

Elina Penttinen (2019) **Emotions and Mindfulness in IR: Moving beyond ‘anti-humanism’**,  
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Anxiety, hopelessness and debilitating fear, these are some of the emotions that my students have voiced to me when they have explained how their experience and world-view has changed after studying International Relations for some time. They had not expected to find that the majority of scholarship in IR depicted a very sinister view of world politics. Neither did they expect that reading these materials would affect them emotionally and they felt there was something wrong with them as they were reacting in this way. They had come to study IR in order to change the world for the better for the actual people living in this world, instead they were offered sophisticated theorizing about world politics, genocide, global inequalities with very little hope in sight. This left many students confused and disillusioned with the scholarship of IR and also hopeless about the future of the human race. And they came to me for help.

The students’ stories also resonated with me as I remembered that once a very long time ago I had also entered into IR also with a sense of enthusiasm and eagerness to find answers to why there is so much war and violence in the world and how to learn from the past so that it would not have to be repeated by the next generations. Even though I never found the answers to such questions, I started to carve out my own room in the discipline of IR by using it as a means of creative thinking and theorizing. Many IR scholars may resonate with this as well: the love for theory, the feeling when a new idea comes, the excitement of doing research and the joy in writing and sharing ideas. However, I noticed that proposing that students do the same was not enough for many of them. As a scholarship dealing with the most important questions, I realized that we could do more than provide sophisticated theorizing about what was wrong in the world. We could also study what was working well in the world, how people recreate their lives after extreme conditions, and how they heal after violence.

In this paper my goal is to challenge the shared anti-humanism in social and political sciences (Coole and Frost 2010) and begin a new conversation on what it means to be human based on recent research

in neurosciences and Buddhist psychology. By shared anti-humanism I refer to both the loss of faith in enlightenment views of humanity in the aftermath of WWII, paving the way for conceptualization of humans as fragile and weak, and the critiques against Enlightenment humanism as an ideology from post-colonialist and post-structuralist perspectives, which emphasize how the ideals of Enlightenment have been used as a means to legitimize oppression and exclusion of non-whites, women and other minority groups. What is also shared in both these anti-humanist approaches is a lack of interest in investigating on what constitutes human well-being and whether humans can have potentiality to change in positive ways. I want to open this conversations in the context of emotion studies in political and social sciences so that we can take positive emotions seriously as well as challenge the implicit anti-humanism which guides towards an (over) emphasis on negative emotions.

My argument in this chapter is that in the light of recent research in neurosciences, scientific study of mindfulness (Wallace 2009) and positive emotions (Fredrickson 2001, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, Sin and Lyubomirsky 2009), the shared anti-humanist conceptualization of human beings is no longer empirically sustainable and thus we can also begin to break free from the hold of anti-humanism. Second, I offer a reconstructive move by proposing mindful IR<sup>1</sup> as a means to account for broader register of experience as well as a practice of looking deeply into how our own conditioning as well as inner landscape of emotions operates in discerning what is valorized as relevant. As such, the practice of mindfulness for International Relations is one step beyond the feminist practice of self-reflectivity, which reflecting on how the social situatedness of the researcher influences the research process (Ackerly and True 2008, Parashar 2016, Wibben 2016). In this way, my chapter offers concrete practices as to how account for the complex process of experience discussed by Ross in chapter two and how we as researchers are also part of an emotional community (See Koschut, ch 5). I emphasize that we as researchers also have ethical responsibility for our own emotions and beliefs and how we communicate with others.

Therefore I wish to show how Buddhist psychology (de Silva 2005, Shonin & al 2015, Nanda 2009), or secular Buddhism, may offer a method which enables to conceptualize the complexity and continuity of emotions in a more comprehensive way, which recognizes that both suffering and liberation from suffering is part of human experience. In other words, loving-kindness and compassion are seen as inherently human qualities which manifest in this world, instead of e.g. something which will be experienced in after-life in the presence of God as in Christian traditions. Therefore, I build on the understanding of emotions both as biological phenomena which arises in the body in response to social environment and in relationships with others as well as in terms of 'inner

