Mindful in a Burning House:
Mahāyāna Buddhist Methods and Mental Strategies for Managing and Overcoming Climate Anxiety

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Introduction

> *"Burnt-out people aren't equipped to serve a burning planet. (...) In such a world of accelerating change, the well-being of our hearts and souls must be reestablished to their rightful place as relevant, essential."*
>
> Susanne C. Moser[1]

In 2002, speaking at the Johannesburg Earth Summit, Jacques Chirac — then president of France — famously said: *"Our house is burning down, and we are blind to it"*.[2] He of course used the now wide-spread metaphor — repeated by many from Emmanuel Macron to Greta Thunberg[3] — to refer to the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change, which have become more and more apparent in recent years.[4] 20 years after the summit, during the summer of 2022, temperature records broke all over Europe, in some places by more than 1.5 degrees,[5] while the days around 2023's New Year's Eve saw temperatures as high that are normally only seen in the summer.[6] Extreme weather events, like heatwaves, forest fires and droughts affected agricultural output,[7] contributing to a rising food inflation.[8] The scientific consensus is now clear that the main cause of the rapidly rising temperatures is our way of life,[9] and that it's threatening to break down not only the precious biodiversity of the planet — bringing about the largest extinction event since the dinosaurs[10] — but with it our food supply chain, our habitats, and perhaps our civilization as we know it.[11]

The Lotus Sutra — one of the most influential Buddhist scriptures in the Mahāyāna tradition[12] — includes a famous parable where a father (representing the Buddha) guides his children out of a burning house.[13] But long before the Mahāyāna ever rose to prominence, the image of being surrounded by flames has been used by Buddhists to highlight the predicament of the human condition.[14] The fires that set the world alight in the Buddha's teaching are psychological: the flames of greed *(rāga)*, hatred *(dosa / dveṣa)* and confusion *(moha)* fuel the cycles of suffering that sentient beings find themselves in. Yet these fires — like those burning in fossil fuel plants — are self-created, and according to the Buddha, we have the power to put them out.

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[1] Moser 2020: pt. 6, ch. 6, sec. 4-6

[2] Legagneux et al. 2018: 3. The speech itself can be found at: http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/archives-elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/anglais/speeches_and_documents/2002-2001/fi005004.html

[3] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. I, sec. 4, par. 3

[4] https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/eight-warmest-years-record-witness-upsurge-climate-change-impacts

[5] https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-62833937

[6] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64158283

[7] https://www.copernicus.eu/en/news/news/observer-wrap-europes-summer-2022-heatwave

[8] https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220721-heatflation-how-high-temperatures-drive-up-food-prices

[9] IPCC 2022

[10] Brenner 2019: 139

[11] IPCC 2022, Summary for Policymakers: 14-15

[12] Watson 1993: IX

[13] Lotus Sutra: ch. 3 (Watson 1993: 61)

In the Buddhist tradition it has always been asserted that our mental states and external phenomena are interdependent,[15] so from this perspective it's not a big surprise to recognize a deep connection between the two fires: the "outer" one of climate change, and the "inner" one of our minds.

On the one hand, the outer fires light the inner ones: the growing ecological crisis, paired with the general perception that advances in combating it are ineffective and too slow, create the perfect conditions for hopelessness, despair and anxiety. According to an analysis published in 2021, almost every country is falling short of the actions necessary to reach the target set by the Paris Agreement, a maximum of 1.5 °C warming compared with pre-industrial levels,[16] and instead we are on track for an increase of around 2.7 °C,[17] which according to our current knowledge is likely to trigger a domino-effect of irreversible changes in our environment.[18]

Against this backdrop it is easy to feel that the task of changing course is a gargantuan one, in which individual action is unable to make a meaningful difference — an idea that in itself can be a difficult burden to bear. It's clear that worries about the environment are impairing mental well-being,[19] especially among young people: according to a recent study about climate anxiety's impact on them, about 75% of global youth are afraid for their future due to the climate crisis, with 4 in 10 expressing reservations about having children because of it.[20]

But climate change can also have indirect negative mental health effects: although it is common to consider the COVID-19 pandemic (the first year of which brought about a more than 25% rise in common psychological conditions like depression and anxiety)[21] as an unrelated crisis, world-wide pandemics like it are made more likely with the ongoing destruction of nature.[22] There is scientific evidence showing that aggression, violent crimes and conflicts like the current war in Ukraine — which has its own devastating physical and mental health effects — are also all happening with increased likelihood with increasing temperatures.[23] Perhaps it is also not a coincidence that even before the pandemic, antidepressant use has been constantly rising in many parts of the developed world.[24]

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[14] The *locus classicus* of the "world on fire" symbolism is the Fire Sermon in the Pali Canon (Ādittapariyāya Sutta, SN 35.28).

[15] Dependent origination (Sanskrit: *pratītyasamutpāda*) is one of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, present in virtually every tradition. For a brief introduction of its relevance in the climate crisis, and its understanding in the Mahāyāna, see I.2.

