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Mindfulness, Buddhism, and Rogerian Argument

Cover Page Footnote

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Mindfulness, Buddhism, and Rogerian Argument

Alexandria Peary

In many American universities, there is a course called Communication Skills. I am not certain what they teach, but I hope it includes the art of deep listening and loving speech. These should be practiced every day if you want to develop true communication skills.

—Thich Nhat Hanh,
Teachings on Love

On a given day in the semester in a rhetoric class, a bright yellow blob of a wind-up baby Easter chick passes from student to student. The class is extremely calm, and it would be hard to tell that the students are engaged in an argument on US military strikes on Iraq. A student “requests the chicken,” and, once the chicken is passed to him, he holds it in his palm and breathes deeply for fifteen seconds. Only after he has paid attention to his breathing does this student begin to speak, and, when he speaks, no one interrupts him or raises his or her hand. The student finishes, a few seconds of quiet pass, and then another student politely “requests the chicken.” The pattern continues; significantly, the argument as a whole is one of the group’s finest, replete with logical connections and usage of a range of rhetorical strategies.

The above-described class activity is both practice for an upcoming assignment in Rogerian argument and an embodiment of Carl Rogers’ principles of communication. Difficulties arising in undergraduate instruction of Rogerian argument largely result from the challenges of teaching empathy and conscious listening inherent to both Rogers’ therapy and the argument. To foster these Rogerian components, instructors can help students practice the Buddhist activities of deep listening and mindful speech. Throughout the argument structured with the wind-up chicken, the students are utilizing a version of Buddhist deep listening and mindful speech in order to become aware of their constantly evaluative, discursive inner dialogue about others’ ideas. While employing these mindfulness strategies, students simultaneously develop their rhetorical imagination: the ability to posit the outlook of their opposition—to enter imaginatively the being of another—a skill crucial to the rhetorical strategies of Rogerian argument. Lacking rhetorical imagination, students will be less able to access objective language in order to present the views of the opposition, identify the ethos of the opposition, or locate at least one point about which the opposition is correct/has “changed” the rhetor’s mind. Students must be able to visualize imaginatively in an attitude of acceptance that which is distinct from their current outlook in order to engage in the communication of Rogerian argument.

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I wish I had learned Rogerian argument and Rogers' ideas earlier in life, though frankly I wonder if at age nineteen I would have been prepared to empathize with an opposition. The Rogerian is far more than a classroom assignment. The personal application of Rogerian argument can become extensive, as the ideas of conscious listening positively impact teaching, interactions with colleagues and loved ones, and one's own inner dialogue. The teaching of Rogerian argument improves composition classroom pedagogy by helping the instructor create a non-threatening environment for the student to communicate (Hairston 51). Coincidentally, when I teach the Rogerian method, I am the most mindful—or, to apply Rogers' term, authentic—as an instructor. The impact of Rogerian argument has been as beneficial as that of meditation on my overall quality of life; no matter its challenges, perhaps even its unorthodoxy, the Rogerian can compel one to teach it. However, Rogerian communication holds some challenges for students. As this essay will argue, Buddhist deep listening and mindful speech can provide a useful mechanism for composition and rhetoric students, helping them perform Rogerian listening in order to engage in an empathic process while simultaneously developing their rhetorical imagination. Although Rogers has been linked to Eastern thought, those connections have not been fully explored (Van Kalmthout), and such an exploration is important for shaping a more therapeutic, humanistic approach to argument, something that Rogers would advocate (Teich 24).