environment' emotions arising within in response memories, thoughts and beliefs. These responses can be characterized by dividing them into forms of affect, emotions and feelings as discussed in the introduction. This characterization helps to recognize how some emotional states can be felt more clearly and with conscious awareness and how other emotional states can be more complex, but nevertheless effective. Emotions, feelings and affects also configure the sense of self in relation to others. In Buddhist psychology this is called dependent-origination (Segall 2003) referring to continuous moment by moment process in which our sense of self arises in relation to the flow of feelings, emotions, affects, thoughts, and perceptions of ourselves and others. The human suffering called *dukkha* is in Buddhist psychology seen to result from our instinctual clinging to positive emotions, feelings and affects and aversion from negative emotions and experiences. On the other hand, liberation from suffering results from deep acceptance of the present moment and the ontological impermanence of life with the sense of self-compassion and shared humanity. This refers also to the practice of cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion as a means to transform anger and fear towards those who we believe are the cause of our suffering, which enables to move towards reconciliation based on understanding of our shared humanity.

Secular Buddhist (Kwee 2012, 2015) conceptualization of emotions resonates both with the approach of radical empiricism as discussed by Ross (Ch 2) conceptualization of emotional communities by Koschut (ch 5) as well as the relevance of undoing body mind distinctions as discussed by Auchter (Ch 11) and by recognizing the relevance of complex affective environments and how these are configured in the human experience (Van Rhythoven and Solomon Ch 8). In other words, our own emotional reactions are conditioned by present time cultural processes and norms and thus our emotions are not only 'our own' property or telling of who we are as individuals, nor do our emotions remain the same but are continually changing. Emotional landscapes are also affected by the emotional landscapes of our parents and grandparents through social memory and inter-generational trauma. However, also positive experiences of loving-care and tenderness, sense of connectedness and community are configured in the relationships and passed on to the next generation. This in secular Buddhism is referred to as inter-being. The sense of self arises in relations to others in present and in the past<sup>2</sup>. When mindfulness is applied, we can practice being aware of what it is that arises in the present moment and look deeply into the conditioning of our emotions, feelings and affects. This certainly is similar to western psychotherapeutic practices. However, the difference in Buddhist psychology (Brown & al 2007a, Segall 2003, Shonin & al 2015) is the emphasis on transformation of painful experiences by active orientation of loving-kindness and self-compassion, in order to care for, sooth and transform difficult emotions and access the well-being that is also available in the

present moment. The radical acceptance of the impermanence of life can allow also opening to the beauty that exists in the world and to the realization that life itself is precious.

This chapter is divided as follows. I will first return to the idea of anti-humanism and examine how positive psychology challenges its assumptions. I will discuss new evidence on the relevance of positive emotions as well as what the scientific study of mindfulness offers in terms of rethinking the role of emotions in human experience. This paves the way for the second section in which I discuss how a mindful approach in International Relations can open the possibility of a broader register of emotions in world politics and thus account for the fullness of life-experience without constricting the analysis to negative emotions. Finally, I will address the responsibility of the researcher in the emotional communities created in academic scholarship by drawing on Buddhist psychology and feminist research ethics.

### **Easing the hold of anti-humanism**

In this section I discuss the possibility of challenging the implicit anti-humanist conceptualization of human beings that informs both foundationalist and anti-foundationalist approaches in social sciences. The research on benefits of mindfulness and cultivation of positive emotions is abundant and continually increasing in clinical research in health sciences and psychology (see also Kohl & al 2009, Fredrickson & al 2008, Sibinga & al 2011). In addition, there has been considerable interest in the cognitive and neurosciences in investigating the effect of meditation on brain activity (Kabat-Zinn 2003, Hölzel & al 2011, Raffone & al 2010)<sup>3</sup>, which have led to increased interest in the neuroplasticity of the brain in relation to contemplative practice such as mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation. Even though neuroscientific research does not make philosophical claims about human nature, or aim to reconceptualize what being human means or even challenge behaviorist approaches in any way, the evidence does challenge the premises of anti-humanist conceptualization of human beings as inherently weak, always subject to outside conditions and limited in their capacity to change in ways that support well-being. It offers new insight into how human beings can transform suffering and experience of well-being. Moreover, this research challenges common sense assumptions about happiness to result from favorable conditions or from getting what is wanted and instead shows how experience of joy and happiness is accessible through cultivation of these emotions without any change in outside conditions or life circumstances.

