatomical parts is to counter ordinary perceptions of the body as sensually alluring. Such perceptions, however, do not arise merely in relation to one's own

body. Recurrent descriptions in the early discourses portray a male monastic on his tour through a village or town to beg for food. Lacking mindfulness when encountering a beautiful woman, he becomes overwhelmed with lust (e.g., AN 5.76 and EĀ 33.4). In such a situation, contemplation of the anatomical constitution of the body that has triggered lust would offer a powerful antidote. From this perspective, an external contemplation of the anatomical parts of another's body can be of considerable importance for celibates struggling with lust. In this way, understanding "external" to imply a shift of contemplation from oneself to others does provide a satisfactory perspective in the present case.

Elements

The instructions for contemplating the elements in the body proceed in a way similar to the previous exercise:

In this body there are the earth element ...
(MN 10: *atthi imasmiṃ kāye pathavīdhātu ...*).

Within this body of mine there are the earth element ...
(MĀ 98: 我此身中有地界 ...).

In this body, is there the earth element ...?
(EĀ 12.1: 此身有地種耶 ...).

The elements mentioned in all three versions are earth, water, fire, and wind, which stand representative of the qualities of hardness, liquidity/cohesion, temperature, and motion. The *Madhyama-āgama* version additionally mentions space and consciousness, which can safely be set aside as a later addition (Anālayo 2013).

If the application to another person is granted as a sensible explanation of an external contemplation of the anatomical parts, then the same could be adopted for the present case. The main difference would be that, in this case, the concern is with the four elements as basic qualities of the material constitution of human bodies, one's own and those of others.

However, in the case of the elements, an explicit distinction into internal and external manifestations occurs elsewhere among the early discourses. The relevant exposition lists anatomical parts of the body for the internal earth element (MN 28, MĀ 30, and Up 3044). This underlines its relevance to the present context. The corresponding external element, however, is rather the continent earth (as known in ancient Indian cosmology). In the case of the water element, its internal manifestation covers liquids included under contemplation of the body's anatomy in expositions of the first establishment of mindfulness.

The circumstance that this discourse lists anatomical parts and liquids found also in the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-*

sutta and its two parallels for the previous exercise can at first sight make its presentation appear to be quite pertinent to the present context. However, the instruction for mindful contemplation of the elements features under the header of being a "contemplation of the body" (*kāyānupassanā*/觀身). This header reflects the overall thrust of the first establishment of mindfulness: the human "body." In this setting, a contemplation of the continent earth would not fit.

This in turn makes it reasonable to assume that an external contemplation of the elements, as long as this takes place in the context of a cultivation of the first establishment of mindfulness, can be understood to require an application to the bodies of others. Just as one's own body is a combination of the four elements, so are the bodies of others.

A Decaying Corpse

The third contemplation of the body common to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its two parallels describes a corpse in various stage of decay, inviting the following reflection:

One compares this same body with it: "This body, too, is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate."

(MN 10: *so imam eva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ayam pi kho kāyo evaṃ dhammo evaṃ bhāvī evaṃ anatīto ti*).

One compares oneself to it: "This present body of mine is also like this. It is of the same nature and in the end cannot escape [this fate]."

(MĀ 98: 自比: 今我此身亦復如是, 俱有此法, 終不得離).

One then contemplates that one's own body is not different from that: "My body will not escape from this calamity."

(EĀ 12.1: 自觀身與彼無異, 吾身不免此患).

This mindfulness exercise involves a form of reflection, which requires relating one's own body to an external body that is dead. Notably, in this case, the actual instruction already involves the body of another.

The **Śāriputrābhidharma* considers contemplation of the anatomical parts to be an "internal" contemplation (T XXVIII 613b: 觀身中, 從頂至足, 從足至頂, 具諸不淨, 乃至是名內身觀身行). Contemplation of a corpse, however, should, according to this work, be considered "internal-and-external" (T XXVIII 614a: 若見死屍棄在塚間, 若一日至三日, 乃至是名內外身觀身行).

An exposition of the first establishment of mindfulness in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* similarly considers the contemplations of anatomical parts and elements to be "internal." However, from its viewpoint, the corpse

contemplation is just “external” (Dutt 1934, p. 206: *bahirdhākāye kāyānupaśyī viharati*).

In a way, both texts have a point. The instruction for this body contemplation involves an external body, in the form of a corpse. It also concerns relating the mortality evident in the decaying corpse to one’s own body, so that from this perspective it is a contemplation of what is internal-and-external. Given that both works precede this by reckoning contemplation of the anatomical parts as internal, it seems that their analyses are meant to draw out the distinct nature of the actual instructions. Whereas instructions on the anatomical parts and elements only mention one’s own body, those for the contemplation of the corpse explicitly mention an external body.

A commentary on the perfection of wisdom, the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (T 1509), sets out by confirming that, when contemplating the body, “internal” refers to one’s own and “external” to the body of another (T XXV 202a: 內名自身, 外名他身; see also Lamotte 1970, p. 1172). In the case of contemplating a corpse in decay, that corpse is the external body and the practitioner’s body is its internal counterpart (T XXV 202a: 死屍是外身, 行者身是內身). The text continues by turning to contemplating the living body of another. That body thereby becomes the “external” body. The understanding that one’s own body has the same nature in turn represents the corresponding “internal” implementation.

A related perspective emerges in two out of six alternative explanations proposed in the *Śrāvakaḥūmi*. According to the fourth explanation, one’s own living body is internal and a corpse in decay external (Shukla 1973, p. 301: *yadā savijñānakam kāyam adhyātman ālambanīkaroty evam adhyātman kāye kāyānudarśī viharati, avijñānakam rūpam sattvasamkhyātam vinīlakādiṣv avasthāsv ālambanīkurvan bahirdhā kāye kāyānudarśī viharati*). According to the fifth explanation, contemplating the anatomical parts of one’s own body (*ātmano*) is internal, whereas contemplating the same parts of the body of another (*pareṣām*) is external.

From a practical perspective, a progression from internal to external along the lines suggested for the previously discussed body contemplations would be feasible. On this understanding, one may at first use an external corpse as an exemplification of the mortal nature of one’s own body. The understanding gained in this way can then in turn be applied to the living bodies of others, thereby providing a similar external counterpart to the previously cultivated internal dimension, as in the case of the anatomical parts and the elements.