Teaching Rogers and Rogerian Argument

Rogerian communication, which originated in Rogers' psychoanalytic practice, is built upon three attitudinal principles: congruence (or genuineness), unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding (Teich 249-50). Perhaps the best source of Rogers' ideas about communication is his 1951 essay, "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation," in which Rogers connects problems in mental health to problems in communication. According to Rogers, a client lacks a clear line of communication with both herself and with others. This line of communication can be restored through client-centered or nondirective therapy in which the therapist uses neutral description and "listening with understanding" in place of evaluation. Rogers' therapeutic principles of communication were transposed onto an argument structure in two textbooks: Young, Becker, and Pike's 1970 *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* and Maxine Hairston's 1974 *A Contemporary Rhetoric*. The Rogerian can be contrasted with the Aristotelian argument:

[T]he style of argument associated with Aristotle . . . is adversarial, seeking to refute other views, and . . . sees the listener as wrong, someone who now must be overwhelmed by evidence. In contrast to the confrontational Aristotelian style, which allegedly seeks to present an airtight case that compels belief, Rogerian argument . . . is non-confrontational, collegial, and friendly; . . . respects other views and allows for plural truths; and seeks to achieve some degree of assent rather than convince utterly. (Barnet and Bedau 417)

By staying conscious of their natural reactive evaluations of others' ideas and by desisting from interrupting, the students are establishing a climate of acceptance inherent in Rogerian communication.

According to Rogers, the human predilection for constant evaluation (of ourselves, others, our circumstances) causes blocked communication. While a client-centered or nondirective therapist creates an atmosphere of acceptance to allow the client the experience of being fully listened to, the typical everyday mode of communication is evaluation. It's not too great a claim to say that writing for teachers is in fact a type of blocked communication noticed by Rogers. In such a view, the central cause of students' blocked communication is the very same experience of incessant evaluation which blocks a patient seeking help from a mental health specialist. Writing apprehensive students avoid writing because such assignments represent a punishing experience, one "accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Faigley, Daly, and Witte 37). As Rogers stated, the tendency toward blocked communication occurs with "defensive distortions" or "the insecurities, the defensive exaggerations, the lies, the 'false fronts' which characterize almost every failure in communication" (*Communication* 423). Consequentially, the situation of receiving comments and a grade on one's writing precludes Rogers' climate of positive acceptance. Secondly, as Peter Elbow noted, a teacher is not a natural reader but rather "one of the trickiest audiences of all" in part because the teacher, unlike other types of readers, is bound to reading the entire document and because the student is explaining material to an audience who presumably already knows the material, thus thwarting the natural impulse to communicate to someone (216-19).

The Liquid Plumber to blocked communication is empathy, in part because empathy prevents that constant evaluation. Rogers frequently uses "understanding" as a stand-in for empathy: "*to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about*" (qtd. in Barnet and Bedau 420, Rogers' italics). The net effect of empathic communication is change in the individual, which Rogers describes in "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation" as "releasing potent forces of change" (302). Empathy is "one of the cornerstones of Carl Rogers' work and life" (Teich 249), but it is difficult to help students practice empathy, "listening with understanding," in Rogers' terminology, for two reasons. First, students doing a required writing assignment are largely in a defensive mode prior to approaching the empathy requirements of the Rogerian. After all, they are writing for a teacher, a highly unnatural communicative situation, as Elbow and others have suggested. Students-writing-for-teachers results in a lack of genuineness in the student-teacher communication, a genuineness or congruence inherent in the Rogerian mode. Empathy, unlike sympathy or pity, involves a degree of self-exposure which will be less possible for an individual in a situation of self-defense. Second, empathy does not seem inherent to our present educational culture. For example, in my classes, I have watched the students laugh with delight when a main character in a film was struck by a bus. Thus, much is already stacked against the successful teaching of Rogerian argument since its requirement of empathy is both something under-known and impossible to know (because it means that the student fears evaluation and becomes defensive). At the same time, the relevancy—and even imperative—of empathic thinking is all too apparent: both to complete the

Rogerian assignment and to develop intellectually and interpersonally. As a result, it is necessary to guide students to develop the empathic ability for argument.