[16] Climate Action Tracker 2021: 7

[17] Climate Action Tracker 2022

[18] McKay et al. 2022

[19] Bellehumeur et al. 2022: 2

[20] Hickman et al. 2021: e867

[21] WHO Executive Summary 2022: 2

On the other hand, the inner fires can also fuel the outer ones: our mental states — through our actions — can have an impact on the unfolding of climate change, so by not addressing its psychological effects, we are risking the creation of a negative feedback-loop. From a Buddhist perspective it is clear that the roots of climate change are directly related to the "triple flames", the three roots of suffering: rampant consumerism[25] and obsession with GDP growth is a manifestation of greed; hatred or aversion (in the Buddhist sense) appears as our disregard for the natural habitats and living conditions of non-human sentient beings (and indeed, many of our less fortunate fellow humans in the global south, who in turn are the least resilient against the effects of climate change);[26] and the failure to recognize how deeply interconnected we really exist with our environment, is of course a form of confusion or ignorance.[27] (Not to mention the outright denial that the problem even exists.)[28]

Mental health problems arising from climate change can make matters worse in many ways, perhaps the most visible of which is the apparent paralysis of individual action brought about by climate anxiety. It is clear that if we are to have a working strategy to deal with the environmental crisis, it's not enough to focus on carbon footprints and green energy: it needs to address mental health as a priority. In fact, that's also the official recommendation of the World Health Organization, published in a recent policy brief for the Stockholm+50 environmental summit.[29]

I believe that Buddhism has meaningful contributions to make on this front. It is a therapeutic tradition that is one of the most ancient precursors of CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy),[30] primarily concerned with relieving internal turmoil; and which during its roughly 2500 years of history has developed a great variety of methods to do just that. In the last decades we have seen greater dialogue evolve between the practitioners of contemplative wisdom and western psychology, leading to the development of a large number of interventions that make use of Buddhist meditation practices. MBSR (Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction) and MBCT (Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy) are examples of effective integrations of mindfulness into western psychotherapy. ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) appears to have several parallels with Buddhism in both its methods and philosophical outlook,[31] while DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) was developed to address borderline personality disorder by adopting principles from Zen.[32] Although efforts have already been made to incorporate Buddhist techniques and spiritual perspectives into psychological practices designed to combat climate anxiety,[33] there is still a lot of room to cover in this regard.

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[22] Atwoli et al. 2021: 2
[23] Anderson et al. 2000, Tiihonen et al. 2017: 4
[24] Brody and Gu 2020: 4
[25] Le Duc 2017: 135
[26] Javanaud 2020: 1
[27] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. III, sec. 4, par. 2
[28] Le Duc 2017: 136
[29] WHO Policy Brief 2022: 1
[30] Murguia and Diaz 2015: 41

My intention with this paper is to contribute in a small way to the work of addressing the mental health aspect of climate change, by further exploring the relationship between the two problems, and by systematically mapping out some of the most relevant Mahāyāna Buddhist mental strategies and interventions that can be put into practice to reduce the effects of, and to overcome climate anxiety.

To do this, I reviewed the teachings given by some of the most relevant contemporary Mahāyāna teachers in connection with climate change and its psychological effects. My most important source is the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh — as he has produced most of the publicly available material on the subject. I also relied on discussions conducted with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, teachings given by the American Tibetan Buddhist nun, Thubten Chodron; the insights of Ven. Master Hsing Yun, founder of the Taiwan-based international Chinese Buddhist organization, *Fo Guang Shan*; and the book of the American Zen Buddhist teacher David R. Loy, *Ecodharma* — an inspiring Buddhist take on how to respond to the climate crisis. I explored the traditional Mahāyāna concepts and practices that lie at the heart of their teachings, in some cases suggesting ways to adapt them to deal with climate anxiety. In an attempt to cover a wide range of approaches in a systematic way, I organized the practices using a thematical framework inspired by the Six Perfections *(pāramitās)*: the six "transcendent virtues" that represent the perfected practices of the bodhisattva, the ideal practitioner of the Mahāyāna tradition.[34]

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[31] Fung 2015: 566

[32] Robins 2002: 51

[33] For arguments about incorporating spirituality and non-Western perspectives into positive psychology in the context of climate change, see: Bellehumeur et al. 2022

My sincere hope is that by empowering people to gain control over their psychological world — both Buddhists and non-Buddhists — humanity will also become more successful at addressing the physical causes and consequences of climate change. With this aspiration in mind, I dedicate my work to the benefit of all.

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[34] Dharmamitra (tr.) 2008: 11

I. The Climate Crisis as a Psychospiritual Problem

1. Spiritual interpretations of an existential threat

Climate change is perhaps the most significant challenge that humanity faces today. Although attention has been drawn to the issue by scientists for decades, we have so far arguably failed to address it with the seriousness it deserves. In recent years, public awareness and concern has been slowly increasing[35] (even though it still lags behind scientific advances),[36] that is likely to be at least partly thanks to the more frequent occurrences of weather anomalies, the noticeable trend of warming[37] (generally in line with predictions from as far back as the 1970s)[38], and the media coverage of linking these to the findings of climate science.[39] Activist groups and initiatives — often organized by young people facing an uncertain future — like the Sunrise Movement, Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, and most recently, Just Stop Oil[40] have been drawing attention to the life-and-death urgency of the situation, and the necessity to radically rethink our way of life and our connection with the planet.[41]

Spiritual traditions have generally been responding to the climate crisis by interpreting it as a sign of an unbalanced or unhealthy relationship between humanity and the natural world. The 2015 encyclical by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* presents "an instrumentalist view of creation" as its root cause, while the *Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis* blames humanity for "overworking" the Earth, and failing to let it rest. Similarly, the *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change* states that humans are called by God to be caretakers *(khalifa)* of the Earth, and the current crisis is a result of not living up to that role. The *Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council Statement* — representing people with traditional native spiritual views — calls for a realignment of the world's population *"with the Creator's Natural Law"*. Many Evangelical Christians seem to express a minority view (at least among religions practiced in the western world) in their skepticism of human-induced climate change.[42]