Looking back at the three contemplations examined so far, mindfully contemplating one’s body and then applying the same to the bodies of others appears to be a feasible approach in each case. Moreover, with the present exercise, the basic idea that mindfulness can be concerned with the body of another finds explicit confirmation in the actual instructions for the contemplation of a corpse. This peculiar aspect of the contemplation of a corpse has been highlighted in some of

the works surveyed above: The relevant instructions explicitly direct mindfulness to the external (and in this case dead) body of another.

Feeling Tones

The suggestion to take the qualification “external” to refer to another person is considerably more straightforward in the case of the body compared with the case of feeling tones. The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels present the relevant instructions, here given just for the case of painful feeling tones, in this way:

When feeling a painful feeling tone, one knows: “I feel a painful feeling tone.”

(MN 10: *dukkhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno, dukkhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti pajānāti*).

At the time of experiencing a painful feeling tone, one then knows one is experiencing a painful feeling tone.

(MĀ 98: 覺苦覺時, 便知覺苦覺).

At the time of getting a painful feeling tone, one is then aware of it and knows of oneself: “I am getting a painful feeling tone.”

(EĀ 12.1: 得苦痛時, 即自覺知: 我得苦痛).

The three discourse versions proceed similarly for pleasant and neutral feeling tones, followed by introducing a further distinction of each of these three basic feeling tones into worldly and unworldly types. In each case, the instructions are concerned with the felt experience of feeling tones and involve personal direct experience. This makes it more difficult to conceive of an external application of these instructions in the sense of involving another person’s feeling tones. Gethin (1992, p. 54) commented:

it might be suggested that the way the *sutta* formulation includes the progression *ajjhataṃ/bahiddhā/ajjhata-bahiddhā* [internal/external/internal-and-external] for all four *satipaṭṭhānas* is simply mechanical, and that the later exegetical works are thus left with the job of making sense of an accident. But this is much too convenient. Elsewhere the Nikāyas can be quite definite in leaving out of consideration what should be left out of consideration.

The *Vibhaṅga* conveys the impression that an external modality of contemplation of feeling tones indeed concerns those that occur in another person (Vibh 196: *dukkhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayaṭī ti pajānāti*; following Asian editions over the faulty PTS edition). The explanations of internal and external

contemplation of the body in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* indicate that the same holds for the other three establishments of mindfulness. Its fifth explanation, according to which what is one's own (*ātmano*) is internal and what pertains to another (*paraṣām*) is external, would thus be applicable to feeling tones (and mental states) and would thereby correspond to the presentation in the *Vibhaṅga*.

The *Dharmaskandha* explains external contemplation of feeling tones (after again mentioning its alternative perspective influenced by the doctrine that things exist in past, present, and future times) by fleshing out how this can take place: a monastic contemplates the feeling tones of another person by giving attention to the marks of external feeling tones (T XXVI 477b: 於彼外受循受觀者: 謂有苾芻於他諸受觀察, 思惟外受諸相). The term “mark” or “sign” (相, corresponding to *nimitta* and *mtshan ma*) employed here stands for the features of an object of experience that enable recognition (Anālayo 2003a). The presentation in the *Dharmaskandha* could be taken to convey the idea that externally visible marks or signs can enable an apperception of the feeling tone another person might be experiencing.

Exploring this suggestion, it could be noted that the ability to know another person's affective condition is a central dimension of empathy. The presence of a joyful person naturally tends to be experienced as uplifting, just as the presence of a sad person can have a depressing effect. For this to happen, there is no need for the other person to name their mental condition explicitly, as human beings are able to detect this from a range of external signs, such as posture, tone of voice, etc. According to Gleichgerrcht and Decety (2014, p. 2):

Empathy is a natural socio-emotional competency that has evolved with the mammalian brain to form and maintain social bonds, facilitate the survival of offspring, and facilitate cooperation among group members ... pain evolved protective functions not only by warning the suffering person, but also by impelling expressive behaviors that attract the attention of others.

This ability, constantly improved in the course of one's interactions with other human beings, is of particular relevance to the case of medical practitioners treating patients in pain. As noted by Jackson et al. (2005, 772), “pain can, of course, be experienced by self and perceived in others. Our reaction to someone else's physiological pain can be automatic and even accompanied by avoidance-type motor behaviors.” In fact, neural structures involved in the direct experience of pain are apparently also activated when arousing empathy for the pain of others (e.g., Lamm et al. 2011).

Such overlap in neural activation would imply that it is in principle possible to feel, at least to some extent, the feeling tones experienced by another person. From this viewpoint, then, the suggestion to understand external contemplation of

feeling tones to intend other persons would appear less improbable than it may have seemed at first sight.

When evaluating the idea of directing mindfulness to the feeling tones of others, it could also be noted that the instructions for the previous contemplation of a corpse involve a form of reflection rather than direct experience. The Pāli version of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* introduces each stage of decay with the phrase “as if one were to see” (*seyyathā pi passeyya*), which leaves open the possibility of imagination, or at least visual recollection, rather than actually seeing the corpse. Given this precedent, a contemplation of external feeling tones that does not involve their direct and personal experience need not be seen as problematic. In fact, the belief that mindfulness practice must invariably result in a personal and unmediated type of experience is probably more a reflection of Buddhist modernism (on which see McMahan 2008) than of what the early Buddhist texts convey.

Just as observing a corpse in decay can be sufficient grounds for insight into the mortality of a human body, in the same way observing the body of a living person behave in certain ways can be sufficient grounds for concluding that the person in question is either happy or in pain, or else neither of the two. This much would suffice as an implementation of at least the basic distinction into three feeling tones thematized in the first part of the instructions for the second establishment of mindfulness in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels.

Mental States

Implementing the descriptions of the third establishment of mindfulness requires recognizing the presence or absence of various mental states. Taking the case of anger as an example, the three versions proceed as follows:

One knows a mind with anger to be ‘a mind with anger;’ or one knows a mind without anger to be ‘a mind without anger.’

(MN 10: *sadosaṃ vā cittaṃ: sadosaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti; vītadosaṃ vā cittaṃ: vītadosaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti*).

Having a mind with anger, one knows, as it really is, that one has a mind with anger; having a mind without anger, one knows, as it really is, that one has a mind without anger.

(MĀ 98: 有恚心, 知有恚心如真; 無恚心, 知無恚心如真).

Having a mind with anger, one then knows of oneself that one has a mind with anger; having a mind without anger, one also knows of oneself that one has a mind without anger.

(EĀ 12.1: 有瞋恚心, 便自覺知有瞋恚心; 無瞋恚心, 亦自覺知無瞋恚心).

