Mind the Gap. I am Not a Robot!
MINDFULNESS & REFLEXIVITY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN THE AGE OF “A.I.”

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Lecture Notes

Introductory: Module 1

1. These Notes are intended to facilitate participation in the Lecture which has, as its focus, the Lonergan Mindfulness Method (Self-Appropriation) and Intentionality Analysis (I.A.) and which shows how the Method is or may be practised in search of peace of mind and well-being and mindful reflexive engagement with and ethical use of A.I.

There are “practice moments” intended to be shared with and experienced live by participants rather than simply described on paper. The opening Slide reminds us of our human condition in an increasingly synthetic world where, among other things, A.I is trying to “embody” itself and humans are “digitalising” themselves.

Embodied Mind

2. Mindfulness practices seek, among other things, to “re-connect” or otherwise reinforce (where necessary) the unity of mind and body (“the bodymind”). By “mind” is meant the embodied mind. 4E Cognition means embodied, embedded,
extended and enacted. There is a fifth E, namely Ecological. This will be explained with the help of Slides at the Lecture, e.g. -

1st Practice Moment (< 1 minute): Simple demonstration on how the mind can direct attention from foreground to background to produce a perceptual shift.

What is Mindfulness? (正念).

3. "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" **Jon Kabat-Zinn.** The watch words are intention, attention and attitude (IAA). Mindfulness is reflexive heightened self-awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, caring and discerning way (cf Shapiro and Carlson, 2009). **Intention, Attention, Presence, Gratitude.**

4. There are many forms of meditation such as Yoga, Tai-Chi, Qi-Gong, and/or of incorporating such elements as Mantra-Meditation, Mindful Breathing, Mindful Eating, Mindful Walking, Body Scan and Feeling Tone, Compassion & Loving-Kindness whether or not combined with cognitive behavioural therapies or other approaches such as **MBSR** (for Stress Reduction) and **ACT** (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).

5. The Lonergan Method is not intended to detract from and may be integrated with elements from other forms of practice. Whilst it has its own unique features, it intersects for example with “analytic meditation”. The Method is primarily directed at long-term
peace of mind and happiness and is not limited to temporary relief of anxiety or stress or other negativities (important though such relief is). It offers a means of stepping out of mere reactive doing into being and joyful living!

**What is “The Present Moment”?**

6. Present-Moment meditation is found in practically all forms of Mindfulness. *The here and now is really the only existential moment that we live in.* We are always in a here and now. Cf Martin Buber’s “I and Thou in the Here and Now”

**2nd Practice Moment (<2 minutes): Meditation in and on the Present Moment** with an image of A Moving Still Point (image generated, through prompts, by ChatGPT Smith).

A Moving Still Point

**What is “Intentionality”?**

1. Intentionality refers to the manner in which mental acts are directed to and are always about an object or objects and is a fundamental characteristic of human intentional consciousness. The concept may be traced back to ancient times. It was reflected in the thinking of Aristotle and later of St. Thomas Aquinas among others. It was revived by Franz Brentano (1838-1977). Bernard Lonergan S.J. developed it with unique features in his monumental *Insight* and other works.
Module 2: The Lonergan Method: Intentionality Analysis (“I.A”) and Self Appropriation

2. **The Lonergan Method** called Self Appropriation involves heightened reflexive self-consciousness over the full range of conscious acts. Lonergan identified four integrated levels of intentional consciousness, plus a fifth level.

3. **Intentionality Analysis (“I.A”)** is the hallmark or standard bearer of such “intentional consciousness”. Lonergan stressed that it is not just “about” an object but also the active participation of the subject in the process of knowing.

4. **Self-Appropriation** is a critical realist tool to facilitate heightened awareness of awareness, insight into insight and personal appropriation of one’s own affective and rational self-consciousness, so as to truly know about ourselves in ourselves, mindfully integrating knowing not just with one’s thinking and doing but with the whole of one’s being.

5. **Lonergan’s 4+ levels of knowing and acting.** The dynamic, heuristic and generative four levels of consciousness identified are (1) experience (data of sense and of consciousness) (2) understanding (level of concept) (3) judgment and (4) decision (which involves responsible action-oriented evaluation). Self-appropriation includes the personal appropriation of all 4 levels and beyond, driven by the unrestricted desire to know (“eros of the mind”) and the questions for intelligence or understanding, questions for reflection and questions for deliberation. There is a fifth level, love as a mode of being.

6. **The four precepts are Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable and Be Responsible. The fifth precept is Be in Love.**

7. **“Sublation”** is the dynamic progression from the lower to the higher levels, with feedback loops, engaging different modes of reasoning and fuelled by insight and exigences, physical, moral, intellectual, spiritual and/or religious, preserving insights reached at lower level or levels and transforming them together with insights reached at a higher level or levels. Sublation engages and at same time goes beyond “deduction”, “induction”, “abduction” and includes dialectical, statistical and other methods as well as rules of practical reason.