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[35] Clayton 2020: 8, Thackeray et al. 2020: 1

[36] Rahimi 2020: 1

[37] Bergquist and Warshaw 2019: 4

[38] Hausfather et al. 2020: 5, Herrington: 2021

[39] Pianta and Sisco 2020: 3

[40] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/27/just-stop-oil-expected-to-begin-two-weeks-of-action-in-london-from-monday

[41] Thackeray et al. 2020: 2

[42] Jenkins et al. 2018: 90-92

2. The Buddhist view: climate change and interdependence

a. Buddhism as a "green" religion

Buddhist leaders often emphasize a deep connection between the Dharma and environmental protection. The Dalai Lama — who gave his first statement on the matter in 1990[43] — points to the Buddha's practice in the forests, and the importance of trees in his life story, claiming that if he were alive today, he *"would be Green"*.[44] Thich Nhat Hanh calls the Earth a "great bodhisattva", and the "mother of Buddhas",[45] who is remembered in the Buddhist tradition as having been called to witness the Buddha's awakening, with the Buddha's iconic gesture of "touching the ground".[46] Buddhist scriptures reference "nature spirits" — gods of trees, mountains and rivers — being instructed by the Buddha,[47] implying not just a sacred quality of the natural world, but also that the divide between it and the human realm is not as great as it might seem. In the Pali Canon, we can already find signs that the early Sangha had environmental concerns: monastic rules and stories point to the recognition of the importance of preserving the purity of natural waters and forests.[48]

Buddhist authors generally point to a deep connection between climate change and the fundamental problem of suffering. Both are created by the three poisons of greed, hatred and confusion:[49] in this way striving to solve the climate crisis takes on a soteriological dimension. Climate change is merely a symptom of the unwise way our society functions:[50] The root problem is confusion or ignorance, which in the Buddhist context means failing to see the world as it really is. The antidote to confusion is insight or wisdom *(prajñā)*, which in the Mahāyāna primarily refers to seeing the deeply interconnected and interdependent nature of all things. Humanity's disregard for its environment arises from its inability to see that its existence and well-being depends on that of the natural world around it. By framing our lives as completely separate from nature, we create an illusion that encourages us to act in self-destructive ways.[51]

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[43] Jenkins et al. 2018: 90

[44] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. III, sec. 1

[45] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 29, par. 3

[46] Kohn: 2009: 31

[47] A good illustration of this can be found in the first chapter of the Ksitigarbha Sutra (地藏經), when the Buddha is giving a teaching: "Furthermore, from other lands and the saha world, sea spirits, river spirits, stream spirits, tree spirits, mountain spirits, earth spirits, brook-and-marsh spirits, seedling-and-crop spirits, day spirits, night spirits, space spirits, heaven spirits, food-and-drink spirits, grass-andwood spirits—spirits such as these all came and assembled there." ("復有他方國土及娑婆世界海神、江神、河神、樹神、山神、地神、川澤神、苗稼神、晝神、夜神、空神、天神、飲食神、草木神， 如是等神皆來集會。") Tsai (tr.) (2014): 12-13

[48] Le Duc 2017: 129

[49] Javanaud 2020: 1

[50] Loy 2019: ch 1.

b. Emptiness and "interbeing"

The same idea is expressed with one of the central terms of the Mahāyāna, *emptiness (śūnyatā)*. The first lines of the Heart Sutra — one of the shortest, and most popular Mahāyāna scriptures, and whose central teaching is perceiving emptiness — equates it with insight and awakening:

“行深般若波羅蜜多時，照見五蘊皆空，度一切苦厄。

"(...) when cultivating profound transcendent insight
clearly saw that all the five aggregates are empty,
and with it overcame all suffering."

The text continues with the beautifully symmetric and poetic quadruplet, expressing the idea that all conditioned phenomena is empty, interdependent, without a fixed essence:

色不異空，
空不異色；
色即是空，
空即是色。

"Form is naught but Emptiness,
Emptiness is naught but Form,
Form itself is Emptiness,
Emptiness itself is Form."[52]

While early Buddhism focused on the illusory nature of the individual existence of beings, in the Mahāyāna this idea is extended to all things. Everything is *empty* of substantial self-existence, because everything only exists in relation to other things — everything arises depending on other things. The 2nd century Buddhist philosopher, Nāgārjuna (himself revered as a bodhisattva) explains:

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[51] Javanaud 2020: 9
[52] Own translations.

> *"That which is dependent arising is explained to be emptiness.*
> *That, being a dependent arising, is itself the middle way.*
> *There does not exist anything that is not dependently arisen.*
> *Therefore, there does not exist anything that is not empty."*[53]

Everything that makes human beings human are actually "non-human" elements: our bodies are made up of elements of the external world. Since humans are *empty of humanness,* destroying nature destroys the very support of our existence. Thich Nhat Hanh calls this concept *"interbeing"*, a neologism he coined, that is arguably less frightening to contemporary westerners than "emptiness". He explains that emptiness is just one side of the coin: if we "look deeply" into anything, we find that they are "full" of elements that are not themselves.[54]

c. The Diamond Sutra as "deep ecology": a contemporary Mahāyāna interpretation

A good illustration of interpreting traditional Mahāyāna teachings in the context of the climate crisis — specifically how insight about the nature of existence can serve both soteriological goals and saving the planet in a physical sense — is Thich Nhat Hanh's presentation of the Diamond Sutra.[55] He reframes the text as a *"teaching on deep ecology"*, a meditation practice that helps us to create a healthier relationship with the world, and to heal our "fear, anger, despair and anxiety". He says the sutra is calling on us to "throw away" four fundamental concepts: "self", "human being", "living being", and "life span". This is based on the sutra's radical statement:

> "若菩薩有我相、人相、眾生相、壽者相，即非菩薩。"[56]

> *"If a bodhisattva has a notion of "I",*
> *"human being", "sentient being" or "living being"*[57]

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[53] Treatise on the Middle Way 24.18–19 (Tegchok 2017: 163)

[54] Thich 2012: 417

[55] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 5

[56] Diamond Sutra, ch 3.

[57] 眾生 *(zhòngshēng)* is a technical term, normally translated as "sentient beings". Literally it means a "multitude of living beings", hence my translation in plural. This is what Thich renders as "living being". Slightly more problematic is 壽者 *(shòuzhě)*, where 壽 has the meaning of "life", "longevity", or "age". 者 is normally a grammatical modifier meaning "-er", or "someone who"; so in my opinion, in this context the correct translation of the term would be "one who lives", or "living being". Nevertheless, Thich emphasizes a relevant shade of meaning

> *they are in fact not a bodhisattva."*[58]

Getting rid of the concept of "self" enables us to see that we are not different or separate from the Earth, or the cosmos. Besides creating a more holistic perspective in regards to our actions — according to Thich Nhat Hanh — it frees us from fear, which ultimately comes from a view that projects solid boundaries on a world that in reality has none. Holding on to "self" — our identity — locks us in a narrow perspective, while transcending it leads to a more global view, and greater clarity.

Removing the notion of "human being" results in us no longer trying to protect our species by destroying "non-human" beings. Here he refers to the recurring pattern in Diamond Sutra, that can be described with the formula:

$$A = !A \Rightarrow A = A$$ [59]

"A is not A, therefore it is called A".[60] All things, including humanity, are only themselves due to others. This way we can realize that *"man is present in all things, and all things are present in man"*. Preserving other species means preserving humanity. And likewise, taking care of humanity is a way of taking care of the natural world.

The third notion to overcome is that of "living being", in other words, the distinction between "animate" beings and "inanimate" matter. Thich Nhat Hanh says we can also understand this as a distinction between "mortal" and "immortal", leading to an understanding that the Earth is not just *"inert matter, but a sacred reality that we are also a part of"*. This view can generate love and respect for the planet, along with the realization of our capacity to help.

Finally, the last concept to throw away is that of "life span", which means removing the idea that our life has a beginning and an end. From one perspective, we are born and we die every second. From another perspective, we are part of a continuity that started long before our birth, and which will go on long after we die. This idea can help us *"allow our ancestors, our teachers, the buddha in us"* to act to save the Earth, and helps us realize that our actions have effects long after our

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with his rendering of "life span", which is probably due to the Vietnamese reading of the word.

[58] Own translation.

[59] See: Nagatomo 2010

[60] Several examples from ch 10. of the Diamond Sutra.

lifetimes.

In the following chapter (II.6.a.) we explore a meditation based on this interpretation of the Diamond Sutra as a potential intervention against climate anxiety.

3. Cause and effect: Mental health and the environmental crisis

a. From fear to denial: negative emotional responses to climate change

In recent years increasing attention has been given to the mental health aspect of the climate crisis. Besides the obvious relationship between natural disasters and psychological suffering, a growing number of people are affected by negative emotional responses to the perceived threat of the rapidly changing environment.[61] Since the recognition of these phenomena is relatively recent, many finer details about them — like their long-term mental health implications — are not yet well understood.[62]

Some new terms that have been coined to capture the emotional responses to climate change are "eco-anxiety" (more-or-less synonymous with climate anxiety), the closely connected "eco-paralysis", "solastalgia" (distress caused by the lived experience of environmental destruction), "eco-nostalgia" (perception that a geographic location was better in the past),[63] "eco-guilt",[64] "eco-anger" and "eco-depression". While all these are considered to be negative (or unpleasant) emotions, they differ in the dimension of "activation", or the degree to which they energize or inhibit action. For example depression is a deactivating emotion, leading to inertia, while anxiety is activating, as it prompts avoidance of threat ("flight" of "fight or flight"). Anger is connected with the "fight" aspect of "fight or flight", and it seems that from all eco-emotions, perhaps it is the most adaptive in terms of motivating eco-conscious actions.[65]

The unpleasant nature of these emotions can in part account for the high degree of denial that has been present in society in regards to the climate crisis. Denial is a mental strategy that manifests as negating some fact that causes discomfort,[66] and as such, it can be a also a sign of repressed eco-anxiety.[67] In terms of climate change, denial has been directed at both the reality of the situation ("it's not really happening"), and humanity's responsibility in it ("it might be real, but we didn't cause it"),[68] maintaining both of which views are taking up an increasing amount of energy in the face of growing evidence against the contrary. In this context it's a maladaptive response[69] that not only threatens directly hindering efforts to improve the situation, but which also has political implications by strengthening nationalistic and authoritarian tendencies,[70] which according to the Dalai Lama is the very mentality we have to transcend if we are to face the global issue of climate change with any degree of success.[71] It is worrying that even those who don't deny the reality of the climate crisis, often tend to maintain a large psychological distance from it, by choosing to believe that it will only affect people in far away places, or far off in the future.[72]