Other disciplines employ imagination to develop an empathic outlook on another individual or society. For example, sociologists talk of a sociological imagination which involves the drawing of connections by an individual between her personal biography and the time period in which she lives (Mills). During instruction, the student attempts to "get beyond himself" through the sociological imagination; the sociology instructor tries to help the student increase her critical thinking capacity and see how she affects and is affected by others. A second application of empathic and imaginative thinking, called realistic empathy or situational attribution, occurs in peace psychology. Realistic empathy is a means for accurately assessing the necessity of military intervention and ultimately for the development of any global peace (White, "Why" 122). Realistic empathy requires that a nation develop an accurate view of itself, an accurate view of its nation-opponent, and an accurate reading of that nation-opponent's perceptions of both itself and the first nation. Thus, military failures occur as a result of overestimating the esteem given to one's own country by other countries while simultaneously underestimating another nation-opponent's willingness to defend itself after an invasion. It is also important to use realistic empathy in order to understand another group's motives for attacking a third group (White, "When").

While imagination particularly (as pertains to invention) has played a role in rhetoric since the beginnings of the Western rhetorical tradition, a different type of rhetorical imagination is necessary for Rogerian argument. In "Refiguring Fantasy: Imagination and Its Decline in U.S. Rhetorical Studies," Joshua Gunn demonstrates how the role of imagination in the earlier rhetoric of Cicero and Quintilian was limited to a sort of cosmetics, adding a mimetic, imagistic, or figurative flourish to the logic of an argument (45). Invention began to include the imagination during the Renaissance, and reason was then demoted to the less significant role of arrangement. In the twentieth century, rhetorical imagination was again reconfigured. It became "the imaginary," a sort of collective unconscious that acts as a repository for persuasive elements which are both verbal and nonverbal (47-49). This view of imagination in rhetoric emphasized metaphor, generalized creativity, fantasies, and "intersubjectively shared 'social knowledge'" (47). The imaginary was subject to the critique that it could not provide any real information on audience motivation which could then be applied in argument. The imaginary could not provide motivation because of the Freudian view that material derived from the imagination is inherently unreliable and deceptive. The materials of dreams and fantasies, according to Freud, were not direct translations of the collective unconscious but rather warped representations (50).

However, the rhetorical imagination in the case of the Rogerian argument does provide insight into possible motivations and perspectives of the other party, which the rhetor can use to formulate his or her strategy. This type of rhetorical imagination is in essence a different breed. Rather than focusing on poetic devices such as metaphor or imagery from collective fantasies, this rhetorical imagination emphasizes interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogic interaction. It intensely emphasizes the interpersonal because it is situated within the act of empathizing,

unlike historic applications of imagination in rhetoric. However, unlike overarching empathy, the rhetorical imagination is consciously deployed and done so in persuasive situations. It is empathy with a mission. Similar to sociological imagination and realistic empathy, the Rogerian-based rhetorical imagination requires that the rhetor be first aware of his or her own circumscribed stance; in the case of the rhetorical imagination, however, this awareness occurs through paying attention to one's inner dialogue. If in its most basic form imagination is the act of positing that which is not actually present, whether it be an object, a person, or an event, we can agree that the act of empathy, of understanding someone's views, involves positing the imaginary act of stepping into that person's being. The empathizing actual self is, according to some views, momentarily laid aside. Empathy is distinct from sympathy because with sympathy the other's emotion or experience is understandable because they are similar to those known by the sympathizer. Empathy requires greater imaginative effort as true empathy involves even relating to emotion and experience which are completely foreign to the empathizer.

Changing one's point-of-view, whether it be temporary (obtaining empathic perspective on another) or more durable (absorbing and adopting another's views), inherently involves being imaginative. Moreover, the connection between empathy and the creative arts is evident in the nineteenth-century origins of empathy. The original context for empathy was aesthetic, situated in an observer's experience of losing self-awareness while looking at a work of art (Teich 241). It seems reasonable, therefore, that exercises involving visual arts and creative writing could help students develop the imaginative capabilities inherent in empathy and, as a result, help complete Rogerian argument.