3rd Practice Moment (< 5 minutes indicating 2 instances within the Lonergan Method).

i. Starting at the 5th level: Be-In-love, focusing on meaning of four types of love, Eros, Philia, Storge and Agape (Greek & Judeo-Christian and/or near-equivalent Chinese concepts: template available to attendees at the lecture)
ii. Engaging all the 4 + levels. Choose a subject in your discipline, e.g. law as a datum to be attended to, as a concept to be understood, as a fact or value to be affirmed and as a rule of conduct to be observed; and love of profession and its best traditions, Rule of Law etc at the 5th level.

NB: In analytic meditation the chosen subject could be anything. It could be a person, but it need not be physical. It may be a virtue such as patience. It may be the thinking process itself.

NB: Reflectivity refers to the act of thinking deeply and critically about one's own thoughts, actions, and experiences. Reflexivity goes beyond reflectivity and involves a higher level of self-awareness and self-reflection, including examining and questioning one's own assumptions, biases, and perspectives.

8. Donald Schón in his influential book “The Reflective Practitioner” (1982) speaks of professionals reflecting in their practice and reflecting on their practice (without explicitly distinguishing between reflectivity and reflexivity). His “epistemology of practice” however has elements of reflexivity. He speaks, too, of problems or loss of confidence arising from “complexity, uncertainty, instability….”

Module 3: Mindful Engagement with and Ethical Use of A.I.

9. A professional in the Age of A1 will need to be a Mindful Reflexive Practitioner to navigate what some two decades ago was called a VUCA world. Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. About a decade later, BANI was added and this year a new acronym CALVIN (see diagram below). Liminality is certainly a defining characteristic of the Age of A.I.: a transitional or in-between state of being, where individuals or groups are in a phase of ambiguity and uncertainty and possible transformation.
Minding the Gap between human intentional consciousness and A.I.

10. **Minding the Gap in this context does not mean trying to bridge what is unbridgeable or ought not be bridged.** It means trying to understand and leverage on human potential and the radical differences between human beings and machines including what I.A. tells us - namely that however awesome and even scary generative A.I and future developments may be (AGI, etc), human beings are their makers and are themselves “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, based on Imago Dei, free will, etc). The greatest deep fake that can be perpetrated is when people are duped into thinking that A.I. is conscious like us and therefore should be accorded equal rights with us.

11. **We should focus on unlocking human potential especially in areas where human beings excel because of their natural make-up and optimise everything that makes us uniquely human, with due regard to the potential and limitations of both I.A. and A.I.** Mindfulness can nurture growth, empathy, emotional intelligence, creativity, renovation, resilience and other deeply human qualities and so-called “soft skills”.

Credit (both Figures above reproduced with permission): Prof. Haydn Chen, Professor Emeritus of Materials at UIUC and with Chief Strategy Officer at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University (NYCU), Taiwan
12. When asked about the gap between human intentional consciousness and A.I., ChatGPT readily admits (1) at the first experiential level, that A.I. “lacks the embodied experience and sensory perception that humans possess” (2) at the 2nd (conceptual) level, that A.I. currently lacks “the depth of human intellectual capacity that humans have” i.e. the intentional consciousness to engage in creative and self-aware critical thinking (3) at the 3rd (rational) and at 4th (axiological) levels that A.I. lacks the ability to engage in self-reflection and make moral or ethical decisions and (4) at what it calls “the transcendental level”, that AI does not possess “the capacity for existential reflection and search for meaning” or “the inherent drive for transcendence”.

Engaging in the wise and ethical use of A.I.

13. The following are some relevant areas, in addition to the need for cross disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue at all levels:

i) **Judicious use of A.I.**, with due regard to the requirements of professional and academic integrity and the needs of sound pedagogy;

ii) **A.I. Literacy across all disciplines, and continuous professional development;** this should include “prompt engineering” or at least “learning to ask” 学问（prompts）

iii) **AI Governance and Use Ethics, including Human Oversight.** These frameworks should lay down the core principles to ensure that AI systems are designed and used in a manner that respects human rights including equal access, fairness, transparency, accountability, data protection and privacy, protection of intellectual property, etc

iv) **Impact Assessment and Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation.**

v) **Control of fake news, deep fakes and AI fraud etc**
Concluding Remarks:

14. There can be no doubt that with the exponential rise of A.I., professional practice, like almost everything else, will be profoundly affected. There will be winners and losers. I understand that A.I. Literacy will become a compulsory subject in HKU and I am impressed with initiatives like the Law in Tech and Tech in Law and the Humans-Working-in-the-Loop projects run by the LITE Lab, HKU. I thank Prof Albert Chen for introducing Mr Brian Tang, the founding executive director of LITE Lab and I am grateful to Mr. Tang himself for explaining to me the exciting programs which LITE Lab has launched or completed. Below is one of the ppt. Slides he has shown me. May I conclude by expressing the wish that HKU will consider establishing, like what Oxford University has done, a Mindfulness and Well Being Centre. I hope there will be provided a course on Lonergan’s Method of Mindfulness. Thank you!

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