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[61] Pihkala 2020: 1

[62] Stanley et al. 2021: 2

[63] Clayton 2020: 6

[64] Pihkala 2020: 1

[65] Stanley et al. 2021: 1

[66] https://dictionary.apa.org/denial

b. Why climate anxiety is a problem

In this paper I am focusing my attention on climate anxiety, which can be viewed in a narrowest sense to mean "the worry, dread, and angst evoked by the awareness of climate change",[73] but which is also increasingly seen as a general term to cover related negative emotional responses to the climate crisis.[74] In this paper I use the term in the narrower sense, but arguably many of the techniques listed can be utilized to deal with other climate emotions as well.

The term that is normally translated as "anxiety" in Buddhism is the Pali *paritassanā.* De Silva describes it as the emotional response to the idea: "I will be annihilated",[75] which is also an appropriate understanding of climate anxiety. It is a mental state that exists on the same emotional continuum with fear, anger and irritation: a manifestation of "hatred" *(dosa / dveṣa)*, sometimes also translated as "aversion". According to the Buddhist tradition, states of consciousness of this nature can be targeted in similar ways, either by generating emotions that are contrary to them (like loving-kindness, compassion or mental fortitude), or by challenging the underlying wrong views, which have to do with a strict delineation between "us" and "them". On a deeper level, anxiety is fuelled by the fundamental "existential angst", or sense of unsatisfactoriness *(dukkha)* arising from the mismatch between the fixation on a fixed "self", and the reality of emptiness and impermanence.

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[67] Pihkala 2020: 6
[68] Brenner 2019: 138
[69] Brenner 2019: 142
[70] Brenner 2019: 138
[71] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. IV, sec. 1, par. 4
[72] Spence et al. 2011: 2
[73] Crandon et al. 2022: 1475
[74] Pihkala 2020: 1
[75] De Silva 1976

Popular media is full of stories about the grief and anxiety in connection with the environment, so much so that Grist magazine called climate anxiety the *"biggest pop-culture trend"* of 2019. With constant access to news and information thanks to technology, anyone can be affected by it, regardless of their location or relative vulnerability or safety. In 2020, two-thirds of Americans reported at least a little anxiety about the environmental crisis,[76] with younger people and children disproportionately affected. But is climate anxiety really a problem? From the perspective of psychology, anxiety, to some degree, can be an adaptive emotion. It encourages an active evaluation of threat, and can help us take a safer course of action. In the case of climate anxiety, this can mean more environmentally conscious choices. There is ongoing research on whether climate anxiety actually enables pro-environmental behavior, but so far the results are inconclusive: some data suggests that the inhibiting and activating aspects of the emotion might be canceling each other out, leading to no measurable effect on actions.[77] We know that fear-based campaigns have mixed effects at best.[78] Even if it turns out that climate anxiety motivates helpful actions on the environment (which some research indicates),[79] it is unclear whether these effects are actually due to healthy coping skills, rather than the direct motivating effects of the emotion. It is also difficult to assert the causal direction of the correlation from the emotion towards action: it might be the case that people who are more likely to engage in environmental behavior are also the ones who are more likely to be anxious about the climate.

In psychology, anxiety is considered maladaptive when it interferes with normal functioning. Recent research using an online survey indicated that 17-27% of the of those experiencing climate anxiety might suffer from serious impairment in their their daily lives.[80] Wider definitions of what "maladaptive" means can also be considered in relation to the fact that a large number of people affected by negative climate emotions plan on having fewer children than they would think ideal.

From a Buddhist perspective, unchecked anxiety is an *akusala*, or "unhealthy", "unskillful" state of mind,[81] because it leads to suffering, which in turn can be the ground of harmful actions. Naturally, if climate anxiety leads to more climate-conscious behavior, it's a fortunate situation, and this active approach in itself can help one to cope with the anxiety. But the nature of the climate crisis is such that individual action produces little visible effects, and the threat seems to be ever-present and growing. Because of its uncertain nature, full adaptation is not possible. These kinds of conditions can enable the anxious state of mind to persist, or to regularly re-occur. This creates more suffering, which not only can lead to more harm, it is also unnecessary: coping with climate anxiety by developing more hope, mindfulness,[82] insight and meaning can be predicted to lead to pro-environmental behavior — perhaps even more reliably than negative climate emotions.[83] On the other hand, without effective coping strategies, avoidance and denial are likely responses to ongoing internal turmoil.

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[76] Clayton 2020: 7-9

[77] Clayton 2020: 14

[78] Stanley et al. 2021: 2

[79] Crandon et al. 2022: 1477

[80] Clayton 2020: 7-11

[81] I use the term "state of mind" for lack of a better one, even though it doesn't do justice to the Buddhist understanding of how the mind works, as it implies something static and persistent. Buddhists conceive of the working of the mind as a flow: the comparable Buddhist term, *citta*, carries with it a meaning of dynamically changing from moment to

There is some evidence that climate anxiety can have a major negative effect on mental health,[84] and that it can lead to more serious problems, like burnout,[85] depression and even suicidal ideation.[86] The psychological concept of "learned helplessness" might be useful to understand how these kinds of outcomes can come about. Martin Seligman — one of the fathers of positive psychology — describes experiments he conducted in the 1960s on dogs. In these experiments the dogs received unavoidable electric shocks at random. After a while they "learned" that nothing they do matters: looking depressed, they "whimpered softly", and passively accepted shocks even at a later point, when they were easily avoidable.[87] Just as dogs, in this uncertain context humans can also come to the conclusion that solving the climate crisis and their negative feelings about it is an insurmountable task, leading to passivity and depression.

c. Climate change and mental health: a feedback loop

In a recent discussion between western scientists, the Dalai Lama, and Greta Thunberg, the scientists introduced His Holiness to the concept of climate feedback loops.[88] These are self-reinforcing processes in the climate: the stronger the warming, the more warming effect they produce. One such feedback loop that was introduced is that of the melting of the permafrost in the

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moment.