To that end, in the past I've employed several creative exercises in the Rogerian unit. To help students understand the limits and potential of point-of-view, I utilize concepts from Cubism from the visual arts (although a verbal version, for instance, a prose poem from Stein's *Tender Buttons*, could be substituted). In his Cubist works, Picasso is credited for "the creation of a new system of indicating three-dimensional relationships that would not longer be dependent on the convention of illusionist, one point perspective" (Fry 14). Setting a coffee can on one of the seminar tables at the front of the room, I ask students to describe their view of the can from their current seat. A student at the back of the room has one view of the can, its label, its shadow, whereas a student with a differently positioned seat has another. As a group, we then discuss what a single text combining everyone's different descriptions based on their point-of-view would look like. Then a Cubist-style "portrait" is done of a volunteer, who poses in the center of the room. Through a series of prompts, students write phrases describing the volunteer's appearance (from the student's seat), unseen parts of the volunteer's appearance (i.e., what does the back of his or her head look like), empathic guesses at the thoughts and feelings of the volunteer, plus a description of the volunteer's activity ten minutes after the class has ended. In this exercise, students employ creative writing in order to learn a more flexible physical and then psychological point-of-view.

Other components which are typically restricted to creative writing classes could benefit the development of empathy in rhetoric. Students may naturally gravitate toward the creation of fictional characters when doing the Rogerian because of the intensely imaginative nature of the empathic work required by

Rogerian communication. Nathaniel Teich describes how one student switched genre, writing a literary narrative to dramatize the abortion debate for her Rogerian paper (278). Students can be shown persona poems to discuss what techniques make the first person portraits credible. Another possible set-up for developing a different person's point-of-view is to have students actually create a fictional character (possibly even one who embodies the "opposition" of their forthcoming argument paper). Students should understand that the writing exercises, while important to the whole Rogerian unit, are to be done in the rough, like a sketch in which one does not worry about grammar or seek polished creative writing, which would stray from the purpose of the rhetoric course. However, these creative exercises do not surpass the efficacy of teaching mindfulness in conjunction with Rogerian argument.

Buddhism and Rogerian Argument

*By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.
—the Buddha on Loving-kindness*

In the Buddhist sense, both judgment and evaluation involve the human weakness for sorting experience into categories under the motivation of keeping what is pleasant close to us and casting aside what is unpleasant or harmful. Thus, we idly attempt to control experience such that it comes out in our favor. According to the second principle realized by Buddha upon his enlightenment under the bodhi tree, everything passes, and thus through our attachments to "good" experience we are caught up in the endless cycle of suffering called *samsara*. Pema Chodron, a contemporary American Buddhist nun in the Tibetan tradition, explains there is "a common misunderstanding among all the human beings who have ever been born on the earth that the best way to live is to try to avoid pain and just try to get comfortable" (3). Chodron advocates trying to accept instead "how our world ticks, how the whole thing just *is*" (3). To suggest that we shouldn't try to make occurrences come out in our favor may strike people as ludicrous; it's contrary to basic human self-interest. Therefore, we like our rooms a certain temperature, enjoy good meals, and bask in the gratitude and respect given to us by others. Moreover, we take concrete—but futile—measures to ensure these pleasantries.

Even more significant is the way in which our mind endlessly narrates and tries to direct external circumstances. This endless narration—also called "monkey mind" or discursive thinking—largely occurs as inward, non-vocalized evaluations. Every split second, our mind issues an evaluative response either to what's actually out there or to what we anticipate. *I like that color on my coffee cup; that car passing over the loose manhole cover is annoying; that word I just thought up is really dull*, and so forth. When listening to someone else, the inner evaluative dialogue continues, as has also been suggested by Rogers in "What Understanding and Acceptance Mean to Me":

Our first reaction to most of the statements which we hear from other people is an immediate evaluation, or judgment, rather than an understanding of it. When a pupil speaks up in class expressing some feeling or attitude or belief, our tendency is, almost immediately, to feel “That’s good”; “That’s right”; or “That’s bad”; “That’s incorrect.” Very rarely do we permit ourselves to understand precisely what the meaning of his statement is to him. (11)

In “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation,” he offers an example from the time of the writing of the essay: “if we had a Russian communist speaker here tonight, or Senator Joe McCarthy, how many of us would dare to try to see the world from each of these points of view? The great majority of us could not listen; we would find ourselves compelled to evaluate, because listening would seem too dangerous” (421). Frequently, those inner evaluations impact our interactions and communications with others. Interrupting another person is the most obvious manifestation of that evaluation. Rogers’ diagnosis of our constant evaluation when communicating is uncannily akin to what is described by Buddhist practitioners.

