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"PERCEPTION IS AT THE ROOT OF CONFLICT"

Agatha Glowacki

Doctoral Student, School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-Car)

George Mason University, Washington, DC

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Human behavior, including the most irrational and bizarre actions, is always the result of a process of consciousness. Some have called this process indefinable and likened it to a 'black box.' Others, albeit the minority, have attempted to examine and elucidate this process, starting with themselves but then universalizing it to other human beings. In this essay I explore the similarities and differences between two theories of consciousness and what they can tell us about conflict and human behavior.

The topic of consciousness and conflict is a new one that is only beginning to be explored in the field of conflict studies. Cutting edge work is being done using the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan, a philosopher-theologian who developed a methodology of interiority, which has led to the creation of Insight theory. Another philosopher who has studied the data of consciousness is the historical Buddha. Although Buddhism is not exactly known for its social activism, and is rarely integrated into conflict studies, I hope to show in this essay that the two approaches have a lot in common. I also hope to show how applying certain techniques and practices used by an emerging style of socially engaged Buddhism could potentially enhance the conflict resolution practices of Insight theory.

I begin this essay by describing the theoretical similarities between both approaches in understanding the root causes of conflict, and then follow with how this understanding can be applied to conflict resolution. I then explore how Buddhist ideas are being applied to a

mediation-like situation in a specific case study, and what lessons there are to be learned for Insight Mediation practice. For the purposes of this essay, I primarily rely upon the work done by Cheryl Picard and Kenneth Melchin, who have applied the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan to conflict and created Insight theory and Insight mediation. To elucidate the teachings of the Buddha, I rely on the work and translations of Thānissaro Bhikkhu, an American Buddhist monk of the Dhammayut Order in the Thai forest tradition. He is considered one of the foremost experts in the Pāli language and of the Pāli Canon, which is the earliest record of the Buddha's teachings.¹

Understanding Conflict

Both the Buddhist and Insight approach to conflict are based on theories of cognition, making these approaches very different from the more standard approaches to conflict that focus on interpersonal relations, social psychology, structural theories, or group dynamics. In fact, the majority of scholars have shied away from studying the question of consciousness since the assumption has often been that cognition occurs in a 'black box' that cannot be understood. However, both the philosophers Bernard Lonergan and Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, have posited that consciousness is actually an important object of study in its own right. Both have claimed that consciousness can actually be understood empirically. Buddhism, in fact, is regarded by many as being one of the first empirical systems of knowledge, an internal science and internal technology of systematic meditation.² Likewise, Lonergan's philosophy is described

¹ Many of the sources I use in this essay come from *Access to Insight*, an online portal of the translations and interpretations of respected scholars, teachers, and practitioners in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. It includes the most comprehensive offering of English translations of the original Pali canon available, to include more than one thousand suttas and several hundred articles and books. The Theravada tradition, or "Doctrine of the Elders," is the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali canon, which scholars generally agree contains the earliest surviving record of the Buddha's teachings.

² Shinzen Young, "YouTube - Divide and Conquer: How the Essence of Mindfulness Parallels the Nuts and Bolts of Science," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XCWP4pODbs>.

as a discovery process where we come to understand our cognitive performativity in day-today actions.³⁴

Before exploring how these two philosophies view conflict, however, I will first set the scene by explaining how each view the nature of reality, and thereby human existence. A key concept of Insight theory is the understanding of the importance of the social context on human behavior, and that our identities are generated and reinforced through interactions and the environment.⁵ This social nature of the human person highlights how traditions, communities, and relationships, all of which are interrelated and connected, shape us. This drives an understanding of conflict as inherently relational, according to the Insight approach.⁶

Buddhism also recognizes this relational quality of human existence, according to the doctrine of dependent co-arising (*paticcasamuppāda*). This doctrine is meant to explain the causal factors of existence and how all things are interrelated. Thānissaro Bhikkhu says the topic of dependent co-arising is an extremely complex topic—so complex that the Buddha compared its effects to tangles and knots.⁷ Suffice it to say, fully explaining this concept is beyond the scope of this essay, however the basic premise is that nothing has an independent or permanent existence.⁸ Instead, everything is part of a limitless web of interconnections and undergoes a continual process of transformation and relatedness. In this way, both Insight and Buddhist philosophy agree on the fundamental social nature of conflicts.

³ Cheryl A. Picard, "Learning about learning: The value of "insight"," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (22, 2003): 477-484.

⁴ See Appendix for a summary of Lonergan's four levels of cognition.