It is also important to recognize how the current dominating paradigm of anti-humanism in social and political theorizing is not universal or ahistorical but has its roots in the devastation of WWII in Europe. In the context of psychology, the impact of the WWII led to an increase in research on trauma, depression and mental illness, and questions of well-being were put aside. However, as the focus on illness became dominant, it led to the generalization that human experience is about languishing and the role of psychology is the alleviation of suffering. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) call this 'illness approach' in psychology, which is based on a norm of human beings as ontologically fragile. It is easy to draw parallels between IR theory and psychology on the shared assumption of human nature and life as constricted by outside conditions emerging from WWII. We learn from the tradition of realism the premise that 'the nature of man is to dominate' or that life is nasty, brutish and short (Walker 2010). And later we learn from post-structuralist theorizing how power/knowledge discourses operate subjects and subjectifies human beings into individuals who embody and reiterate existing power relations in order to be recognized as social subjects and gain agency in the social world (Booth 2005, Coole and Frost 2010).

The shared anti-humanism across positivist and anti-foundationalist approaches is based on two different ways to conceptualize what constitutes human weakness. First, humans can be seen as driven by greed, hatred and aggression if left ungoverned. Or humans can be seen as inherently good and capable of cooperation, but it is the harshness of life and structural inequalities which prevents them from actualizing this potential or that structural inequalities determine individual experience. However, the shared assumption is that humans are fragile, weak and vulnerable and subject to outside forces whether physical or discursive and that these are always beyond the individuals' control (Csikszentmihalyi 2011). The practical implication of this anti-humanist approach is that it leads to focus research on violence, atrocities and trauma without researching how individuals live their everyday lives in the midst of extreme conditions (Chan 2011). This is problematic because, this approach neglects information and evidence of how individuals are able to enact compassion and the capabilities that human beings already express in the midst of adverse circumstances.

According to Fredrickson (2001) the focus on the negative experiences and emotions as more real or pertinent than positive emotions has to do with two different theoretical approaches. First is the action tendency theory, according to which negative emotions are seen as more relevant than positive emotions because negative emotions are associated with actions and responses, whereas positive emotions are seen to lead to inactivity. Another reason is that in the tradition of psychoanalysis positive emotions are rather seen as a form of denial of the real experience of suffering (Fredrickson

and Branigan 2008). In other words positive emotions such as joy, love and amusement are not true, but a means of divert from the inner suffering that a person is unable to face. Inquiry into positive emotions in this case would mean investigating the pain the person is trying to hide. Therefore, positive emotions are seen either as irrelevant as an object of study or inherently suspect.

Currently, the reason why negative emotions are experienced as more relevant in human experience is explained with the concept of *negativity bias* (Fredrickson 2001, Fredrikson and Branigan 2005). This is fundamentally different than the anti-humanist approach. Negativity bias refers to the understanding that negative emotions feel more intensely in the body and thus seem more pertinent and thus more 'real' than positive experiences. An intense emotion of fear, anger, anxiety and depression can be so overwhelming that a person may have the experience that this is all that there is to human experience, and that the pain will never cease. On the other hand, moments of feeling neutral, calm, peaceful, joyful and loving may feel both milder and short lived than negative emotions. In addition, the human mind is inclined to ruminate over negative experiences as a means to learn and avoid pain in the future. Research in neurosciences shows how these thinking patterns create neural pathways which are reinforced over time (Churchland 2012, Hari 2015) which may result in ruminating over the past or worrying about the future as an automatic response instead of being based on responding to actual present threat or problem. Research also shows that these neural pathways can be 'rewired' with the contemplative loving-kindness practice and thus the automatic response to life circumstances can also be changed (Isen 2009, Raffone & al 2010).

