

# Mindfulness, Meditation and Dharma Art: Clues for the Pedagogy of the Actor<sup>1</sup>

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the intersection between the performing arts and contemplative practices, especially meditation, in my practice as a teacher of performing arts. With this orientation, I address concepts such as mindfulness, meditation, and Dharma Art to present an introduction to this theme and to raise questions I consider essential when approaching it. Finally, I point to the potential contributions this discussion can offer regarding the training of performers from a contemplative perspective.

**Keywords:** Meditation, Dharma Art, performing arts pedagogy, mindfulness.

## Introduction

This article aims to present a theme that has captured my attention over the past 10 years — the relationship between contemplative practices and performing arts. Despite the lack of academic publications on the topic in my country (Brazil), as compared to north-American and European contexts, throughout this time I have been able to study this dynamic, initially with a special focus on dialogue with the Buddhist meditation tradition<sup>2</sup>. During this time, my vision has been enlarged through contact with other scholars studying in the same field; especially through my relationship with the Centre for Psychophysical Performance Research at the University of Huddersfield, and my participation in the ‘Mindfulness and Performance’ project (MaP, 2015-2016), in the same centre, as part of my post-doctoral research funded by the Brazilian Coordination for the Improvement of Higher-Education Personnel (CAPES). This last experience raised questions regarding how to name the field that emerges from the relationship between theatre and mindfulness practices. This article aims to address this question from the perspective of my experience as a teacher of performers.

## A brief background, or first things first

My interest in this subject grew from my relationship with Tibetan Buddhism, especially the performative aspect of its rituals. Whilst attending Tibetan Buddhist rituals I could perceive, in some of the long-term practitioners, a kind of presence that related to that found in some actors; a special quality in the way they used their bodies that attracted the attention of whoever witnessed their actions. From this I raised a question - is there any possible relationship between the presence observed in meditation practitioners and that of actors? - which brought me to an MA programme at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) where I conducted a study on the actor’s training, performativity and meditation. Since then, I have been tracking the growing interest in the contemplative practices of performing arts academics and artists in Brazil, the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), as well as the increase in the number of texts either addressing this subject or incorporating it as a central component.

In terms of offering some context, since 2003 a number of Performing Arts researchers in different institutions in Brazil have become engaged in this dialogue; such as, Cassiano Quilici, Ana Caldas Lewinson, Tânia Alice Felix, Matteo Bonfitto, Nara Keiserman, Gilson Motta, Tatiana Motta Lima, and Fernando Mencarelli. Thanks to the effort of those scholars in the last decade, it is possible to see an increase in interest in this theme in Brazilian academic literature.

Based on this interest, an important action was made possible - the seminar ‘Contemplative Practices and Performing Arts’ which took place at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) in 2016. This event was the result of a partnership between different research groups: ‘Arts of Movement’ (UNIRIO); ‘Research in Performance, Training, and Practice of Mindfulness’ (Federal University of Santa Maria - UFSM); ‘Performing Arts: Tradition and Contemporaneity’ (State University of Campinas- UNICAMP); ‘CRIA – Arts and Interdisciplinarity’ (Federal University of Minas Gerais- UFMG); and the Centre for Psychophysical Performance Research (University of Huddersfield, UK)<sup>3</sup>. As a result of this meeting a group of scholars founded, in 2017, a working group at the Brazilian Association of Postgraduate Performing Arts called ‘Performing Arts, Modes of Perception, and Practices of the Self’. In addition to this, an entire issue of the Brazilian journal *Pós* was given over to essays in theatre and contemplative practices in May 2018<sup>4</sup>. And now, this issue of the *Performance and Mindfulness* journal from the University of Huddersfield dedicated to Brazilian researchers.

During my time of studying this subject, one of the most difficult tasks I found was that of defining and naming this field. Initially, when I was focused on the relation of Buddhist tradition to contemporary arts, especially through the writings of artists such as Lee Worley, Marina Abramovic

and Meredith Monk, the term “mindfulness” seemed like a natural choice, because of its use in meditation studies, both inside and outside the academic universe.

Outside of the field of art, discussion of the practice of mindfulness has been gaining ground in academic discourse over the past 40 years, especially since the 1980s. It has been particularly encouraged by the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, who launched the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, USA; a programme which has been developing since then, with wide acceptance in the medical field due to various studies demonstrating its effectiveness. Furthermore, certain studies related to neuroplasticity and the impact of emotions on health have recommended mindfulness as beneficial for strengthening the immune system and creating new neuronal connections (Goleman, 1999; Davidson, 2008; Danucalov & Simões, 2009)<sup>5</sup>.