The listings of mental states in the three versions exhibit some variations; common ground among them is the need to recognize the presence (and respective absence) of lust, anger, delusion, distraction, greatness, concentration, and liberation of the mind (Anālayo 2013). The survey of mental states thereby ranges from defilements to mental conditions resulting from successful meditative practice. Each of these is an alternative, evident in the use of the disjunctive *vā* in the Pāli version. This implies that the third establishment of mindfulness can be undertaken even with just one or a few of these states and does not require always implementing the entire list.

The same listings recur in other contexts, where they refer to the mental states of another. An example is a survey of commendable wishes a monastic might have, which includes the wish to be able to know the mental condition of another (MN 6: *parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca pajāneyyaṃ*, MĀ 105: 他心智, and EĀ 37.5: 知眾生心意; MĀ 105 abbreviates and for this reason does not have the listing of mental states).

The same ability occurs also in accounts of the gradual path of practice, where it stands for a form of telepathic ability gained after mastery of the four absorptions (DN 2: *cetopariyañāna*, Gnoli 1978, p. 248: *cetaḥparyāyājñāna*, DĀ 27, supplemented from DĀ 20: 證他心智, and T 22: 知他人心). In the first three of these versions, which represent Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Dharmaguptaka lines of textual transmission, this ability finds illustration in a simile that describes looking into a mirror or a bowl of water to see the reflection of one's own face. Yet, there is no need for a mirror or a bowl of water to see the face of another person; such a need only arises when one wishes to see one's own face. Thus, the simile illustrates knowing one's own state of mind rather than telepathic knowledge of the mental condition of another. Only one version, preserved as an individual translation, provides an illustration appropriate to the context by describing someone who stands on top of a high building and sees people come and go, exiting and entering the building (T 22: 若高樓人住其上, 見無數人行來, 出入). According to Meisig (1987, p. 21), in other respects this individual translation is quite close to the Mūlasarvāstivāda discourse, making it probable that these two versions reflect closely related transmission lineages. For the present simile in the individual translation to differ from the Mūlasarvāstivāda version, and from the other two textual lineages, makes it fairly probable that it has been adjusted to fit the context better.

The simile of the mirror or bowl of water in turn must have had its home in the context of contemplating one's own mind. This idea, although not explicitly mentioned, seems to stand in the background of the present description of telepathic knowledge of the minds of others. In other words, the listings of mental states in accounts of the gradual path can be understood to have followed the precedent set by descriptions of mindfulness practice.

Based on such mindful internal contemplation as the starting point, perhaps further practice can then lead over to its external counterpart in the form of knowing the mental states of others. In fact, another discourse explicitly relates the ability to know the mental states of another to having first contemplated the third establishment of mindfulness in relation to oneself. The part relevant to the contemplation of the mind reads in this way:

Abiding in contemplation of mental states in regard to mental states internally, one becomes well concentrated, well serene therein. Being well concentrated, well serene therein, one produces knowledge and vision of the mental states of others externally.

(DN 18: *ajjhataṃ citte cittānupassī viharanto tattha sammā samādhīyati sammā vipassīdati. so tattha sammā samāhito sammā vipasanno bahiddhā paracitte ñāṇadassanaṃ abhinibbatteti*).

Having contemplated the mind internally, one arouses knowledge of the minds of others.

(DĀ 4: 內觀意已, 生他意智; another parallel extant as an individual translation, T 9, does not provide any details about the implications of external contemplation).

The two versions agree that such knowledge of the mental states of others builds on having done the same in relation to oneself. They thereby point to a progression from internal to external which is also evident in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels. In other words, the circumstance that the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels first mention internal and then external contemplation appears to reflect successive stages that are to be practiced in progression.

Regarding the question of how to implement such external contemplation of the mind, whereas the formulation in the *Dīgha-nikāya* version gives the impression of involving telepathic abilities, the same is not the case for its *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel. The possibility of adopting different approaches to knowing the mind of another person receives a more detailed treatment in another discourse, which distinguishes four such approaches. One of these is the cultivation of telepathic abilities. Another approach to such knowledge proceeds as follows:

Thinking and pondering on having heard speech conforming to thought, one declares: “Your mind is like this, your mind is thus, this is your state of mind.”

(DN 28: *vitakkaya to vicāraya to vitakkavipphārasaddaṃ sutvā ādisati: evam pi te mano, ittham pi te mano, iti pi te cittaṃ ti*).

Hearing the speech of another, one says to that person: “Your mind is like this, your mind is like this.”

(DĀ 18: 聽他言, 語彼人言: 汝心如是, 汝心如是).

The idea of inferring another's state of mind from what that person said, if that is the correct interpretation of the above two passages, would certainly be a generally accessible avenue for knowing another's state of mind, without any need to cultivate telepathic powers.

Exploring this option, it could be noted that the ability to express emotions in such a way that they are distinctly recognizable appears to be an outcome of evolution and as such has already been studied by Darwin (1872). This ability seems to have served a key adaptive role in several functions related to survival, such as avoiding predators, finding food, and caring for offspring.

Ames and Johar (2009, p. 586) explained that, in a way, "perceivers act as folk psychologists who, in effect, run appraisal theories of emotion" on the activities of others. This takes place in reliance on others' positive or negative emotional display. The emotional cues garnered in this way can in turn lead to inferences about the nature and personality of others (Hareli and Hess 2010).

According to research by Simon-Thomas et al. (2009), audio recordings of mere "vocal bursts," in the sense of brief vocal expressions (such as "aaah" and "yee"), could successfully communicate quite a range of distinct emotional states without needing to rely on explicit words or obvious word substitutes. The basic principle behind verbal expression of emotions appears to be related to the ability of music to convey specific emotional states (Juslin and Laukka 2003).

Bodily posture and facial expression can serve a comparable function, and they usually do so in conjunction (Meeren et al. 2005). Learning to recognize them occurs already at a very early stage in human development. Darwin (1872, p. 365) explained that "the movements of expression in the face and body ... serve as the first means of communication between the mother and her infant; she smiles approval, and thus encourages her child on the right path, or frowns disapproval."

Although frowning is indeed an evident marker of lack of approval, anger as such can easily be detected by way of what is being said. According to a meta-analysis of research on emotion recognition by Elfenbein and Ambady (2002, p. 230), "anger was the most accurately understood emotion in the voice, whereas it was relatively less well understood in the face."

