

# **Awakening from the Meaning Crisis: A Journey of Mindfulness and Wisdom**

## **Introduction**

In this article, we delve into the concept of Awakening from the Meaning Crisis. We explore the teachings of Aristotle, his interpretation of reason and wisdom, and the secular aspects of his worldview. Additionally, we discuss the contact-epistemology of conformity theory and its alignment with a plausible, albeit false, geocentric model of the world. This exploration leads us to understand the interplay between our worldview, our understanding of the world, and our existence, creating a harmonious relationship that generates existential modes and meta-meaning.

## **The Axial Revolution in Ancient Greece and Beyond**

After analyzing the axial revolution in ancient Greece, we shift our focus to India. We examine the impact of the Mindfulness revolution, considering it as a response to the Western Meaning Crisis. The convergence of Buddhism and cognitive science becomes an attempt to identify and provide solutions to this crisis.

We begin by exploring the life of Gautama Siddhartha, the embodiment of the axial revolution in ancient India, and his journey towards enlightenment.

## **The Modes of Existence: Possession and Being**

Drawing inspiration from the works of Erich Fromm, Martin Buber, and Stephen Batchelor, we discuss the two modes of existence: the mode of possession and the mode of being. The mode of possession revolves around categorizing and manipulating the world, seeking to solve problems and maintain control. On the other hand, the mode of being focuses on fulfilling existential needs and becoming mature and virtuous through love. We explore the possibility of modal confusion, where one remains trapped in the mode of possession while trying to satisfy the needs of the mode of being.

## **The Myth of the Palace and the Quest for Awakening**

We examine the mythological depiction of Siddhartha's life within the palace, representing a specific existential mode. By leaving the palace, Siddhartha experiences an awakening to the true nature of suffering in the world. However, his attempts to return to the mode of possession prove futile as he encounters sickness, old age, and death—inevitable aspects of human existence. The encounter with a beggar, who embodies a different mode of existence, reveals the profound contrast between Siddhartha's internal turmoil and the inner peace of the beggar.

# **The Disillusionment and the Middle Way**

The experience of disillusionment prompts Siddhartha to pursue the Middle Way, an alternative to the extremes of hedonism and asceticism. Rather than solely denying or indulging in desires, he seeks to optimize his consciousness by transcending the mode of possession. This involves a radical transformation and a rediscovery of the missing mode of existence represented by the beggar's gaze. Siddhartha realizes that the Middle Way is not a compromise but a profound reconfiguration, transcending both indulgence and self-denial.

## **Mindfulness as Remembering the Mode of Being**

Siddhartha begins practicing mindfulness as a technique to remember and reawaken the mode of being. Mindfulness, or "sati," involves a modal form of memory—an embodied recall of a lost mode of existence. It goes beyond mere facts or events and reconnects with the essence of being in a resonant relationship with the world. The article emphasizes that the modern usage of Mindfulness often overlooks this deeper sense of remembering, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive understanding.

## **Awakening from the Meaning Crisis: Mindfulness and Cognitive Science**

The article acknowledges the Mindfulness revolution as a response to the Meaning Crisis in the Western world. However, it also emphasizes the importance of evaluating the scientific work related to Mindfulness critically. By adopting a cognitive science

perspective, we aim to better understand and articulate the concept of Mindfulness. The article draws upon previous research, including the authors.

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# **Understanding Mindfulness: Beyond Metaphors and Concepts**

## **Introduction**

Mindfulness has become increasingly popular in recent years, with many people recognizing its potential benefits for mental well-being and personal growth. However, the language and concepts used to explain and teach mindfulness can often be confusing and misleading. In this article, we will explore the limitations of certain metaphors and the need for a deeper understanding of mindfulness.

## **Mindfulness and its Dual Nature**

To truly grasp the essence of mindfulness, we must acknowledge its dual nature. Mindfulness encompasses both academic explanations and pedagogical practices. It is essential to navigate both realms to avoid confusion and gain a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness.

## **Distinguishing Language and Explanation**

When teaching meditation, contemplation, and practices like Tai Chi, a specific language is employed to facilitate skill development. This language is based on imitation, participation, and the pragmatic context of acquiring skills. However, using the same language unquestioningly for explanations would be an error. Differentiating between the language of training and the language of explanation is crucial to prevent confusion.

## **The Memory Palace Technique and Mindfulness**

The memory palace, also known as the loci method, is a powerful memory technique. It involves visualizing a familiar place, such as a room, and associating specific information with different locations within that space. While this method can effectively enhance memory, it is essential to recognize that it represents a spatial metaphor for memory and does not accurately reflect how memory functions.

## **Mindfulness and the Spatial Metaphor**

The spatial metaphor of memory suggests that memories are static and unchanging representations of specific objects or ideas. It implies that these memories are located in specific places within our minds, and the closer these memories are to each other, the stronger their association. However, empirical evidence contradicts this simplistic understanding of memory.

## **The Flaws of the Spatial Metaphor**

The flaws of the spatial metaphor become evident when we consider how memory operates in real-life situations. We can immediately recognize what we do not know or remember without extensively searching through our mental space. The process of memory retrieval is not akin to sending a little memory servant to explore and retrieve information from a specific location. The language we use, such as "searching" or "recalling," may suggest otherwise, but it does not accurately represent the complexity of memory.

## **Moving Beyond Simplistic Explanations**

The language used to teach mindfulness should not be uncritically integrated into scientific experiments or explanations. While it serves its purpose in facilitating skill development, it is overly simplified and misleading when applied to understanding mindfulness as a whole. To redefine mindfulness and truly grasp its essence, we must reclaim the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama and strive to understand how it can awaken individuals.

## **Rethinking Mindfulness**

To redefine mindfulness, we need to reframe it using existing theoretical frameworks within psychology and cognitive science. Concepts such as attention, insight, enhanced self-regulation, and the psychology of mindfulness can serve as starting points for redefining mindfulness. By understanding the causal and constitutive relationships between these concepts, we can transform the list of mindfulness characteristics into a coherent schema.

## **From Characteristics to Schema**

The characteristics commonly associated with mindfulness, such as presence, non-judgment, insight, and reduced reactivity, need to be reconceptualized as features that can be cultivated. Rather than mere actions, they represent qualities that can be developed. The psychology of attention, insight, and self-regulation provides a theoretical framework for understanding how these characteristics interact and function.

## **The Complexity of Attention**

The phenomenon of attention goes beyond being a spotlight metaphor or a simplistic concept. Attention is a complex optimization process, involving tuning and balancing between extremes. It allows us to engage intimately with the object of our focus, coordinating various cognitive.