Based on a dialogue with medicine, studies on mindfulness have branched out to other fields such as education and philosophy, to name those that boast the greatest number of published studies. Moreover, the media have reserved a space in their agendas to promote research and activities related to the subject. To conclude, mindfulness practices have proved to be a rich field for research, confirming the following statement of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch:

It is our contention that the rediscovery of Asian philosophy, particularly of the Buddhist tradition, is a second renaissance in the cultural history of the West, with the potential to be equally important as the rediscovery of Greek thought in the European renaissance. Our Western histories of philosophy, which ignore Indian thought, are artificial, since India and Greece share with us an Indo-European linguistic heritage as well as many cultural and philosophical preoccupations (2003, p. 22).

Nowadays, mindfulness is one of the terms most-used in American and European countries when referring to practices whose origin is linked to the Buddhist tradition. In an interview by Linda Heuman published in the 2014 fall issue of *Tricycle* magazine, Evan Thompson notes a wide range of mindfulness-based activities, including those in human resources management courses; business administration; Mindfulness Coaching<sup>6</sup>; stress reduction programmes (MBSR); Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT); mindful eating, education, parenting, and sex; and mindfulness-based military physical and mental conditioning programmes (Heuman, 2014: p. 43).

These days, mindfulness is also commonly associated with the proposals of Kabat-Zinn, especially the MBSR programme that entails eight weeks of two hours per week, plus one full day of practice, and involves exercises that focus the attention on breathing, eating, communicating, taking care of others, and body tension. Although the practice of mindfulness originates in the Buddhist meditation tradition, Kabat-Zinn and Williams claim that it is not exclusive to that context:

...meditative practices are concerned with embodied awareness and the cultivation of clarity, emotional balance (equanimity) and compassion, and since all of these capacities can be refined and developed via the honing and intentional deployment of attention, the roots of Buddhist meditation practices are *de facto* universal (Kabat-Zinn and Williams, 2013, p. 3).

### **Mindfulness and performance – mindfulness-performance?**

Given the wide range of practices that can be covered by the term “mindfulness”, I share with Middleton (2018) the question as to whether the word is accurate and, at the same time, broad enough to define such different practices. For example, should we use mindfulness or meditation

to describe such practices as those found in ancient Greek culture prior to Plato and Socrates, and pointed to by Foucault (2006) when commenting on the technologies of the self? Are techniques of concentration of the soul and retreat into the self (*anakhóresis*), which were later maintained and adapted by Neoplatonism, Neo-Pythagoreanism, and Stoicism, the same as those referred to as mindfulness techniques? Or meditation? Could the contemplation practices known as the 'Prayer of the Heart' (Merton, 2014, p.36/90), found in the writings of Saint John of the Cross, John Cassian, and Meister Eckhart and revitalized in Catholicism through the efforts of the Benedictine monks John Main and Laurence Freeman, and the Trappist Thomas Merton, fit under these two labels - meditation or mindfulness? Of course, descriptions of such practices have many similarities with methods of meditation found in the Buddhist tradition and in Patanjali's yoga sutras. But when using the same term - mindfulness - to refer to all practices that share similarities regarding the refining of attention and introspection, is there a risk that we overlook the particularities of these practices? In some sense, might we disregard specificities that, in fact, form the identities of the practices?

Deborah Middleton, in an article published in *Pós* (2018), introduces the term "mindfulness-based performance" to refer to those performative actions that are based on, or have their centre in, practices linked to management of attentional states and also in a series of ethical procedures aiming to increase consciousness in its broader sense. Middleton mentions that this terminology is still provisory and problematic (Middleton, 2018, p.5) due to different issues involving the mindfulness movement and its sometimes very broad application.