Nevertheless, recognition of emotions based on facial expression can in general be surprisingly accurate, relying not only on a range of minor details in its static appearance, as evident in the case of a photo or drawing (Ekman 2003; Scherer and Grandjean 2008), but also on its dynamic dimension, in the sense of how facial muscles change during the time of observation (Wehrle et al. 2000). A classic example would be noting the too abrupt beginning or ending of a smile as signaling its false nature.

The ability to recognize the emotions of others based on external cues is an important factor in decision-making

(Levine et al. 2018). The effect of such emotion recognition also depends to some degree on the context within which it occurs, such as when a smile will be interpreted differently when the other appears either competitive or else cooperative (de Melo et al. 2014).

Buddhist exegetical tradition identifies a range of different aspects of behavior and speech as helpful to determine someone else's mental condition and traits, such as manners of dressing, eating, and sleeping, bodily posture, and way of doing some work (Mann and Youd 1992). Understood in this way, an external contemplation of mental states like lust, anger, and delusion does seem to be a feasible option.

Awakening Factors

Out of the various exercises listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* for the purpose of the fourth establishment of mindfulness, contemplation of dharmas, only the awakening factors are similarly taken up in the two parallel versions. Here are the relevant instructions for the case of the last awakening factor of equipoise:

If the equipoise awakening factor is present within, one knows: 'the equipoise awakening factor is present within me;' if the equipoise awakening factor is not present within, one knows: 'the equipoise awakening factor is not present within me;' and one knows how the not arisen equipoise awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen equipoise awakening factor is perfected by development.

(MN 10: *santaṃ vā ajjhataṃ upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ: atthi me ajjhataṃ upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo ti pajānāti; asantaṃ vā ajjhataṃ upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ: natthi me ajjhataṃ upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo ti pajānāti; yathā ca anuppannassa upekkhāsambojjhaṅgassa uppādo hoti tañ ca pajānāti; yathā ca uppannassa upekkhāsambojjhaṅgassa bhāvanāpāripūrī hoti tañ ca pajānāti*).

Actually having the equipoise awakening factor within, one knows, as it really is, that one has the equipoise awakening factor; actually not having the equipoise awakening factor within, one knows, as it really is, that one does not have the equipoise awakening factor; one knows, as it really is, how the not arisen equipoise awakening factor arises; and one knows, as it really is, how the arisen equipoise awakening factor is then maintained without loss or deterioration, and is further developed and increased.

(MĀ 98: 內實有捨覺支, 知有捨覺支如真; 內實無捨覺支, 知無捨覺支如真; 若未生捨覺支而生者, 知如真; 若已生捨覺支便住不忘而不衰退轉修增廣者, 知如真)。

One cultivates the equipoise awakening factor supported by insight, supported by dispassion, and supported by cessation, discarding bad states.

(EĀ 12.1: 修護覺意, 依觀, 依無欲, 依滅盡, 捨諸惡法).

The instructions in the three versions differ. Whereas the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel proceed from a recognition of the presence and the absence of an awakening factor to an exploration of the conditionality of its arising and perfection or maintenance, the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse depicts how the awakening factors should be cultivated in order to ripen in awakening. Since such cultivation requires being aware of their presence, the need to know when an awakening factor is present in the mind can be taken as a common requirement of the three versions.

In line with its consistent emphasis on the qualification “external” being a referent to others, the *Vibhaṅga* understands an external application of the present exercise to imply knowing the presence or absence of an awakening factor in the mind of another person (Vibh 201). This understanding would correspond to an explanation offered in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and discussed above, being the fifth of the alternative perspectives provided in this work. The *Dharmaskandha* also proceeds similarly to its earlier presentation: a monastic contemplates the seven awakening factors of another person by giving attention to the marks of external dharmas (T XXVI 479a: 苾芻於他七覺支法觀察, 思惟外法諸相).

The whole list of seven awakening factors does not occur elsewhere among the discourses in a way evidently related to another person. Nevertheless, some passages do point to the possibility that the individual mental qualities that can become awakening factors were considered to be externally recognizable.

In one discourse, the Buddha draws the attention of his audience to the behavior of one particular monastic. His listeners agree that this monastic stood out for his remarkably tranquil bodily behavior (SN 54.7 and SĀ 806). This would be an instance of tranquility visible to others through external behavior. A different discourse sets out with the Buddha declaring that excessive socialization will prevent the gaining of the happiness of concentration (Anālayo 2012). This thereby relates the cultivation of concentration to a type of behavior that can be observed by others.

Another relevant instance features a local king, who expressed his inspiration on seeing the glad and joyful behavior of Buddhist monastics (MN 89: *hatṭhapahatṭhe udaggudagge abhiratarūpe* and MĀ 213: 樂行 and 悅). This must be intending wholesome forms of delight and joy, which according to this passage were observable by someone who can safely be assumed not to have had telepathic powers (Anālayo 2020b). The same would apply to a debater and follower of the Jains. This debater noted with approval that the Buddha, in spite of being challenged again and again, did

not display any irritation; in fact, his skin would even brighten and the color of his face become more clear (MN 36: *chavivaṇṇo c’ eva pariyodāyati mukhavaṇṇo ca vipasīdati* and Liu 2010, p. 243: *parisudhyaty eva mukhavarṇaḥ paryavadātaś chavivarnṇo*). The observation made by this debater would be a recognition of the Buddha’s equipoise.

This is not to pretend that each of these few examples, taken up somewhat at random, involves awakening factors. The point is only that it seems reasonable to propose that the possession of qualities like joy, tranquility, concentration, and equipoise can at times be visible to an onlooker without requiring the previous cultivation of telepathic abilities.

Contemplation of the Body

Up to this point, the survey of mindfulness exercises was based on what is common to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its two parallels, an agreement that probably reflects an early stage in descriptions of the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness. Several other exercises are found only in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel. The relevant topics are three body contemplations and two contemplations of dharmas:

- breathing
- postures
- bodily activities
- hindrances
- sense spheres

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel only present the first four steps out of the entire scheme of sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing, reflecting the beginnings of a development that eventually led to a reduction of this practice to focusing exclusively on the breath (Anālayo 2019a).

According to the Pāli commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, an external application of this practice involves the breath of another person (Ps I 249: *bahiddhā vā ti parassa vā assāsapassāsakāye*). Although this may at first seem a bit far-fetched, it could be argued that it would be possible to know the breathing of another person, for example, when attending to someone who is sick or about to pass away. In such a situation, the continuity or discontinuity of that person’s breathing can become an object of sustained attention in order to know if the person is still alive; in fact, even gauging the length of the breath (corresponding to the first two steps in the instructions) could be of some relevance, as reflecting the present physical (and mental) condition of the individual.