[82] Wamsler and Brink 2018: 57

[83] Clayton 2020: 17

[84] Stanley et al. 2021: 3

[85] Pihkala 2020: 2

[86] Clayton 2020: 10

[87] Seligman 2002: 31

[88] The video of the discussion is available on the Dalai Lama's Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9GXgOMMeTg&ab_channel=DalaiLama

tundras. As the layer of frozen ground thaws due to rising temperatures, methane is released into the atmosphere. Methane then contributes to more warming, which leads to more thawing, and so on.

From a Buddhist perspective, the climate crisis and the mental health problems it creates can be seen as forming such a feedback loop.[89] From its earliest periods, Buddhist mind training gave a way for people to deal with catastrophes, but also a way to develop a maturity to prevent creating them.[90] Climate change is a man-made catastrophe, which Buddhists link to the root causes of suffering. But since it was shown that climate change induces its own mental health problems, if it turns out that these have a detrimental effect on environmental efforts, the feedback loop is complete: the more problems we create, the more anxiety we have, which leads to more problems again.[91] And if this is the case, all the more urgent dealing with the mental health aspect of climate change becomes.

It can in fact be shown that climate anxiety and maladaptive coping mechanisms associated with it can hinder pro-environmental behaviors through several related pathways: for example through seeking comfort in denial, averting personal responsibility, increasing nationalism, and "business as usual". Thich Nhat Hanh says: *"if you continue to resist the truth and allow fear, anger, and despair to overwhelm you, you cannot have peace, and you won't have the freedom and clarity you need to help. If all of us panic, we will only accelerate the death of our civilization."*[92]

Denial has already been discussed (3.a.) as a mental strategy that attempts to ease the psychological suffering brought about by the realization of the threats associated by climate change, by dismissing them completely. Playing down the severity or the reality of threats is a common cognitive strategy even in psychotherapy, when dealing with anxiety ("emotion-focused coping"). While this is adaptive in cases where the anxious person is catastrophizing (overestimates threats), it is difficult to overestimate the threat posed to humanity by climate change. Denial can have an obvious negative effect on individual environmental behavior, while on an interpersonal level it can increase the spreading of misinformation. Shifting responsibility through rationalization — constructing narratives where individual action is seen as meaningless or ineffective compared to entities seen as more powerful (i.e. politicians, large corporations) — is a closely related defense mechanism that can hinder societal change.[93]

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[89] The cycles of death and rebirth that make up Samsara, and which are driven by the three poisons is an obvious Buddhist example of a "feedback loop" as well.

[90] Ryu 2019: 12

[91] Wamsler and Bristow 2022: 7

[92] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 20, par. 3

Climate anxiety is caused by a sense of uncertainty and loss of "ontological security".[94] One common response to situations like this is the strengthening of identity through symbols, narratives and rituals. Consequently, climate anxiety can increase nationalistic and authoritarian tendencies. From a Buddhist perspective, strong attachment to national identity is a form of confusion: national identity is a "self" just as illusory as the individual soul. Like any identity, nationalities are defined as arbitrary boundaries to divide "us" from "them". The implications of such boundaries on the climate crisis were made clear when we explored Thich Nhat Hanh's treatment of the Diamond Sutra as an ecological text (1.c.). Both nationalism and the climate crisis is driven by in-group bias: the treatment of members of the out-group (other nationalities or nature itself) as less important than us.[95] This tendency is dangerous, because people tend to have less compassion for those in the out-group.

But in a more practical sense, it is often argued that climate change is the type of problem that by its very nature crosses national boundaries: the weather, the atmosphere, forests and rivers don't respect man-made frontiers. Climate change quite possibly can only be effectively addressed by a joint effort of all of humanity — a narrow-minded focus on national interests can easily hinder the pursuit of the common interest of the planet. Thich Nhat Hanh says: *"We allow political boundaries to obscure our interconnectedness. What we often refer to as patriotism is actually a barrier that prevents us from seeing that we're all children of the same mother. Every country calls its nation a motherland or a fatherland. Every country tries to show how it loves its mother. But in doing so, each country is contributing to the destruction of our larger mother, the Earth. In focusing on our human-made boundaries, we forget that we are co-responsible for the whole planet."*[96]

Finally, in uncertain situations, seeking comfort in the known, the usual and the habitual, is also a common coping mechanism.[97] In the context of the climate crisis however, this can lead to a doubling down on "business as usual", which — since it was what created the problem in the first place — is counterproductive if we want to bring about the cultural shift necessary to combat climate change. David R. Loy argues that one of the ways this manifests is by chasing more economic and technological growth, which ultimately only makes things worse.[98] It is now also a well-known fact that one of the most effective actions individuals can take to protect the environment is to reduce the amount of meat and dairy products — especially beef — they consume.[99] But the stress of climate anxiety can easily inhibit people's ability to change their diet (which is often also connected to one's identity); a stress that can be predicted to get worse, if climate change increases food prices, and reduces the available variety.