⁵ Cheryl A Picard and Kenneth R Melchin, "Insight Mediation: A Learning-Centered Mediation Model," *Negotiation Journal* 23, no. 1 (January 2007): 35.

⁶ Kenneth R Melchin and Cheryl A. Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 1st ed. (University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2008), 82.

⁷ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *The Shape of Suffering: A Study of Dependent Co-Arising* (Access to Insight, 2011), 10, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/>.

⁸ See the Appendix for a more in-depth definition of the doctrine of dependent co-arising.

Moving beyond agreement regarding the social context, both approaches understand the basic functioning of the human mind as related to conflict in a similar fashion. For both Lonergan and the Buddha, human minds function as meaning-making machines. According to Insight theory, we respond to the complex data of our lives by developing reference frames that act as habitual ways of experiencing the world. These narratives, or cognitive maps, are ordered sets of ideas and expectations based on past experience and accumulated experience of others through history, science, religion, etc. As they develop and are used, they become habitual and hidden, even to us. According to Lonergan, these frames often accumulate distortions, prejudices, and stereotypes that influence how we interpret others and the world.⁹ And often the source of many conflicts can be found within these distortions.

According to Insight theory, a key distortion that leads to conflict is the perception of threat. Although there are situations of real danger, often conflict results when there is a false interpretation of a threat. This experience of threat is referred to as a threat-to-cares, and it results in a defend-attack pattern of interaction that then escalates. The term “cares” refers to the needs, interests, goals, beliefs, and values of a person. Cares exists at three levels: 1) personal desires and needs, 2) expected patterns of interaction, and 3) standards to judge the right or wrongness of decisions. Individuals often have complex meanings linked to these cares and are often unaware of, or have given little thought to them. However, feelings—especially feelings of fear and hostility—can serve as signals of these meanings since they are directly associated with the associated cares and values. Conflict, thus, results when one person’s cares are perceived and felt as threatening to another person’s cares.¹⁰

⁹ “Bernard Lonergan's Philosophy of Religion,” <http://www.sunypress.edu/p-3630-bernard-lonergans-philosophy-of.aspx>.

¹⁰ Picard, “Learning about learning.”

Similarly, Buddhist philosophy also traces conflict back to both faulty interpretations and feelings of threat. There is no particular theory of conflict according to Buddhism, but there are certain discourses in the Pali canon in which the Buddha does explain conflict and its causes. I will focus on two, both from the *Digha Nikaya* (DN), or the Long Discourses, translated by Thānissaro Bhikkhu.¹¹ The first, DN 15, the *Maha-nidana Sutta*: The Great Causes Discourse, gives an extended treatment of the teachings of dependent co-arising within which the Buddha describes the causal factors leading to conflict.¹² In this sutta, the Buddha says,

"And this is the way to understand how it is that **because of defensiveness** various evil, unskillful phenomena come into play: the taking up of sticks and knives; conflicts, quarrels, and disputes; accusations, divisive speech, and lies."

In other words, conflict (evil, unskillful phenomenon) results from defensiveness, which can be traced back through a casual linkage to feeling. The links, described fully in the sutta, are:

feeling→craving→seeking→acquisition→ascertainment→desire and passion→attachment→stinginess→**defensiveness**→**evil, unskillful phenomena** (taking up of sticks and knives; conflicts, quarrels, and disputes; accusations, divisive speech, and lies)¹³

The second sutta related to conflict is DN 21, the *Sakka-pañha Sutta*: Sakka's Questions.¹⁴ According to this discourse, conflict (defined as hostility, violence, rivalry, ill will) ultimately results because of perceptions and categories of objectification. The sequence in this causal link is:

perceptions & categories of objectification→thinking→desire→dear-&-not-dear→envy & stinginess→**conflict**

¹¹ These two suttas were highlighted for me by another monk, Piyadhammo Bhikkhu, who also comes from the Thai forest tradition and is regarded as an expert in the Pali canon.

¹² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Maha-nidana Sutta: The Great Causes Discourse" (Access to Insight, 1997), <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Sakka-pañha Sutta: Sakka's Questions" (Access to Insight, 1999), <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.21.2x.than.html>.