At the same time, however, the discourses do not associate the full instructions for the sixteen steps with the distinction between internal and external practice (Anālayo 2019b). It

seems safe to assume that the idea of an external contemplation of the breath results from a later addition of this exercise to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, whereby it came to be associated with a distinction that would not have been a natural dimension of such meditation practice from the outset. The Pāli commentarial gloss would then simply have applied the precedent set by the authoritative *Vibhaṅga* to a practice that, in the way it was probably conceived originally, was just about one's own breath.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* differs from its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel insofar as it also describes the preliminaries to meditation on the breath, including the specification that the meditator retreats to a forest, the foot of a tree, or an empty place, and sits down cross-legged (MN 10: *araññagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā nisidati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā*). Ditrich (2016, p. 137) apparently took this to be applicable to the whole range of exercises covered in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, reasoning that, given that the instructions are “to sit alone in meditation,” for someone practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation “there would be no other people to observe.” According to her reasoning, an understanding of external contemplation as involving other persons would therefore not be applicable, as a practitioner “would practice in silence and solitude, not observing other people.”

Yet, consulting the ensuing exercises in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* would counter such a conclusion. The next practice concerns knowing different bodily postures, which already implies that the description of the sitting posture for mindfulness of breathing does not apply invariably to subsequent practices. Mindfulness of bodily postures is followed by clear knowing of various bodily activities, one of which is talking. This shows that the practitioner was not expected to maintain silence and solitude throughout. Besides, it also needs to be kept in mind that early Buddhist monastics, to whom these instructions were addressed, were mendicants. They had to be in contact with other people in order to receive their daily food, making it impossible for them to be in such continuous silence and solitude that they would not encounter other people (Anālayo 2017a).

Turning to the two exercises of awareness of bodily postures and clear knowing of bodily activities, just mentioned, these could easily be applied to others. In particular, the latter would yield a meaningful form of practice, as seeing another acting with circumspection and decorum can become a source of inspiration for cultivating the same oneself.

Contemplation of Dharmas

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel agree in including contemplation of the five hindrances and of the six senses among their survey of the fourth establishment of mindfulness, contemplation of dharmas. For the case

of the five hindrances, the two versions proceed in ways comparable to the case of the awakening factors. Contemplation of the six senses in turn requires becoming aware of the potential fettering force of what is experienced through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. In both versions, such practice covers the six senses and their respective objects. The distinction underlying this instruction emerges explicitly in the following formulation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*:

In regard to dharmas one abides contemplating dharmas with regard to the six internal and external sense spheres.

(MN 10: *dharmesu dhammānupassī viharati chasu ajjhattikabāhiresu āyatanesu*).

This overtly brings up the distinction between what is internal and what is external. In itself, there is nothing surprising in this, and the same idea would also underlie the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, even though not being explicitly expressed. It is also entirely natural for mindfulness in relation to the six senses to be brought into the present context, as its potential to support remaining mentally balanced with sensory experiences receives recurrent coverage elsewhere in the discourses. Yet, as an overall result, the instructions for this exercise direct mindfulness to a type of externality that goes beyond other persons. Anything seen, heard, etc., can potentially lead to the arising of a fetter, a potential not confined to other human beings as the objects of one's own senses.

The exercise itself can still be accommodated to the distinction between oneself and others. On following the precedents explored above, an internal implementation would require directing mindfulness to one's own condition of being fettered by sense experience. Its external counterpart could take the form of noting when others are similarly fettered. At the same time, however, as the expression “internal and external sense spheres” in the Pāli version clearly documents, the instruction itself involves something external that can comprise inanimate matter as an integral part of the contemplation itself.

With the elements, such a sense of what is external was found in another discourse, where in the case of the earth element, for example, the external dimension comprises the whole continent and therewith any manifestation of matter. Although this discourse shares a listing of some anatomical parts with the instructions on the establishments of mindfulness, it has otherwise no explicit relationship to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. Moreover, as already mentioned above, mindfulness of the elements occurs in the context of contemplation of the body, where the overarching topic of the human body as the object of mindfulness would not have encouraged an interpretation of the external mode of contemplation to include inanimate matter.

In the present case, however, given that the term *dharma* can cover any “phenomenon” in general, the setting of the present exercise as a contemplation of *dhammas* would allow such a more general notion of what is external, well beyond what is related to other persons. For this reason, it seems fair to assume that, with the integration of contemplation of the sense spheres into detailed expositions of these four establishments, the implications of “external” in this context tended to broaden or become fuzzier. This in turn would naturally have stimulated the devising of alternative explanations of the significance of cultivating the four establishments of mindfulness externally.

Among the various exegetical texts surveyed above, the *Vibhaṅga* has an exposition of the four establishments of mindfulness that reflects a particularly early stage in the development of descriptions of this practice (Bronkhorst 1985). Of particular relevance here is that this work does not cover the six sense spheres. In other words, the stage of development in conceptualizing detailed applications of the four establishments of mindfulness taken into account in the *Vibhaṅga* is based on a vision of this practice that had not yet incorporated the six senses and their objects. Quite probably precisely for this reason, this work consistently adopts the interpretation that external refers to other persons. In a way, there was no need for the *Vibhaṅga* to offer other explanations. The situation changes with texts that do cover contemplation of the six sense-spheres.

Changing Perspectives

The **Śāriputrābhidharma* adopts the same position it took in relation to the contemplation of a corpse, in that contemplating the sense spheres, described in a way similar to the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, is a way of contemplating *dhammas* internally-and-externally (T XXVIII 616b: 是名內外法觀法行). As with the corpse contemplation, the point made by the **Śāriputrābhidharma* appears to be that the actual instructions cover something internal, the sense organ, together with something external, the sense object. Of particular interest, here, is that the **Śāriputrābhidharma* applies the same pattern also to the second and third establishments of mindfulness, in the sense that instructions comparable to those in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* should be considered a way of contemplation feeling tones and mental states “internally-and-externally” (T XXVIII 615a: 是名內外受觀受行 and 615b: 是名內外心觀心行).