A very practical non-mystical answer for the impact of the practice of mindfulness on the brain and body is that meditation reduces anxiety and stress (Borkovex, 2002; Fredrickson, 2009). Mindfulness practice measurably reduces the levels of stress hormones, cortisol and adrenalin, by calming the nervous system down (Brown & al 2003). On the other hand, research on the impact of the stress on the brain (Sokka 2017) also has shown how stressful work environment, burn out, and emotional abuse can be empirically measured by brain imaging techniques. Mindfulness meditation reduces the stress reaction in the body by enabling to calm the mind and cultivating a sense of appreciation which alleviates the effects of chronic stress in the body. The specific practice of compassion and self-compassion during mediation is also associated with the activation of the 'care giving system' (Neff and Germer 2013) associated with the feelings of secure attachment, safety and the oxytosin-opiate system. These are felt as deeply nourishing and induce a feeling of connectedness with others which is integral to well-being. The great paradox of mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn 2003, Brown & al 2007b) and practices of loving-kindness is that these non-goal oriented practices enable greater

resolve to respond to life challenges (see also Langer 2009, Germer and Neff 2015). Integral in the development of scientific study of mindfulness has been the cross-cultural research projects involving Tibetan monks practicing meditations and neuroscientists measuring brain activity during meditation. Understanding the Eastern philosophical tradition of meditation is essential for interpreting the data. The investigation of specific meditative areas, such as positive feelings, compassion and the devotion of a trained long-term monastic practitioner, “show a range of stable patterns of brain activity (‘neural signatures of different mental states’) that have never been observed in naïve subjects, patterns that could be replicated by the subject at will, depending on his choice of meditative practice” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003: p.147).

Research projects show that mindfulness meditation concretely changes brain activity and capacity. It is also shown to increase the density of gray matter in the brain (Hölzel & al 2011). These research projects complement contemporary research on brain plasticity in repairing neurological damage. The benefits of mindfulness based stress-reduction has been researched in relation to e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for war veterans in the US, childhood trauma, anxiety, depression and panic disorders as well as chronic medical conditions (see e.g. Kearney & al 2013, Germer and Neff 2015). The research on positive emotions by Barbara Fredrickson (Fredrickson and Losada 2005, Fredrickson & Branigan 2005, Fredrickson & al 2008) in the context of positive psychology has shown how the active practice of positive emotions such as joy, amusement, relief, love and compassion resulted in the increased experience of well-being and the possibility to build resources for the future. Positive emotions enabled subjects to gain novel insight, creative solutions and experience connectedness (Cohn & al 2009). Practice of positive emotions does not promise that bad things will never happen or that individuals cultivating loving kindness would not experience life crisis or adversities. Rather the claim is that cultivation of positive emotions and mindfulness enables to respond to life crisis with a sense of self-compassion and this enables to bounce back from life’s challenges more easily.

The evidence from scientific research on mindfulness and positive emotions is relevant for the study of emotions in the context of IR, because these offer a more complex understanding of human beings than what is familiar to humanist or anti-humanist traditions. Moreover, understanding how experiences of shared joy, kindness and compassion can be cultivated with contemplative practices challenges us to rethink the validity of the premise of human beings as inherently weak and vulnerable or subjective to outside conditions. It also enables researchers to put the emphasis on fear and hatred

into perspective and recognize that humans are actually capable of broader register of emotions and that positive emotions leads to also to action<sup>4</sup> (Fredrickson and Branigan 2005). This should be taken as a positive challenge to redesign research in critical, post-structuralist as well as feminist approaches in ways that can account for more complexity in understanding what constitutes what human experience and how to research the relevance of emotions in generating behaviors and political outcomes (Langer 2009, Hayes & Feldman 2004). Buddhist psychology, neuroscientific research on mindfulness and research on positive emotions points towards the same thing; that every human being has the capacity to be mindful and to experience deep joy and happiness regardless of outside conditions even though this is not always easy to do (see also Ho ch 9). In the next section I will discuss how this wisdom can be operationalized in the practice of research.

### **Mindful approach to IR**

Buddhist psychology is not intended as an intellectual exercise, but a practice by which one can cultivate loving-kindness and thus lessen greed, ignorance and hatred in oneself and in the world. A mindful approach to IR means acknowledging that as researchers we are not separate or ontologically distinct from the world we study. Throughout this book the argument that is put forth is that emotions matter in social relations and in the contexts of politics. Emotions matter in terms of how humans make evaluations about what is relevant and how they perceive, react or respond to the world around them. Moreover, emotions are something which everyone has and they may not be as private as we would like to believe, but instead are culturally conditioned. The key here is to acknowledge this as being the case also for the researcher herself in the process of research. Thus, this complex experience is not only reserved for the emotions and behaviors of the people and politics we study, but that the emotions we experience are also configured by the research we produce.