This sutta is referring to the process of objectification (*papañca*), a word that does not have a precise English equivalent but is frequently used by the Buddha in analyses of the psychology of conflict. It has been translated loosely as reification, falsification, distortion, elaboration, or exaggeration, all of which refer to the unskillful habits of mind that lead to conflict. These habits of mind can also be traced back to feeling, the links being:

What one **feels**, one perceives (labels in the mind)→What one perceives, one thinks about→What one thinks about, one "**papañcizes**"

Therefore, according to both these suttas, conflict in the Buddhist understanding is a result of defensiveness and faulty perceptions influenced by feelings. Feelings lead directly to desires, which come into conflict with the desires of others who are also engaging in *papañca*, which then leads to conflict. In this way, the Buddhist view of conflict corresponds very closely to the Insight theory of conflict as a threat-to-cares.

Conflict Resolution

Since both Lonergan and the Buddha attribute conflict to faulty interpretations of reality, both also conceive of ‘conflict resolution’ as a learning process. According to Insight theory, conflict resolution is a process of helping parties move from certainty (un-learning) to uncertainty (re-learning); helping them move from knowers (closed-minded and sure) to thinkers (wondering what it is all about). Likewise for Buddhists, the root of suffering, and hence conflict, is ignorance or delusion (*avijja*) and its solution is a gradual cultivation of wisdom or insight (*pañña*). Learning is made possible in both approaches by a shared assumption in the inherent flexible nature of conditions.

The Insight approach has applied this understanding of conflict-as-learning to the practice of mediation, and created what is called Insight Mediation. Of the five steps in the Insight Mediation model, step three—Deepening—is considered to be the most important and where the

majority of learning takes place.¹⁵¹⁶ In this step, the mediator helps parties make sense of their feelings and behaviors by understanding the underlying threat-to-cares. The insights gained in this step are meant to de-link the threat experience, resulting in shifts of attitude that pave the way for positive change and conflict resolution.¹⁷

The Buddhist approach, however, has focused primarily in the sphere of intra-psyche, rather than interpersonal, change. The Buddha makes very clear that the resolution of disputes has to start with individual transformation. This internal work is accomplished first and foremost by meditation (versus mediation), which is understood as a process of turning inward to learn about the workings of the mind and how thoughts and emotions shape perception. Various meditative practices are believed to calm the minds, open the heart, and develop wisdom or insight into the true nature of reality.

One such meditative practice is ‘right mindfulness,’ which involves bringing one's awareness to focus on one's experience in the present moment without judgment. By paying close attention to the present experience, practitioners begin to see that the mind is continually full of commentary (engaging in *papañca*), and thus become free to stop scripts that are destructive. Practitioners are also able to become aware of emotions and direct them consciously.¹⁸

The Buddha never advocated trying to make others work on themselves, which he taught was impossible, but did advocate encouraging other people to see their own contribution to disputes. One way of doing that is to help people to realize their own negative emotions and false

¹⁵ The steps in the Insight Mediation Process are (1) Attend to Process, (2) Broaden Understanding, (3) Deepen Insights, (4) Explore Possibilities, (5) Make Decisions.

¹⁶ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 80.

¹⁷ Picard, “Learning about learning.”

¹⁸ Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, *Joyful Wisdom: Embracing Change and Finding Freedom* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 82.

interpretations and how they are responsible for the resulting conflict. This has never been fully developed into a mediation practice, however.

Practical Applications

Although Buddhism has historically focused primarily on inner transformation of the self, there is an emerging strand of Buddhist practice that is interested in applying Buddhist teachings to social action, in the form of what is called Engaged Buddhism. This term was coined by Vietnamese Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, and originated out of the work he and his spiritual community undertook during the Vietnam War to respond to the suffering around them.¹⁹ In an interview about the origin of Engaged Buddhism, he explains,

“When I was a novice in Vietnam, we young monks witnessed the suffering caused by the war. So we were very eager to practice Buddhism in such a way that we could bring it into society. That was not easy because the tradition does not directly offer Engaged Buddhism. So we had to do it by ourselves. That was the birth of Engaged Buddhism.”²⁰

Thich Nhat Hanh has outlined fourteen precepts of Engaged Buddhism that explain his philosophy.²¹ In the next section, I will explore how he and his spiritual community have operationalized these concepts into a mediation-like function.