Most significant for our purposes is that Rogers made listening a conscious process by which a therapist suspends judgment of others. In the Fourth Noble Truth, the Buddha delineates eight ways to overcome this endless suffering or *samsara*: Right Understanding, Right Mindedness, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Attentiveness, and Right Concentration. Modern monasteries and *sanghas* (meditation groups) practice different activities in order to perform the Noble Eightfold Path, including deep listening and loving speech, the basis of the exercises which I used to teach Rogerian argument. Under the Fourth Truth, Buddhist practitioners attempt deep listening and speech, which involves careful choice of language, avoidance of gossip, chatter, or falsehood, and avoidance of interruption (all the while staying conscious of one’s breathing). During dharma discussions, it is common for practitioners to wait a few mindful breaths after another person has finished speaking before starting to talk. What is avoided is the tendency to interrupt or respond, to ignore the communication occurring in the present moment.

The purpose of all of these activities is to stay conscious of our thoughts, including being aware of how we are evaluating everything. Another word for this type of consciousness is *mindfulness*. The Chinese character for mindfulness is composed of the signs for “mind” and “now” (Hanh, *Path* 151). In essence, a mindful person is aware of the present moment and aware of his or her thoughts in the present moment. A mindful disciple is uniquely qualified for the Rogerian, as “he dwells in contemplation of the mind, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons, or both. He beholds how the mind arises; beholds how it passes away; beholds the arising and passing away of the mind” (Goddard 51). Moreover, mindfulness has been translated from Pali as “activity” as well as “bare attention” (Wood 35). These word origins reinforce the effort involved in staying conscious of thoughts, which is not a passive procedure.

Mindfulness recognizes a difference between the thinker and her thoughts. Mindfulness can be practiced through a variety of everyday actions—eating, talking, listening, walking—and not just on the meditation cushion, but what unites

all mindful activities is a turning inward to watch one's breathing. When Rogers asked therapists to be conscious of a tendency toward diagnosis or evaluation, he is essentially advocating mindfulness, which is far more difficult than it appears, since the human condition is largely one of unmindfulness. In application to an undergraduate assignment with Rogerian argument, I first guide students through some basic meditation steps in order to help them be mindful of their breathing. Students sit in comfortable postures in the chairs and watch their breathing. I ask them to close their eyes—not standard practice in Buddhist meditation—in order to facilitate their concentration. We discuss yogic breathing, or deep-belly breathing, versus anxious, upper-chest breathing. Students are instructed to continue mindfulness of their breath throughout the loving-kindness practice and then the Rogerian (with wind-up chicken) argument.

Two Buddhist practices are particularly conducive to the development of empathy and unblocked communication, both of which I've practiced with my undergraduate students in a required first year rhetoric course. The main purpose of the first activity—mindful speech à la wind-up chicken—is to have students observe their inner reactive tendencies and become less blocked to the ideas of others. In *On Dialogue*, David Bohm describes a self-monitoring in dialogue which is like what occurs in mindfulness practice:

If one is alert and attentive, he can see for example that whenever certain questions arise, there are fleeting sensations of fear, which push him away from consideration of these questions, and of pleasure, which attract his thoughts and cause them to be occupied with other questions. So one is able to keep away from whatever it is that he thinks may disturb him. And as a result, he can be subtly defending his own ideas, when he supposes that he is really listening to what other people have to say. (4)

The second practice, loving-kindness meditation, is the most obvious in its use of imagination to develop empathy, and, as such, loving-kindness meditation is essentially basic training in rhetorical imagination.