In this section I propose how to apply mindfulness in the research process by practicing open-hearted curiosity with three different modes of inquiry. These are first, looking deeply into negative emotions which arise in the research process with the intention of self-kindness and compassion for the suffering these emotions create. Second, is bringing awareness to what feels and seems neutral. Third is the practice of paying attention to positive emotions, such as sense of relief and ease, amusement and joy.



Mindful IR is aligned with feminist methodologies which emphasizes self-reflectivity as an integral part of research ethics as it is important to bring awareness to how the social situatedness of the researcher influences research relationships. Self-reflectivity is a practice of bringing critical awareness to position of privilege of the researcher in terms of access and mobility as well as bringing awareness to representation so as not to reinforce unequal power relations. The level of self-reflectivity that I propose takes this a step further. The goal is to bring mindful awareness to our own emotions, conditioning and beliefs in addition to social situatedness in order to build for mindful action, communication, and research.

These three modes are not intended as a three step process, but rather as three different ways to meet one's own experience with curiosity and compassion. Throughout the practice of mindfulness, i.e. looking deeply, it is imperative to adopt a sense of self-respect and kindness towards what arises. It may very well be that looking deeply into the fears we experience can be too much to bear at a particular moment, perhaps triggering painful memories from the past. Starting with neutral and positive sensations enables to build resolve for the direct observation to the negative emotions as well as disturbing materials, as it is possible to find a place that feels at least neutral in the body if the inquiry becomes too overwhelming. The practice of mindful non-judgmental awareness of emotions has enabled me to engage with difficult materials with greater openness and sense of compassion as I know before going deeply into such materials that I have a methods to care for and sooth my own difficult emotions if these were to arise during research process. In this section I begin with the practice of inquiry into negative emotions simply because these are the main interest areas in research of emotions in IR and often the research on violence, trauma and war can trigger these within the researcher as well.

The practice of looking deeply into negative emotions begins with the intention of taking care of the difficult emotions which arise during the research process. It means acknowledging that reading disturbing materials do disturb us and that witnessing suffering, pain and violence can induce a deep sense of anger, resentment as well as fear for the future of the humankind.

In academic scholarship, there is an implicit demand for researchers to remain neutral or unaffected by the suffering they witness in order to be objective. How this neutrality is supposed to be achieved or practiced is not addressed directly. Remaining objective follows the ideal of the subject/object split which assumes an ontological separation between the self and the world. A mindful approach begins from the ontology of interdependence, hence being is named as inter-being. To inter-be is to recognize

how we are ontologically dependent on nature and with other beings. Without the sun, the clouds that offer rain, or the breath that moves in and out of the body, we would not be here at all. In our own life trajectories, the life experiences of those who came before us can be seen to continue as they might affect the choices we make and influence what we value. Similarly, our actions and speech will create ripples of diffracting waves or complex effects to future generations. In this way the self is never separate from other, but a process of the unfolding of life. Therefore, the task is to take care of the difficult emotions in order to transform them, so as not to continue the cycles of reactivity and thus cause more suffering to continue. As renowned Tibetan monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh explains; we have to diffuse the bombs of anger within ourselves before engaging with the world. Therefore, taking care of ourselves is not a matter of being selfish nor does it limit our capacity to think critically or fight for the cause to end injustice. On the contrary, we are actually taking care of others when we practice self-compassion as the actions taken from the place of (suppressed) anger and fear will only produce more of the same. Therefore, it makes sense to turn towards one's own pain with kindness in order to relieve this suffering. This practice is not necessarily easy to do as our natural human tendency is to react with aversion, by pushing, denying or numbing the pain we experience. Therefore, there needs to be a sense of kindness and compassion that is activated before embarking on the practice of dealing with difficult emotions.