Case Study: Plum Village

Perhaps the most challenging work for a mediator is working to bring so-called enemies together. It is a struggle to facilitate transformative encounters in a way that will promote positive change between parties with long histories of entrenched animosities. Such change cannot be forced and is difficult to elicit from a third party. However, the wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh might have some guidance to offer in this area. Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that making

¹⁹ John Malkin, “In Engaged Buddhism, Peace Begins with You,” *Shambhala Sun*, <http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1579>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See the Appendix for the Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism.

peace between groups in conflict always comes back to the transformation of the individual first and foremost.²² His strategy has been to bring ‘enemies’ together in non-threatening environments and first focus on teaching them to find peace within through mindfulness practices, before any interaction with the ‘other’ is even attempted. He says:

“Too often in the past, peace conferences have been environments where people came and fought each other, not with weapons but with their fear. When we are carried away by our fear and prejudices, we cannot listen to others. We cannot just bring two sides together around a table to discuss peace when they are still filled with anger, hatred and hurt. If you cannot recognize your fear and anger, if you do not know how to calm yourself, how can you sit at a peace table with your enemy? Facing your enemy across a table, you will only continue to fight. Unable to understand yourself, you will only continue to fight. Unable to understand yourself, you will be unable to understand the other person.”²³

Thich Nhat Hanh has incorporated his ideas into a program that brings delegations of Palestinians and Israelis together at his Plum Village monastery in France.²⁴ According to him, bringing conflicting parties together often fails because they get into painful issues before establishing what he calls ‘stability.’ So, during the first few days of the first such retreat in 2001, Israeli and Palestinian participants did not discuss the conflict but instead focused on learning how to sit, walk, eat, speak and listen mindfully. The aim was to be stable enough to engage with the energy of conflict. The participants also engaged in a practice Thich Naht Hanh calls ‘Watering the Flowers,’ which is based on a Buddhist monastic practice meant to maintain community and work through conflict. The group sat together and individuals were asked to ‘water each other’s flowers’ by sharing something beautiful about the other, a practice meant to create a stable foundation of goodness in the relationships.

²² Azriel Cohen, “Towards a Holistic Model of Conflict Resolution,” in *Beyond You and Me: Inspiration and Wisdom for Building Community* (AZRIEL COHEN - PRESS, 2007), <http://www.azrielcohen.com/index.php?page=PRESS>.

²³ Thich Nhat Hanh, “Listening Deeply for Peace,” *Shambhala Sun*, <http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1546>

²⁴ Cohen, “Towards a Holistic Model of Conflict Resolution.”

Upon this foundation of stability, the practices of loving speech and mindful listening were taught. At the end of the week, the Israelis and Palestinians met for "deep-listening" sessions. Loving speech meant to speak without blame or condemnation, and mindful listening meant to listen deeply, following the breath, and to be aware of reactions without responding verbally. The idea was for each side to open its heart to the other side and see each other's suffering.²⁵ "Through mindful listening both Israelis and Palestinians discovered that for the first time they not only heard but also felt one another," explained one of the participants. Thich Naht Hanh says:

"Peace conferences must create environments that can help people calm down and see that they are suffering and that the other side is suffering also. Many leaders have tried to sponsor talks and discussion, but theirs was not the way of practice. They did not practice to transform anger and fear into deep listening and loving speech. When leaders do practice, there will be a chance for true reconciliation. After the practices of deep listening and kind and loving speech have dissolved bitterness, fear and prejudice, people can begin to communicate with each other. Then reaching peace will be much easier. Peace will become a reality."²⁶

Also very important in this process was the mindfulness and compassion exuded by the monks and nuns who led the dialogues. "We saw how knowledge of group dynamics and conflict resolution theory needs is not enough. The facilitators of our group were the top monks and nuns in Plum Village, people who had many years of practice transforming their own suffering and conflict," explained a participant. What this suggests is that the personal *qualities* of mediators are just as important, if not more, than their techniques.

Lessons Learned

Although still in its nascent stages, certain practices within Engaged Buddhism—such as those used in Plum village—can be useful in applying to Insight mediation. First and foremost,

²⁵ Ruth Mason, "Does Buddhist Hold Mideast Peace Key?" *JewishJournal*, December 4, 2003. http://www.jewishjournal.com/travel/article/does_buddhist_hold_mideast_peace_key_20031205/

²⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, "Listening Deeply for Peace," *Shambhala Sun*, <http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1546>

these include practices that focus on cultivating certain internal qualities of the mediator. Many of the skills key that a good Insight Mediator should have—such as noticing habitual patterns, noticing curiosity, noticing strong emotions, noticing defend stories, noticing surprises—are hard, if not impossible, to teach through intellectual learning. However, they could be strengthened through Buddhist practices. Meditation practices have been scientifically proven to nurture such qualities like focus, calmness, compassion and empathy that are key to an effective mediator. The deep sense of tranquility that also results from meditative practices would also likely serve as a calming presence in settings of ‘enemies’ where tense emotions abound. Furthermore, meditation could help mediators be fully present in difficult situations and to respond more thoughtfully and less reactively to challenging situations.