I understand the discussion about terminologies to be quite important for defining our field. I agree with Middleton when she points to the problematics involved in the use of 'mindfulness' to refer to a large range of phenomena even in science and arts. Following Middleton's thought, I question whether, when talking about mindfulness-based performances, we are pointing to Buddhist oriented practices, or whether the attunement of mind-body reached by dancers and actors can also be considered 'mindfulness-oriented' practices, as suggested by Blum (2016) and addressed by Middleton:

When I read Harrison Blum's introduction to *Dancing with Dharma* (2016), I envy him the more solid and identifiable boundary lines at the 'fertile intersection of Buddhist practice with movement and dance' (Blum, 2016, p. 3). If you accept what Blum says of movement and dance training (and extend it to actor training) - that they 'foster continuous mindfulness of the body' (Blum, 2016, p. 3) - then to speak of mindfulness in performance training might be to say almost nothing at all. In fact, the assertion that awareness training for performance is a form of mindfulness training is potentially problematic, and the desire to tease out the relationships between performance and mindfulness was part of what fuelled our project. (2017, p.3)

## **Mindfulness and contemplation**

Considering what has been said, in the MaP project, mindfulness as a term failed to fully convey the complexities regarding the performative practices Middleton and I were interested in. Nor did it adequately describe the work of the artists that was identified as suitable to include in the 'Performance and Mindfulness Symposium' in June 2016, many of whom engaged more broadly with contemplative traditions, and had less explicit focus on 'mindfulness' as such.

At the same time, mindfulness started to seem a restrictive label for me, personally. In my practice as artist and lecturer, I started to feel uncomfortable with being described as the 'Buddhist Scholar' in the theatre department, because my practices included actions other than those related only to Buddhist meditation. The contact with writings from the Association for Contemplative Mind

in Higher Education (ACMHE), based in the United States, enabled me to learn more about its proposals for the study of contemplative practices in the university context. The Association offers different text sources and also a model called 'the tree of contemplative practices'<sup>7</sup> that helped me to expand the way I could understand my own work, and that of others too. The discussions of the Association, in large part, revolve around how to integrate introspection and study of the self into pedagogical practice, as well as how to appreciate students' first-hand experiences as keys to the teaching-learning process. Some actions can be stimulated, such as attention refinement and mental stabilization practices, including introspection and contemplation of the methodological procedures of disciplines. There is also exploration of aspects related to compassion, connection with others, and the deepening of ethical relations in the educational process; and investigation of the nature of the mind, personal motives, creativity, and insight (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

Researchers' proposals connected with the Association widen the scope of practice included within the definition of contemplative practices to incorporate: meditation, prayer, body practices (such as yoga, tai-chi, and martial arts), various rituals, visualization, pilgrimage, volunteer work, walking meditation, storytelling, various therapies, and other self-work processes.

Given these experiences, the use of the term 'contemplative practices,' instead of 'mindfulness' or 'meditation,' seems useful to account for the range of ways in which researchers and artists are exploring activities such as meditation, mindfulness, and wider Buddhist, and other sources; it allows me to more accurately name the phenomena being studied.

Considering the proximity of the terms 'contemplation', 'mindfulness' and 'meditation', and the practices they suggest, in the last two years I have been using the term 'contemplative' to refer to those artistic practices which share some characteristics, such as introspection, body-mind attunement technologies, focus on self-integration, refining attention, contact. This approach has helped me include in my studies practices from different artists, such as Bill Viola, Grotowski, Stanislavski, Tania Alice Feix and others who have aspects of their work that fit into the idea of a contemplative art.

## **Contemplative arts and performance practices**

Following the ACMHE model of integrating contemplative practice into higher education, I understand relating artistic practice to contemplative experience (and practice) does not imply adopting any religious framework. Nor does it need to impose a pre-fabricated morality—acting according to what society or a certain group expects—nor must it consider moralistic lessons or religious stories as work themes. From my point of view, approaching performance practices as contemplative practices opens up a fertile field to be explored in the direction of refining attention and the perception of one's psychophysical processes, which include movement, body consciousness, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, relationship with space, time and others. I also refer to practices that start from these psychophysical processes to promote creativity, surpassing rigid patterns of behaviour and thought.

I understand that artistic action founded on experience provided by contemplative practices, or which is, in itself, a contemplative artistic action, counters biased perceptions and challenges automatisms. In addition, artists who expose themselves to the influence of contemplative traditions are invited to take responsibility for their actions in the world, in the sense of responding in more creative ways to the different demands.

I work, not to make some discourse, but to enlarge the island of freedom which I bear; my obligation is not to make political declarations, but to make holes in the wall. The things which were forbidden before me, should be permitted after me; the

doors which were closed and double-locked should be opened. I must resolve the problem of freedom and of tyranny through practical measures: that means that my activity should leave traces, examples of freedom. (Grotowski in Wolford & Schechner, 2001, pp. 294-295)

I see the processes of creation and training based on contemplation as ways to teach (oneself) freedom. When seeking to define the foundations of formative actions that promote the autonomy of the actor, I turn to texts by Chögyam Trungpa, one of the main Tibetan Buddhist masters who played a key role in consolidating the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in the West. I highlight Trungpa's notions of 'crazy wisdom' and Dharma Art<sup>8</sup> as important milestones in this reflection.