The practice of mindfulness of negative emotions is especially relevant in research relationships with people who have been targets of violence. This requires also awareness how witnessing the suffering of others triggers emotional reactions within us as described above. Compassionate witnessing reminds the witness to practice compassion towards oneself for the difficult emotions which may arise in the process of witnessing the other's pain in order to be able to offer a space for the other person's experience. I have argued elsewhere (Penttinen 2016) that compassionate witnessing enables to give space for the suffering of others without being consumed or overwhelmed by it. Therefore, when witnessing the suffering for example caused by extreme violence, it is not the role of the witness to fall into panic, crisis mode or state of dissociation over the atrocities of the world, but rather be grounded enough to be able to validate the pain the other person has experienced. It is important to remember that compassion is what arises when love meets suffering (Neff and Germer 2013). Therefore suffering is a prerequisite for compassion to arise, without suffering there would not be compassion either.

The second practice involves directing mindful awareness to what feels and seems neutral both within oneself and in the research materials. This is also a difficult practice as that which is neutral may

seem as irrelevant or unimportant as an object of observation. However, the importance of observing what feels or seems neutral enables the researchers to broaden their attention from the experience of painful emotions to include the experiences, events and encounters which would easily go unnoticed or which could be devalued. I have discussed elsewhere (Penttinen 2017) the importance of including non-dramatic moments in the study of gender and peace-keeping in order to broaden the perspective from the habitual focus on spectacular violence (Chan 2011). Taking seriously (Enloe 2013) events and experiences deemed as unimportant enables us to see the basis of how we draw the boundary between the relevant and irrelevant. In the context of peace-keeping, I argued for paying attention to mundane moments and to use these as materials to investigate how gender roles are embodied. Focusing on mundane moments can also be transformative as it enables us to broaden our attention to moments and events when nothing really goes wrong in any drastic way, which actually may be the case in the everyday life of many people in the context of peace-keeping.

The final mode of mindfulness is paying attention to positive emotions in world we study as well as being open to the practice of cultivating positive emotions. As discussed in the previous section, studying positive emotions systematically can feel difficult at first or even as a dangerous diversion in the face of extreme violence, suffering, and complex social and political problems. Similarly, as in paying attention to neutral experiences, opening the possibility to positive emotions means first being ready to question the validity of human experience as inherently vulnerable and weak as well as common sense idea about happiness resulting from favorable conditions or from getting what we want. When these assumptions are treated critically it is possible to reflect on the relevance of positive emotions in ways which anti-humanism does not allow. Opening to the relevance of positive emotions enables to research how a sense of connectedness, love, compassion and shared joy can be present even in constricted conditions such as war and conflict. By teasing out these positive emotions in war-time narratives, it is possible to understand human experience in which experiences of joy, relief and love are experienced in constricted conditions and at times of intense uncertainty.

In my research on joy and war (Penttinen 2013) I found a multitude of stories of moments of relief, joy and connectedness which were integral to the process of enduring the harsh conditions of war and building resilience. For example, in my readings of the memoirs of Finnish female volunteers during the WWII in Finland (Penttinen 2013) in addition to immense sense of uncertainty and tragedy of the at the war front another thread of experience emerged in the women's narratives. The experience of proximity of death opened the sense of savoring the little joys in life, deep appreciation for the close friendships and love relations that were present and a deep sense of compassion also for the suffering

on the enemy side as they were also caught up in the same war, the same destruction, loss of loved ones and harsh winter conditions. The goal in highlighting these stories is not deny or denounce the experiences of horror, exhaustion, fear and intense grief that are present in the war experience, but to examine how compassion, love and joy can arise in constricted conditions.

## **Concluding words**

In this chapter I have approached the study of emotions in International Relations by emphasizing that it is also necessary to bring awareness to how researchers' own emotional world affects the perception and evaluation of what emotions are seen as important. This is a step further from the criteria of self-reflectivity familiar to feminist methodology. A mindful approach means recognizing that we can broaden our perspective from the attention and valorization of the negative to notice also how neutral and positive experiences and moments are available in even difficult conditions and examine how they are relevant. Therefore, it is possible also to direct critical inquiry into anti-humanist conceptualization of human beings, which reduces humans to fragile victims of circumstances.