Secondly, mediators could apply certain Buddhist practices to the parties involved in the mediation. A key part of Insight mediation is changing the “fight or flight” response of parties towards one of “being in dialogue,” which could be aided by mindfulness techniques that shift consciousness and promote relaxation. Mediators could also help parties get in touch with their feelings of fear and hostility through mindfulness of body and feelings, and use practices to help reduce such negative feelings.

Conclusion

The understanding of consciousness and conflict according to Lonergan and the Buddha are very similar. In the case of Lonergan, his ideas have been applied to the field of conflict studies to create a novel way of mediating conflicts. In Buddhism, however, the focus has historically been with intrapsychic transformation, although the emerging movement of socially Engaged Buddhism is attempting to apply Buddhist insights to a more social scale. I would argue that there is much benefit to be gained from incorporating and combining the ‘insights’ of both

Insight mediation and Buddhism meditation – and further developing the conflict resolution practices that are so needed for our increasingly complex, conflict ridden world.

APPENDIX A

The Twelve Nidānas²⁷

The doctrine of dependent co-arising is often presented by a twelve-factor formula called the Twelve Nidānas. These factors of existence are linked to one another, forming a continuous, interconnected, mutually dependent chain.

- (1) ignorance
- (2) conditioning, as mental formations
- (3) consciousness, arising from conditioning
- (4) name and form, all of one's mental and physical constituents
- (5) the six senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and mental faculty
- (6) contact, the meeting of the senses with their objects
- (7) feeling, the positive or negative sensations aroused by contact
- (8) craving, the desire to possess or avoid these sensations
- (9) grasping, the physical, verbal or mental action that follows
- (10) existence or becoming
- (11) birth
- (12) decay and death

²⁷ Bhikkhu, *The Shape of Suffering: A Study of Dependent Co-Arising*.

APPENDIX B

Lonergan's Four Levels of Cognition²⁸

Below is a chart that explains Lonergan's theory of cognition. Next to each level of operation is a column that highlights what internal questions are posed at each level. The third column highlights certain factors important at that level of consciousness. The last column defines a progression from highest performance of that level to the least authentic.

Levels of operation	Questions being asked	Factors to consider	Performances
1. Experiencing	Senses reacting to incoming data	Role of past insights reshaping experience of sensory data; creating reference frames and habits	Attentive→Inattentive (listening, watching, noticing, attending)
2. Understanding	<i>What is it?</i> Leads to insights through questioning data of experience	Role of wonder & curiosity	Intelligent/Insightful→ Obtuse (lines of questioning)
3. Judging/verifying	<i>Is it so?</i> Tests understanding by reflecting on insights through more questioning	Role of doubt; whether relevant data is data of sense or consciousness or both influence of authority figure	Reasonable/Critical→ Uncritical
4. Deciding			
Valuing	<i>What is its significance/value</i> (for me and what I care about)?	Whether the feeling is (a) simply about attraction aversion, or (b) something of genuine value, and if so on what level: vital, social, cultural, personal, spiritual.	Self-appropriation of feeling
Deliberating	<i>What can I do?</i>	Formulation of options based on values	Open/Creative →Habitual

²⁸ I developed this chart of Lonergan's theory during CONF 813: Methodology of the Humanities, along with the aid of Professor Jamie Price.

Evaluating	<i>What should I do?</i>	Openness to full range of alternatives	Responsible → Irresponsible
Action	<i>Will I do it?</i> Tests if we are willing to act on our values	Role of anxiety & integrity; individual, group, general bias	Decisive → Indecisive

APPENDIX C

The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism²⁹

1. Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.
2. Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.
3. Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrow-mindedness.
4. Do not avoid suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering, including personal contact, visits, images and sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.
5. Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.
6. Do not maintain anger or hatred. Learn to penetrate and transform them when they are still seeds in your consciousness. As soon as they arise, turn your attention to your breath in order to see and understand the nature of your hatred.
7. Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. Be in touch with what is wondrous, refreshing, and healing both inside and around you. Plant seeds of joy, peace, and understanding in yourself in order to facilitate the work of transformation in the depths of your consciousness.
8. Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.
9. Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things of which you are not sure. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.
10. Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.
11. Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Select a vocation that helps realise your ideal of compassion.

²⁹ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*, 3rd ed. (Parallax Press, 1987).

12. Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and prevent war.

13. Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others, but prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

14. Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of the Way. (For brothers and sisters who are not monks and nuns:) Sexual expression should not take place without love and commitment. In sexual relations, be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.