### **Dharma Art and crazy wisdom**

Trungpa (2003), when commenting on the different manifestations of *Padmasambhava*<sup>9</sup>, the main introducer of Buddhism to Tibet and source of all Tibetan lineages, alludes to *Dorje Drolö*<sup>10</sup>, one of the eight emanations of Guru Rimpoche. *Dorje Drolö* rides into the snowy country on a tiger, demonstrating, in this condition, the quality of a master— someone who is 'domesticated' but who implies a potential for savagery. *Dorje Drolö* represents an aspect of Buddhist practice related to the cultivation of a realistic, simple attitude, i.e., behaviour based on a relationship with the here and now that does not care for constructing mental frameworks in which to fit reality. Such a relationship is not mediated by preconceptions but results from the full experience provided by the six senses<sup>11</sup>. In accordance with this image, Trungpa (2003, p. 10) defines 'crazy wisdom' in the following terms:

The process is one of going further in and in without any reference point of a saviour, without any reference point of goodness or badness – without any reference points whatsoever! Finally, we might reach the basic level of hopelessness, of transcending hope. This does not mean we end up as zombies. We still have all the energies; we have all the fascination of discovery, of seeing this process unfolding and unfolding and unfolding, going on and on. This process of discovery automatically recharges itself so that we keep going deeper and deeper and deeper. This process of going deeper and deeper is the process of crazy wisdom, and it is what characterizes a saint in the Buddhist tradition. (Trungpa, 2003, p. 10)

Addressing theatre-making issues always involves the individual, the artist of the scene, within whom the solutions are embodied. This process of going further into oneself, engaging also in more deep relations to environment and others, is also an important point for artists who explore the border between arts and life. The answer is not to be found in external mechanisms but in each person's relationship to life and its diverse meanings, and in the 'interaction' with the craft, the environment, and companions on the journey. I believe that this is the key point in any discussion involving theatre, meditation, and contemplative practices. Grotowski asks:

This life that you are living, is it enough? It is giving you happiness? Are you satisfied with the life around you? Art or culture or religion (in the sense of living sources; not in the sense of churches, often quite the opposite), all of that is a way of not being satisfied. No, such a life is not sufficient (...) It's not a question of what's missing in one's image of society, but what's missing in the way of living life. (Grotowski in Wolford & Schechner, 2001, p. 295)

In different traditional theatrical forms, such as Noh, Balinese theatre, and Tibetan opera, art is regarded as a way to construct oneself as a human being. It is not just a question of gaining mastery of the tools of the trade but of sculpting oneself through their use. The Balinese, as reported by I Wayan Lendra (in Wolford & Schechner, 2001), consider art as a tool for bringing out the expression of the inner spirit, the true nature of the person. The artist's skills, sincerity, and honesty in so doing are the means of expression.

By this, I do not mean to take a utilitarian view of the theatre, i.e., to use the art for another purpose, but rather to discern in it a method of knowledge and education that comprises more than the accumulation of information and skills. Art in and of itself may be a useful means for awakening, in the sense indicated by the German author, Schopenhauer (2005), who claimed that the aesthetic experience is a form of going beyond the self and desire, two qualities he describes as being the origins of suffering.

Thus, the relationship between theatre and contemplative practices dares me to consider how deeply I wish to go in search of personal freedom. The path to freedom is an alert mind, which brings the automatisms and patterns of thinking and behaving into view. In other words, I am referring to theatre here as a path to cultivate awareness in action. I am also discovering that there is a relationship with the concept of Dharma Art, as proposed by Trungpa (2008), which he defines as an 'artistic-creative' practice based on non-aggression. According to the Tibetan teacher, aggressive attitudes make everything seem equal, which is a generalist and stereotypical view (Trungpa, 2008, p.28). Aggression is the root of crudeness, which is associated with a sense of impatience or inability to return to the same point for a second, third or fourth time, to see what was not immediately visible. Consequently, aggression is contrary to artistic processes of creation.