Similar to feminist methodologies (Ackerly and True 2010), secular Buddhism is an emancipatory project which intends to transform suffering and cultivate peace on a global scale. The objective of feminist politics and research is to advance equality and respect for diversity, as well as transform oppressive structures and discriminatory practices both in the world as well as within academia. However, it is important to remember that Buddhist philosophy and psychology begins with the fundamentally different ontology of the human, human nature and the nature of being than western humanist and anti-humanist philosophies (Huxter & al 2015, Kwee 2015). Rather, than seeing human beings as singular knowing subjects having the capacity to control and take advantage of nature, or inherently frail and at mercy of nature, the conceptualization of human beings begins with the recognition of humans as sentient beings among other non-human animals, plants and the planet earth. Consequently, Buddhism does not conceptually point to the human as the supreme knowing being, because of the capacity to think, but rather approaches thinking as an inner sensation of the body. Thoughts can be named even in denigrating terms as secretions of the mind and thus not something which elevates human beings over other sentient beings. The practice of mindfulness is a means to bring awareness to the thought processes by looking deeply into the many stories of self, which the mind reiterates, and how these are related to cultural constructions, narratives, as well as inter-generational trauma, in order to transform these so that we do not continue cycles of destructive

behavior. As Kwee (2012) notes, secular Buddhism is not the matter of returning to the enlightenment view of humanism, but the emergence of new enlightenment in order to bring harmony in-between-selves. It is a practice that deconstructs all grand narratives of the self, even the anti-humanist one's and invites "a non-clinging openness to the many personal stories of truth" (Kwee 2012).

In this chapter I have offered three modes of inquiry, which enable us to broaden the perspective from the instinctual emphasis on negative emotions to the relevance of neutral as well as positive emotions. With this discussion I wish to suggest that researchers in IR can also profit from caring for difficult emotions by the cultivation of mindfulness in order to ease the experiences of hopelessness and anxiety that are perfectly normal reactions when dealing with difficult materials. The conceptualization of humans as inter-beings in the continuous configuration of life brings emphasis on research ethics in a more comprehensive way. Certainly, increasing suffering in our readers is never a desired outcome. However, it may also be possible to create research which cultivates a sense of hopefulness or even increases well-being.

At a very personal level, a mindful approach means exactly this: do research and write in ethically sustainable ways, which recognize how deeply we are entangled in the emotional communities of IR scholarship and how we contribute to them and others. Barad (2007) talks about the ethics of diffraction, referring to how our actions and words create ripples which intra-act with other waves and create new wave patterns. This approach enables to recognize that our actions do not have only linear causal consequences and points towards a deep sense of responsibility to the ripples that academic scholarship generates. I invite the reader to inquire what this deep sense of responsibility would mean for themselves. For me, it has meant the turn towards research and writing which recognizes also how people recreate their lives after traumatic experiences, and the how compassion and joy is available even in extreme conditions (Penttinen 2013). There is already an expanding stream of research which challenges both the anti-humanism and the instinctual negativity bias within IR. For example, new research on compassion and creativity (Hast 2014) humor and laughter (Särmä 2014) resilience and resistance in the context of illicit migration (Kynsilehto 2011, Kynsilehto and Puumala 2013) and hope and resilience of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone (Vastapuu 2018) has already challenged the unquestioned ontology of suffering in IR, and creates new space for understanding complexity of human experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> I have done Mindfulness basic training, attended vipassana silent retreats since 2013 and completed Mindful self-compassion teacher training in 2016. I have integrated contemplative pedagogy in teaching violence and war as well as designed a mindfulness based academic writing course for doctoral students. This chapter is informed by my own experiences with both practicing mindfulness as well as teaching these practices to students in three different universities in Finland as well as internationally.

<sup>2</sup> This resonates also with the concept of narrative identity, which emphasizes how our sense of self is formed through stories we tell about ourselves and stories others tell about us (see in e.g. Wibben 2011)

<sup>3</sup> The increasing research on the benefits of mindfulness in cognitive science, neurophenomenology and health sciences, clinical studies and psychology has mostly centered on the effects of the practice of mindfulness instead of the philosophical implications. This research is grounded in the work of John Kabat-Zinn, who integrated mindfulness in Western medicine and created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction clinic (MBSR) in Massachusetts in the late 1970s. Since then research has covered the effects of mindfulness on health and healing for a range of physical, emotional and mental disorders (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and continues to show how the practice of mindfulness influences recovery, physical and mental well-being, self-regulation and interpersonal behavior (Brown et al, 2007a, 2007b).