This presentation could hardly have been influenced by the corpse contemplation, simply because a dead body no longer has feeling tones or mental states. A corpse can only become an instance of body contemplation, not of contemplating feeling tones or mental states. Instead, the presentation in the **Śāriputrābhidharma* more probably results from the precedent set by the contemplation of the sense spheres. Once the

addition of this contemplation to the scheme of the four establishments of mindfulness has introduced a different sense of externality, comprising all possible objects of the senses, this new perspective could easily be applied to the second and third establishments of mindfulness in turn. The experience of feeling tones and mental states does in some way involve one or the other of the objects of the senses. From that viewpoint, it would make sense to consider the contemplations of feeling tones and mental states to combine what is internal with what is external, as done by the **Śāriputrābhidharma*.

The *Dharmaskandha* identifies contemplation of the sense spheres to be an implementation of “internal” contemplation of *dhammas* (T XXVI 478c: 是循內法觀), whereas contemplating the sense spheres of another is the corresponding external counterpart (T XXVI 479a: 是循外法觀). This is followed by reaffirming the position already taken in relation to other contemplations; in principle, external contemplation of *dhammas* comprises two alternatives. Besides referring to another person, the *Dharmaskandha* also takes the qualification external to apply to the contemplation of *dhammas* within in oneself that are either past or else future, in the sense of having not yet been obtained or else being already lost (T XXVI 479b: 未得, 已失).

In the early discourses, the distinction between internal and external concerns the spatial rather than the temporal dimension of experience, so that this proposal in the *Dharmaskandha* would not naturally arise as a gloss of the intention of the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels. Instead, Sarvāstivāda doctrinal concerns seem to be its likely origin. For expressing such concerns, the contemplation of the sense spheres would have provided a convenient opportunity, by way of introducing some degree of fuzziness around the notion of what is external. Moreover, from the viewpoint of Sarvāstivāda thought, the topic of the senses and their objects could easily lend itself to the theme of the existence of past and future things. Cox (1995, p. 136) reports an argument advanced in support of this doctrine, which takes off from the canonical position that consciousness arises in dependence on one or the other of the six senses and the respective object:

A given instance of perceptual consciousness is said to arise only in dependence upon two conditions: the sense organ and its corresponding object-field. This implies that perceptual consciousness arises only in conjunction with an appropriate and existent object; perceptual consciousness of a nonexistent object or without an object is, therefore, impossible. Since mental perceptual consciousness of past and future factors does indeed occur, in order to preclude the absurdity of perceptual consciousness without an object-field, these past and future factors too must be acknowledged to exist.

Such reasoning would make it quite natural to seize on the opportunity afforded by the contemplation of the sense spheres, by way of appropriating the canonical notion of external contemplation as a way to accommodate and authenticate Sarvāstivāda doctrinal concerns. Once having originated in the context of the contemplation of the sense spheres, the notion of external mindfulness as implying that things of the past and the future still somehow exist would then have been applied to the other establishments of mindfulness as well.

The tendency to affirm this doctrine in relation to past sense objects can already be seen in a discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*, a collection quite probably transmitted by Sarvāstivāda reciters (Anālayo 2017b). The discourse differs from its Pāli parallel by qualifying the sense organs related to past experiences as “really existing” (MĀ 165: 實有眼 ... 實有意; Anālayo 2008). The formulation in this discourse thereby employs an expression also used in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (T 1545), a central work of Sarvāstivāda exegesis, when affirming the doctrinal position that things of the past and the future really exist (T XXVII 393a: 實有過去未來).

The same **Mahāvibhāṣā* also testifies to the influence of the notion of externality as including any object of the senses, probably resulting from the instructions on the sense spheres, which it even applies to the first establishment of mindfulness. Found among a range of different interpretations offered in this work, the relevant passage proposes that other beings and inanimate objects can be combined under the heading of being “external” modalities of body contemplation (T XXVII 940b: 他相續所攝色, 及非有情數色, 名外身). An alternative interpretation simply considers what is animate to pertain to the internal body and inanimate matter to be the external body (T XXVII 940b: 有情數色名內身, 非有情數色名外身).

The same influence can also be seen in the *Śrāvakaḥūmi*, where one of the different explanations of external contemplation of the body, surveyed in this work, considers matter comprised in the sense faculties as internal, which has its external counterpart in what is not comprised by them and not appropriated (Shukla 1973, p. 300: *indriyasamgrhītaṃ rūpam ālambanīkurvan adhyātmaṃ kāye kāyānupaśyī viharati, anindriyasamgrhītaṃ rūpagatam anupādattam ālambanīkurvan bahirdhā kāye kāyānudarsī viharati*). In the same vein, one of the understandings of an external modality of the first establishment of mindfulness in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* proposes that, whereas the five senses are “internal,” their five objects are what is “external” (T XXV 202a: 眼等五情為內身, 色等五塵為外身; see also Lamotte 1970, p. 1172).

In sum, it seems fair to conclude that the proliferation of different understandings of the implication of external mindfulness practice originated from the integration of contemplation of the sense spheres into a detailed exposition of the four establishments of mindfulness. The absence of this contemplation in the *Vibhaṅga*’s scheme of the establishments of mindfulness

explains why this work could adhere consistently to the apparently original position that external just stands for someone else. The influence of this addition to the fourth establishment of mindfulness can explain the **Śāriputrābhidharma*’s otherwise puzzling qualification of the second and third establishments as “internal-and-external.” The same addition of contemplation of the sense spheres also makes it easier to understand why the *Dharmaskandha* would assert that things of the past and future exist in relation to a distinction between what is internal and what is external, a distinction that in its original setting was of a spatial rather than temporal orientation.

With the doors flung open in this way, later texts naturally tended to add ever more explanations. This concurs with a general thrust toward comprehensive coverage that is central in *Abhidharma* and exegesis (Anālayo 2014). The wish to do justice to any possible idea or opinion would have fueled the emergence of ever more possible interpretations of what is external. Notably, all of these works still include what is quite probably the original idea, namely that external stands for other persons. Nevertheless, here as well as elsewhere, the amount of detail that results from attempts at comprehensive coverage of all possible perspectives can result in obscuring the essential point of a particular teaching. This can safely be considered responsible for the prevalent uncertainty among scholars and practitioners regarding the meaning of external mindfulness practice.

Limitations of Some New Interpretations

Turning to an evaluation of the just-mentioned interpretation proposed in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* and found similarly in the *Śrāvakaḥūmi* and the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, whereas in the context of the sense spheres the objects of the senses do indeed represent something external, to apply the same to the contemplation of the body does not work particularly well. As already mentioned in relation to the contemplation of the elements, the topic of the first establishment of mindfulness is quite clearly the human body, and this holds for its external modality just as much as for its internal counterpart. In this setting, an expansion of the notion of what is external beyond human bodies to include anything that could become the object of the senses does not fit the context particularly well. It shows that, however understandable this move may be in view of the precedent set by the contemplation of the sense spheres, it is limited as an understanding of external mindfulness in general and not readily applicable to all of the four establishments.