According to Trungpa (2008), to overcome aggression it is not enough to simply *practise* awareness through seated (formal) meditation or 'meditation-in-action' alone, we must *cultivate* awareness. Awareness practice is a type of training that is focused on the production of an inspired behaviour (Trungpa, 2008, p.28), committed to bringing something positive into the world, combating crudeness, and dealing with whatever emerges in an open, generous way. It is not simply a matter of fitting into society by doing what is expected and knowing how to please others; rather, one attempts to act with an alert consciousness as much as possible. From this perspective, the artist's formation and creation processes do not exclude the cultivation of non-aggression, which is in line with the Way of the Bodhisattva.

The question is: How are we going to organize our life so that we can afford to produce beautiful things, not at the expense or suffering of others? (...) So, Dharma Art is not showmanship, or having some talent that nobody had before, having an idea that nobody's done before. Instead, the main point of dharma art is discovering elegance. And this is a question of state of mind, according to the Buddhist tradition. (Trungpa, 2008, p. 5)

Thus, I see that the preparation and creation of the performer, from the perspective of mindfulness or contemplation, means applying some form of meditation to the theatrical craft.

The art of meditative experience might be called genuine art. Such art is not designed for exhibition or broadcast. Instead, it is a perpetually growing process in which we begin to appreciate our surroundings in life, whatever they may be – it doesn't necessarily have to be good, beautiful or pleasurable at all. The definition of art, from this point of view, is to be able to see the uniqueness of everyday experience. Every moment we might be doing the same things – brushing our teeth every day,

combining our hair every day, cooking our dinner every day. But that seeming repetitiveness becomes unique every day. A kind of intimacy takes place with the daily habits that you go through and the art involved in it. That's why it is called art in everyday life. (Trungpa, 2008, p. 27)

In other words, the goal of the performer's actions is to discover a new outlook on oneself, the craft, and the context surrounding it— by looking at these elements in depth, analysing their constitution or the relationships between the different parts in a humorous way, i.e., looking at things with detachment, somewhat dispassionately. To summarize, the goal of the performer's actions can be seen as the exercise of the ability to assess the ongoing games of the mind.

### **The contemplative arts and Dharma Art: clues to performer training**

Despite the possibility of outlining a history of relationships with contemplative practices since Stanislavski (White, 2006; Chamberlain, Middleton & Plá, 2014), or the Noh tradition, a centuries-old practice that blends meditation and theatre, I understand that the current moment suggests a particular approach.

Meditative practice has been an interest of numerous artists, including John Cage, Allen Ginsberg, David Lynch, Bill Viola, Meredith Monk, Gilson Motta, Laurie Anderson, among others, who consider meditation to be a crucial element in the development of their work. I could also mention Lee Worley, Arawana Roshi, Cassiano Quilici, Tania Alice, and Deborah Middleton, all of whom have been theoretically and artistically investigating the practice of meditation as a form of existence.

'Artistic-meditative' training requires discipline and a pragmatic approach to the craft, based on the cultivation of an alert mind. When working with students I approach the performer's preparation as a set of artisanal processes that are detached from consumerism and from production inspired by the industry. I refer to the pedagogical action as a type of craftwork production, which implies cooperative work, coexistence, and respect, within an educational system that involves the experience of all parts of the process of construction of a work of art. It is an artisanal learning that includes tool management, but also goes beyond it, since a craftsman learns during training to 'be the craft itself'; it is the vision of a farmer, who plants, creates the right conditions, and while awaiting the moment of harvest, prunes the plant to enable it to draw on its maximum strength. In this sense it is a process of self-cultivation and self-knowledge that involves appreciating what already exists as potentialities in oneself, and nurturing those seeds, more than following a pre-configured model of acting and of being an actor.

Looking at the process of actors and performers from the perspective of contemplation also implies a practice centred on acknowledging and overcoming constraints, automatisms, and limitations, as represented by Trungpa (2015, p.35) as the cocoon which imprisons the body and action in frozen, attached, dormant perception. By employing contemplative practice as a model, I conceive of the idea of creation and artistic formation as a way of emptying oneself. The technique aims to make one look within oneself. The domain acquired through exposure to a technique or a pedagogical/creative process encompasses an individual. This transformation occurs during the encounter with oneself, by acknowledging and overcoming 'coded perception schemes' (Larrosa, 2006). Consequently, actor/performer training is not preparation for speaking, but silence. It is not a matter of filling the void but of producing one.

The void is a stripping of the habits and rituals of existence, an uncovering of the habitual ways of meaning and experience. In short, what is not occupied by the habits



of personal and collective memory. For this reason, it is the full availability, the absolute possibility (Larrosa, 2006, p. 58).