Loving-kindness varies, but a standard version involves five mental prompts which are spoken by a meditation leader who says a prompt and allows three or four minutes to pass before uttering the next. First, one turns to oneself and, breathing in, silently says, "May I be happy, healthy, and calm" (or some variant thereof). Breathing out, one then says, "happy, healthy, calm." Attention is paid to mindful breathing throughout the whole process. Then, one turns to a beloved and, breathing in, silently says, "May so-and-so be happy, healthy, and calm." Breathing out, one repeats the same abbreviated phrase as before, but now in reference to the loved one. People who meditate are frequently advised to visualize carrying the person gifts or news which would make him or her particularly happy. One continues the sequence thinking of a neutral (someone in one's everyday life who is a stranger, for instance, the person at the gas station on the way to work), followed by an enemy or troublesome person. Then one thinks of a group of people, for instance, the people in one's city or state. Some people who meditate continue expanding the scope of loving-kindness until it encompasses all of the world, all previous and forthcoming generations. At the final stage, one

silently elevates the whole (self, loved one, neutral, enemy, group) to the highest level of reached loving-kindness. If one felt the most compassion for the loved one, one attempts to bring the enemy, for example, to the same glowing level.

Pedagogical Advantages of Mindfulness and the Rogerian

While loving-kindness is not topic-related per se, the Buddhist techniques of deep listening and mindful speech contained in loving-kindness meditation and in the “wind-up chicken Rogerian” foster several components of Rogerian argument while developing the rhetorical imagination: listening skills, audience interaction, and awareness of the limitations of one’s perspective.

These mindfulness practices greatly enhance listening abilities needed for Rogerian communication. Julia T. Wood, in “Buddhist Influences on Teaching and Scholarship,” describes “mindfulness as an ethical requirement of good listening” (36). In *sanghas*, I am amazed by the richness of interpersonal communication when speech is done with mindful listening. The simple act of withholding my desire to speak in order to pay attention fully to another person’s speaking in the present moment gives me far more satisfaction than if I were to speak my mind. As Rogers suggested, we evaluate while we listen; however, another form of evaluation besides verbally contributing our two cents is nodding, which should be self-monitored because of its basis in evaluation. In addition, I am more likely to absorb other’s ideas and rhetorical strategies, and this can lead me to change my views or add dimension to my argument. A student involved in one of Rogers’ listening-intensive courses also commented upon the way in which conscious listening helps appreciation of what others can offer:

I have shaken off my rigidity in relating to other people in the class. Now, instead of a categorical response, I can listen, and I *hear*. . . . Suddenly, I’m more realistically aware of the paucity of my formal knowledge. . . . I now feel a real intellectual hunger. I think it’s because I have now experienced the two-foldedness of communication. It’s expression, of course; but it’s also listening. I listened. And the experience has forced me to revise my feelings about the omniscience of my wisdom. (qtd. in Rogers, “What” 16)

A community based on listening can be established through both Rogerian communication and mindfulness. That the listening group is an interdependent community is due to the Buddhist principle of “interdependent co-arising,” whereby one’s separateness is said to be an illusion. As such, mindfulness practices such as deep listening are “congenial with dialogic traditions, which insist that points of view, relationships, and selves are not static. Rather they are fluid processes that are continuously open to being (re)formed, largely through interaction between people” (Wood 34).

On first glance, transplanting Rogers’ therapeutic communication style to a classroom argument may appear impossible; it may appear too difficult for students to write as Rogers doctored because writing an argument, unlike seeing a client, seemingly involves monologue. Rogers never organized a “Rogerian argument” per se. Although this distinction persists between Rogerian therapy and

Rogerian argument used in composition classrooms, Rogers did encourage interdisciplinary adoption of his therapeutic principles by the field of education ("Significant Learning"). In attempting to address the problems in teaching the Rogerian, Doug Brent suggested that all student papers are dialogic in the sense that they respond to countless authors (464).