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[93] https://thubtenchodron.org/2010/09/environmental-action-without-fear/
[94] Clayton 2020: 5
[95] Wamsler and Bristow 2022: 6
[96] Thich 2013: ch. 4, sec. 4
[97] Dahlqvist et al. 2008: 480

d. Mahāyāna practices as meaning-focused coping with climate anxiety

The development of effective interventions for the treatment of climate anxiety is the subject of ongoing research.[100] This work is intended to be a small contribution to this effort, by examining the problem from a Mahāyāna Buddhist perspective, and by providing some examples of actual methods that are either suggested by contemporary teachers as effective strategies to deal with climate anxiety, or traditional techniques that can be utilized to this end. As Buddhist techniques have been effectively adapted in the context of evidence-based psychotherapies to address different mental health issues in the past, I am optimistic that this work can inspire the development of more effective interventions.

It is also my hope that these methods can empower individuals to use healthier ways of coping, regardless of their spiritual alliances. It must be emphasized that the responsibility of combating the problems of climate change and climate anxiety can not be delegated solely to individuals. However, personal effort in handling the mental health aspect of the environmental crisis is a necessary part of the equation.[101] From a Buddhist perspective, social transformation can't be separated from personal transformation — as society is made of people, the two mutually depend on each other.[102]

Generally speaking, Mahāyāna Buddhism deals with unskillful mental states through the cultivation of (or in some sense, accessing our innate)[103] compassion and insight. These two are regarded as two aspects of the same purity of the awakened mind, and are unimaginable without each other: for example an essential part of insight is the recognition of universal suffering, the same suffering that forms the basis of the development of compassion. Compassion leads to the breaking down of the perceived boundaries between self and other, which can help practitioners to get a glimpse of the empty and interconnected nature of all beings.[104]

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[98] Loy 2019: Introduction
[99] Sun et al. 2022
[100] Crandon et al. 2022: 1478
[101] Clayton 2020: 21
[102] Ryu 2019: 14
[103] One of the basic ideas of the Mahāyāna is "Buddha-nature", which is seen as the inherent potential for awakening, or a dormant buddhahood in all beings.

Handling climate anxiety with insight can mean challenging the underlying assumptions that contribute to it (not unlike CBT), and developing a mindful understanding of the ways of how the emotion operates, along with its relationship with reality. Nurturing compassion is necessary to approach one's own suffering with care and kindness, and to gain strength from the recognition of the shared nature of the experience of the climate crisis. It is also a mental skill that directly combats mental states that are rooted in aversion: anger, hatred, but also fear and anxiety.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattvas embody the twin ideals of perfected insight and compassion. They are great practitioners who aspire to reach awakening, with the ultimate aim of becoming Buddhas, and saving all beings. This compassionate aspiration to reach buddhahood is called *bodhicitta*: "the mind of awakening". The bodhisattva's project is not unlike overcoming the climate crisis: facing an immeasurable sea of suffering can seem hopeless and overwhelming. For this very reason, cultivating resilience, hope and joy have always been very practical concerns for Mahāyāna practitioners.

The bodhisattva's insight and compassion manifest as the Six Perfections *(pāramitā)*: six "transcendent"[105] virtues or skills that are developed on the path to awakening. The practices of the bodhisattva — including those that can be utilized against climate anxiety — can be seen as embodiments of these six qualities. In order to better understand the traditional context of the practices presented in this paper, I decided to categorize them in a framework that is based on the Six Perfections. This approach also emphasizes that while these methods can be powerful in themselves, traditionally they have been employed together, and this is the way they can be the most effective.

The six categories or "themes" of interventions I designated based on the *pāramitās* are:

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[104] Lee and Oh 2019: 139

[105] The word *pāramitā* has a dual etymology. On the one hand, it means "most excellent" or "perfection". On the other hand, it has been widely interpreted by practitioners to mean "that which has gone beyond" — often translated by the English word "transcendent".

1. Dāna: compassion, gratitude and generosity
2. Śīla: integrity, responsibility and forgiveness
3. Kṣānti: courage, resilience and acceptance
4. Vīrya: energy, connection, and joy
5. Dhyāna: openness, mindfulness and peace
6. Prajñā: insight, meaning and transcendence

Coping strategies are often classified as being either "emotion-focused", or "problem-focused".[106] Emotion-focused coping is aimed at attempting to reduce the uncomfortable emotional response, while problem-focused coping attempts to solve the issue by solving the underlying problem. In the context of climate anxiety, an emotion-focused strategy would only be aimed at reducing the suffering brought on by the overwhelming nature of the climate crisis; a problem-focused method would try to address climate change itself. Unfortunately in themselves, none of these approaches seem fully satisfactory: as the crisis progresses, we are brought face-to-face with its reality, so managing emotional responses can become increasingly difficult; solving the "problem" purely through the virtue of individual effort also seems unrealistic.

From a Mahāyāna Buddhist perspective, dealing with climate anxiety is a more holistic endeavor, as it involves both aspects of the work. We have already looked at how the same psychological forces are at play behind both climate emotions and climate change itself. This means that — as both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh[107] asserts — any method that truly addresses climate anxiety will also be "climate action". For this reason the interventions presented here can be seen as representing a third category: meaning-focused coping.[108] This type of approach involves fostering helpful attitudes by "cognitive restructuring" — shifting perspectives of the problem, and focusing on meaning and potential positive outcomes. Research shows that meaning-focused strategies of dealing with negative climate emotions not only improve individual well-being, but they also motivate climate-conscious action.