All these aspects, which are related to training processes of the actor/performer—contemplative practice as a model for action; training and creation as processes of emptying and reflexivity; mastery of the tools of the trade; techniques that cultivate method and freedom from biopsychic conditioning—are integrated. This originates in ‘artistic-pedagogical’ action based on the encounter, which occurs when the artist places him- or herself under the influence of another agent, whether it be another actor, the audience, the space, the text, or anything else that is ‘not-me’ and which allows the artist to recognize him- or herself in the other agent. In this sense, the meeting becomes something more than a knee-jerk reaction to stimuli; rather, to recall the thinking of Trungpa (2008), it is what happens when one rescues the ability to find delight in oneself and in the world. It also involves becoming vulnerable without establishing relationships with phenomena based on a defensive attitude.

A discussion of the theatre-mindfulness-contemplative practice relationship from a vertical standpoint poses questions that go beyond rehearsals and debate centred on a performer’s technical/poetic skills. This leads to a need for reflection on the very nature of the artistic work. Formative, creative processes are addressed as both the individual’s journey into the self and training in a freer ‘vision-action’. Finally, technique is equated with the practice of developing individuals, while theatre practice becomes an exercise of full attention.

In conclusion, I point to the potential contributions this discussion can offer regarding the training of performers from a contemplative perspective. To bring contemplative practices and perspectives for discussing the actor’s training into the academic environment allows us to expand the discussion beyond instrumentalism. It is possible to discuss art as a contemplative practice, which means approaching artistic processes as practices of refining attention and exploring the ways body, mind and space relate. It also implies an increasing awareness of the political and relational aspects found in artistic work, as attuning with the materiality of our bodies and environment allows us to explore reality in a more precise way. It is a way to create islands of liberty as said by Grotowski (in Wolford & Schechner, 2001, p. 294), and also, to restore the ancient meaning of theatre as a sacred art, a tool for self-knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is part of the result of the post-doctoral research that I conducted between September 2015 and August 2016 at the University of Huddersfield, UK, funded by CAPES – Coordination for the Improvement of Higher-Education Personnel.

<sup>2</sup> Since then, I have written two dissertations (Plá, 2006; 2012), and various articles and have also presented two papers in conferences.

<sup>3</sup> Where I did a post-doctoral internship funded by CAPES - Coordination for the Improvement of Higher-Education Personnel - in 2015/16.

<sup>4</sup> This issue includes an article from Dr. Deborah Middleton, one of the founders of the Centre for Psychophysical Performance Research, who attended the meeting in Rio de Janeiro in October 2016.

<sup>5</sup> In this sense, we note that the English public health system, the NHS, includes MBSR as one of the therapeutic practices offered as a complement to treat anxiety and depression. Similarly, the Brazilian health system includes meditation and yoga as part of accepted integrative practices.

<sup>6</sup> *Coaching* is a broad definition used in Brazil that includes different methods of counselling aimed at improving the performance of individuals in different areas. It is quite a popular practice in the business milieu.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <[www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree](http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree)>.

<sup>8</sup> I use a capital letter because of the difference placed by different translators between Dharma and dharma. The first term refers to the set of Buddhist teachings; the second refers to a concept of Buddhist cosmology indicating the basic substance that composes the material phenomena.

<sup>9</sup> *Padmasambhava* or *Padmakara*, also known as Guru Rimpoche, means 'Lotus-born', referring to his miraculous birth in the region of Oddiyana, where Pakistan is now located. *Guru Rimpoche*, the 'precious master', is the founder of Tibetan Buddhism and considered the Buddha of our time by practitioners of this lineage.

<sup>10</sup> It is claimed that *Padmasambhava* mystically manifested in eight different ways: *Guru Tsokye Dorje*; *Guru Shakya Sengé*; *Guru Nyima Özer*; *Guru Padmasambhava*; *Guru Loden Choksé*; *Guru Pema Gyalpo*; *Guru Sengé Dradrok*; *Guru Dorje Drolö*. Each of these characters has a hidden meaning that is revealed to the practitioners, but this is not the focus of this article. To learn more about the eight emanations of Guru Rimpoche, see Chogyam Trungpa's book, *Crazy Wisdom*, published by Shambhala Publications (2003).

<sup>11</sup> The Buddhist tradition speaks of six senses, instead of the five cited in the Western cultural context. They are vision, smell, taste, hearing, touch (that includes proprioception), and mind.