Mindfulness practice represents more than audience theory because it is a classroom activity which constructs two types of audience: the first audience with the self (intra-personal dialogue) and the second audience with others (interpersonal dialogue). Using mindfulness with the Rogerian amplifies the student experience of the dialogic by allowing the students to notice their constant inner dialogue in response to an opposition or the world. In essence, the student is a listener to himself or herself, key for a Rogerian therapist. Students likewise benefit from the promise that their opinions will be deeply heard by the group in unconditional positive regard. In essence, the deep listening and mindful speech activity positions the student simultaneously in the role of therapist/listener and client/speaker in Rogers' therapeutic scenario.

The recognition of evaluative thinking and the empathic process can serve as a heuristic. Evaluative thinking is not inherently troublesome; indeed, evaluative thinking plays a role in basic survival and the recognition of pain factors in our environment. Evaluation is a powerful signal. Buddhist practice would discourage the "evaluation of evaluation"; in other words, a meditator is instructed to observe his thoughts as they arise without adding judgment to that observation. If the individual thinks "bad me for just now entertaining that evaluative thought about how uncomfortable my chair is," she is engaging in the false dualistic notion that proper and improper or good and bad exist. Rather, it is the normal human procedure of not being aware of that influence of evaluative thinking which limits our communication and even our persuasiveness. It's easy to dismiss thinking as "only thinking," but in reality, thought is highly active and influential, directly causing all of the human-made objects and institutions in our surroundings (Bohm 9-10).

Perhaps the most important result of using mindfulness practices in conjunction with the Rogerian argument is the fostering of rhetorical imagination. Students become *euphantasiotos*: "people blessed with imagination" (Gunn 45). Through its accepting focus on the opposition and its imperative for personal change, Rogerian argument provides an excellent context for the learning of rhetorical imagination. The mindfulness practices in turn provide students with first-hand experience and a repeatable, simple mechanism which can be used to access rhetorical imagination, even in the interpersonal rhetorical situations of daily life. In the context of argument, however, the application of rhetorical imagination is not constrained to Rogerian argument but could, for instance, be employed to develop more accurate rebuttal or audience awareness for any type of argument.

While Rogers may very well have been inclined to disagree with the following point, empathy can be used as a tool. Rogerian empathy has been connected with the rhetorical device of ethos or with the way the student writer presents himself or herself to the audience (Teich 254). A writing instructor may need to drop traditional pedagogies of critique in favor of tactically employing empathy in order to teach social class effectively (Lindquist). Empathy in this scenario can act as a teaching resource for a particular outcome; it is a "conscious and

strategic emotional labor on the part of the teachers” (Lindquist 195). Meditation too can bolster learning, as even the briefest of lessons in meditation helps establish the awareness of the limitations of one’s point-of-view.

Students may feel uncomfortable or resistant to the Buddhist mindfulness practices in a rhetoric class. The choice of a stuffed animal—and a baby one at that—as the device to hold during mindful speech and deep listening is in part an attempt to diffuse seriousness. I am also sensitive to religious differences in the classroom and tell the students that they are free to step outside the class if they feel uncomfortable meditating. To date, no student has accepted this offer. Another reason for student resistance may be the sheer unusualness of the mindfulness activities. This discomfort can be alleviated by simply encouraging students to make the attempt. After all, Buddhist practitioners struggle with maintaining mindfulness no matter how many years they have sat on the cushion.

The skills imparted by mindfulness bring a significant measure of success in writing Rogerian argument. In their Rogerian assignment, students are advised to use the same mindful practices when developing their objective presentation of the opposition’s view and the point about which the opposition is correct: to be aware of their own judgments and to be able to see clear of them. The section of Rogerian argument in which students need to portray objectively the opposition’s views is less cursory than in Rogerian units without the mindfulness practices. Moreover, students are less daunted by the ultimate task of Rogerian argument: that moment in which they must truly change their mind on at least one point. In a moving conclusion written in 1952, Rogers summarized, “There is even a hint that the most striking characteristic of personality may be, not its stability, but its capacity for change” (“‘Client-Centered’ Psychotherapy” 74). When we are mindful, we are given the power to imaginatively change our point-of-view, and in that way, to control our experience such that it comes out in our favor, in our favor, because we are capable of change. ☞

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