The same holds for several other interpretations presented in these later works. A full survey of these alternative perspectives would go beyond the confines of what is possible in the present article. Nevertheless, a few selected examples can help illustrate in what way some of the resultant proposals are

limited, in the sense that they do not provide a convincing explanation of the distinction between internal and external that the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels apply to all four establishments of mindfulness.

The type of problem that can emerge in this way can be illustrated with two examples from the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*. The first example concerns feeling tones, in relation to which the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* proposes to map the distinction between internal and external on the difference between bodily and mental feeling tones (T XXV 202a: 身受是外, 心受是內; see also Lamotte 1970, p. 1173). The former is external and the latter internal. This indeed provides a meaningful distinction between types of feeling tone; in fact, the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* includes this distinction in its actual instructions by distinguishing the experience of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feeling tones into bodily and mental types (MĀ 98: 覺樂身, 苦身, 不苦不樂身; 樂心, 苦心, 不苦不樂心). However, each of these feeling tones should be contemplated internally and also externally. This prevents identifying bodily feeling tones with one of these two modes and mental feeling tones with the other.

More importantly, the interpretation proposed in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* would not work for the other three establishments of mindfulness. It would not be possible, for example, to develop a meaningful distinction between bodily and mental manifestations of the anatomical parts in such a way that it could then be employed to cultivate mindfulness in different ways. In order to provide a convincing explanation of the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels, a solution needs to be found that is applicable to all of the four establishments, that is, to those exercises common to the three discourse parallels.

The second example from the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* suggests that the collected mind that enters absorption is internal, whereas a distracted mind is external (T XXV 202b: 攝心入禪是內心, 散亂心是外心; Lamotte 1970, p. 1175). It is in a way quite natural to associate concentration with being settled within and distraction with what is external. Moreover, mindfulness is a quality present during absorption (Anālayo 2019c), and the recognition of a distracted or a concentrated state of mind features in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels under contemplation of the mind. Nevertheless, in this case, too, a distracted and a concentrated mental state should each be contemplated internally and again externally. As above, this prevents identifying one type of mental state exclusively with what is internal and its opposite solely with what is external.

Although the Pāli commentarial tradition seems to have followed the lead provided by the *Vibhaṅga* for understanding external mindfulness, contemporary Theravāda teachers have also developed alternative perspectives on the significance of external mindfulness (Anālayo 2003b). One approach distinguishes between bodily sensations felt inside of the body and those on the body's surface, at the skin level, the latter then

being viewed as “external” (Goenka 1999, p. 54). Although certainly meaningful from the viewpoint of a meditation practice that involves scanning the body to experience various sensations (Anālayo 2020a), such a distinction would not work for all four establishments of mindfulness. Contemplation of a corpse, for example, would not allow a practical implementation that distinguishes between doing this practice inside the body or only at the skin level; in fact, neither option seems to be relevant to this exercise.

Another suggestion is to take the distinction between internal and external to represent what is “ordinary” or “conventional” in contrast to the perspective of ultimate truth (Dhammadharo in Kornfield 1977/1993: 263). The distinction between two types of language or truth that underlies this proposal only emerges in a later period in the history of Buddhism and can for this reason not be relied on to understand the meaning of distinguishing internal and external forms of mindfulness in early Buddhist texts. Moreover, this proposal would imply that internal contemplation is confined to an ordinary and conventional perspective and solely with external contemplation does the perspective of ultimate truth (from the viewpoint of this doctrine of course much more correct) come into its own. Take the case of contemplation of anatomical parts. This is certainly meant to counter ordinary perceptions of the body from the outset, showing that the need to shift toward a more accurate vision of things is not confined to external contemplation.

Internal-and-External

Whereas the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* only mentions the categories “internal” and “external,” the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel add to this the notion of “internal-and-external” as a third option (Anālayo 2013). The same third option occurs regularly in other discourses treating the establishments of mindfulness (Anālayo 2020b).

The *Dharmaskandha* explains that, in the case of each of the four establishments of mindfulness, an internal-and-external cultivation combines the earlier-mentioned modality of internal contemplation with its external counterpart (T XXVI 476b: 合說二種, 名內外身, 477b: 合說二種, 名內外受, 478b: 合此二種, 名內外心, and 479b: 合此二種, 名內外法).

According to the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, contemplating internally-and-externally concerns the general characteristics of the object of contemplation. Thus, in the case of the body, for example, whereas internal practice was about the characteristics of one's own body and external about those of another's body, proceeding to internal-and-external concerns what they have in common (T XXVII 940b: 於內身住循身觀者, 住內身自相觀; 於外身住循身觀者, 住外身自相觀; 於內外身住循身觀者, 住內外身共相觀).

The **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* explains a particular instance of contemplating internally-and-externally by noting that internal contemplation, just as external contemplation, concerns separate characteristics, whereas to contemplate them in conjunction and at the same time concerns their general characteristics (T XXV 202a: 觀內, 觀外, 是為別相; 一時俱觀, 是為總相; Lamotte 1970, p. 1173).

The *Śrāvakabhūmi*, in the context of one of its interpretations, points out that taking as one's object what is similar between the earlier-mentioned internal and external body contemplations becomes an internal-and-external contemplation (Shukla 1973, p. 302: *samadharmatām ālambanīkuvann adhyātmabahirdhā kāye kāyānudarśī viharati*).

The *Vibhaṅga* describes internal-and-external contemplation without any reference to oneself or others. In the case of mindfulness as an awakening factor, for example, internal contemplation takes the form “if the mindfulness awakening factor is present within” (Vibh 199: *santaṃ vā ajjhataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ*), which has its external counterpart in “if the mindfulness awakening factor is present in someone” (Vibh 200: *santaṃ vā' ssa satisambojjhaṅgaṃ*). Internal-and-external contemplation then simply involves knowing “if the mindfulness awakening factor is present” (Vibh 201: *santaṃ vā satisambojjhaṅgaṃ*).

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, another important canonical Abhidharma work of the Theravāda tradition, explains that external states in general (and thus not specific to mindfulness practice) are those found in another sentient being or another person (Dhs 187: *parasattānaṃ parapuggallānaṃ ajjhataṃ ... ime dhammā bahiddhā*), whereas internal-and-external stands for those that are found both in oneself and others (Dhs 188: *tad ubhayaṃ, ime dhammā ajjhatabhiddhā*).

It is noteworthy that, within the same textual collection of the Theravāda canonical Abhidharma, formulations can be found that at first sight could seem to differ. Before exploring this further, it needs to be noted that, whereas the other explanations of internal-and-external surveyed so far were directly related to the establishments of mindfulness, the same does not hold for the above quote from the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. This to some extent diminishes its value for the present context, making it uncertain how far it is directly relevant to understanding internal-and-external mindfulness practice. Given the different senses that the term “external” can carry in the discourses in general, it would be important to ascertain if a particular comment or explanation is indeed meant to apply to the specific case of cultivating the establishments of mindfulness.

The relevance of this general comment in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* to the present context would be quite straightforward on following the assertion by Ditrach (2016, p. 109) that “the compound *ajjhatabhiddhā* is attested only together with *ajjhataṃ* and *bhiddhā*, forming a group of three” and that this “triad appears in the Nikāyas consistently

only in the context of meditation instructions, as three different modes or ways of contemplation in the practice of the *satipaṭṭhanas* (sic)” (p. 110). It would follow that a gloss in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* on internal-and-external, *ajjhatabhiddhā*, would be directly relevant to the establishments of mindfulness.

A problem with drawing this conclusion, however, is that this same triad of terms occurs also for contemplation of emptiness, which should be done internally, externally, and both (MN 122: *ajjhataṃ suññataṃ manasikaroti ... bahiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti ... ajjhatabhiddhā suññataṃ manasikaroti*). This does not appear to be a form of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

Moreover, *ajjhatabhiddhā* can occur on its own, as evident in a Pāli discourse that does not employ the other two terms (SN 54.6: *atītesu me ... kāmesu kāmacchando pahīno, anāgatesu me kāmesu kāmacchando vigato, ajjhatabhiddhā ca me dhammesu paṭighasaññā suppaṭivinitā*; following Asian editions over the faulty PTS edition). The passage describes having abandoned sensual desire for sense pleasures of the past and the future, and having well-dispelled perceptions of resistance toward phenomena “internally and externally.” Hence, the assessment in Ditrach (2016) does not appear to be correct. It follows that it would not be possible to consider the gloss in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* to be solely concerned with the establishments of mindfulness.

Nevertheless, the presentation in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* corresponds to explanations offered in the *Dharmaskandha*, thereby exemplifying what already emerged from the other texts surveyed above. Rather than being conflicting accounts, these could be seen as complementary perspectives. On granting that much, the overall idea would then be that, whereas internal practice focused first on a certain phenomenon within oneself and its external counterpart found in another person, at this juncture contemplation comprises “both” in the sense of seeing the “general characteristics” or what is “similar” between them, which naturally comes with an increasing emphasis on the particular phenomenon as such. In other words, all of these perspectives taken together can be understood to point to a level of practice where the distinction between oneself and others gradually loses importance and the practitioner is just aware of the body, feeling tones, mental states, and dharmas as such, no matter whether their manifestation occurs in oneself or in others.

The Three Establishments of Mindfulness

Whatever may be the final word on the intended meaning of contemplating “internally-and-externally,” it seems fair to conclude that the original sense of “external” mindfulness was concerned with other persons. This conclusion finds further confirmation in a scheme of three establishments of

mindfulness cultivated by the Buddha himself (MN 137, MĀ 163, and Up 7015; Anālayo 2013 and 2020b). These describe his mindful attitude in response to three different situations that could occur when giving a teaching. The first establishment of mindfulness concerns a situation when the disciples listen and are attentive, the second when they do not listen and are not attentive. The third establishment then involves a combination of the two, in that some disciples are attentive and others are not.

The circumstance that the differing reactions of the disciples were considered sufficient reason for distinguishing between three establishments of mindfulness, distinct from the four establishments of mindfulness that involve a discerning between contemplation of the body, feeling tones, mental states, or dharmas, shows the centrality of the idea of being mindful of the mental condition of another person.

When evaluated from the perspective of the standard four establishments of mindfulness, the Buddha's knowing of the mental condition of his auditors could be allocated to the third establishment, contemplation of mental states. In the case of the Buddha, such knowing can safely be assumed to be of the telepathic type.

The description of the Buddha's three establishments of mindfulness can be taken to reflect a pattern already discussed in relation to the contemplation of the mind in general. Although telepathic abilities would be the most powerful option for knowing the degree of attentiveness of an audience, this is not the only possibility. Any school or university teacher will know, at least to some extent, if her students are attentive or distracted. The same holds for anyone giving a public talk. Although such knowing is not as direct and certain as telepathy, it does provide an avenue for knowing if, to stay with the above example, the whole audience is listening, only some of them are listening, or nobody is paying any attention. Such knowledge does result in knowing the state of mind of others, at least to some degree. In this way, the three establishments of mindfulness, attributed to the Buddha, support the suggestion that mindfulness practice can be concerned with the mental condition of another.

From the viewpoint of contemporary research on mindfulness, the external potential of mindfulness that emerges in this way could become a fruitful arena for further exploration, in particular in relation to the impact of meditative training on emotion recognition (Blanco et al. 2019 and Pavlov et al. 2015), which in turn can serve as a foundation for prosocial behaviors. The basic pattern underlying this relationship would be similar to the one proposed by Sevinc and Lazar (2019) for mindfulness and ethics, in that the cultivation of mindfulness may enhance awareness of morally relevant cues and thereby foster the adoption of moral behaviors. In the same way, the cultivation of external mindfulness may enhance awareness of emotionally relevant cues and thereby foster the adoption of prosocial behaviors.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies performed by the author with human participants or animals.

Abbreviations AN, *Aṅguttara-nikāya*; DĀ, *Dīrgha-āgama* (T 1); Dhs, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*; DN, *Dīrgha-nikāya*; EĀ, *Ekottarika-āgama* (T 125); MĀ, *Madhyama-āgama* (T 26); MN, *Majjhima-nikāya*; Ps, *Papañcasūdanī*; PTS, Pali Text Society; SĀ, *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99); SĀ³, *Samyukta-āgama* (T 101); SN, *Samyutta-nikāya*; T, *Taishō* edition; Vibh, *Vibhaṅga*; Vibh-a, *Sammohavinodanī*; Up, *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*

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