These "bodhisattva practices" are not strictly psychological in the western sense, as they developed within a specific spiritual and soteriological context. At the same time, there is nothing inherently "religious" about them: there is no required belief in spiritual entities or reincarnation, no need to join churches or organizations, or to engage in rituals that are supposed to work in supernatural ways. As Thich Nhat Hanh points out: *"the world doesn't need another ideology"*.[109] All we need to do is look deeper, and be more connected to how our minds work.

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[106] Clayton 2020: 16. Other recognized categories are: meaning-focused and social coping. (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559031/)

[107] Thich 2013: ch. 2, sec. 4

[108] Clayton 2020: 17

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[109] Thich 2021: part II, par. 3

II. The "Bodhisattva Way" of Dealing with Climate Anxiety

1. Dāna: compassion, gratitude and generosity

a. Compassion (and gratitude) meditation grounded in climate-suffering

According to the Dalai Lama, compassion is the very essence of the Mahāyāna. The bodhisattva's two defining qualities are compassion and insight. *Prajñā* is the last paramita, the culmination of the path. Compassion can be seen as the beginning, the primary motivation of the Mahāyāna practitioner.[110]

Dāna in its purest form is about giving. Compassion has been regarded as a form of giving or generosity in the Buddhist tradition: practicing it means giving beings safety and "fearlessness".[111] In other words, by cultivating compassion, we are making ourselves less of a threat to others. But giving — in the extended sense it is understood in Buddhism — helping others through various means (by giving gifts, assistance, or teaching the Dharma) is the very manifestation of compassion. Cultivating compassion in meditation is just one half of the equation, true compassion also gains expression in actually serving the benefit of others. Still, it's an important half: it is a skill that needs to be cultivated just like any other. Incidentally, cultivating compassion is a practice that can benefit mental health, especially problems related to anxiety.

The Dalai Lama frequently emphasizes compassion as an essential element of mental well-being. He says: *"if one is seriously concerned about one's well-being, one has to really open up one's heart and create space for others."*[112] One way compassion operates is by generating joy (activating parts of the brain associated with positive emotions),[113] which counteracts the negative emotions, including anxiety. But perhaps more importantly, as a state of mind focused on the transpersonal, it counteracts self-centeredness, and the sense of being separate from others. This sense of separateness — that in the Buddhist view underlies all forms of anxiety, including climate anxiety — is directly challenged by compassion. The *Mettanisamsa Sutta*[114] in the Pali canon enumerates eleven benefits to the closely related mental quality of loving-kindness or metta (while compassion is the wish to free others from suffering, loving-kindness is wishing others well), including sleeping well and without bad dreams (implying inner peace), waking up refreshed, being well-liked, and being able to concentrate well.

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[110] Lee and Oh 2019: 137

[111] Kilby 2022: 3

[112] https://www.mindandlife.org/media/embracing-hope-in-times-of-crisis-6-lessons-from-the-dalai-lama-and-leading-scientists/

[113] Ray 2020: 98

[114] AN 11.16

Scientific research also appears to corroborate the positive effects of compassion cultivation: a recent meta-analysis found that compassion-based interventions rooted in Buddhist practices significantly reduce anxiety, depression, and distress, while also significantly improving overall well-being.[115]

The Buddhist notion and practice of compassion is not exactly the same as what we generally understand under it in western cultures. One major difference is that Buddhist compassion is not entirely other-focused: it also includes oneself.[116] The aim is not to focus on others' well-being at the cost of one's own, but rather to regard all beings — one's self included — as equals (in the sense of being suffering, sentient beings), and not truly separate from each other, thereby transcending the implied dualism. For this reason self-compassion is an essential component of the practice. Furthermore, regular self-compassion practice is recommended for clinicians, climate change educators and activits as a way to fight burnout.[117]

Precautions must also be taken that the notion of compassion is not confused with the related ideas of mere empathy (which according to the Dalai Lama, is the starting point of compassion) and pity. Empathy might be able to relate to the other person's suffering, but it doesn't extend into becoming a motivation to prevent or heal it. It is also associated with feeling pain and distress, as opposed to compassion, which is associated with positive feelings.[118] Compassion places oneself on the same level as others, while pity implies a sense of superiority.

There are a number of traditional ways in which compassion meditation can be practiced. Here I present a method based on a description given by the Dalai Lama, that has four consecutive steps.[119] Three of these are members of the four *brahmavihārās* (divine or boundless states of mind), which represent four aspects of the Buddhist conception of love. The second step is the cultivation of gratitude, which loosely corresponds to the remaining *brahmavihārā*, altruistic joy *(muditā)*. This is one of the reasons I chose to present this particular method: it integrates gratitude practice, which not only helps the development of compassion, but is also strongly associated with several measures of well-being, as well as having some protective effects against anxiety.[120] Thich Nhat Hanh also recommends developing gratitude by reflecting on the generosity of the Earth, as a way to develop joy, which — he says — can make us more resilient when facing our anxiety.[121]

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[115] Lee and Oh 2019: 133
[116] Ray 2020: 109
[117] Kelly 2017: 37
[118] Ray 2020: 98
[119] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2005: 29-96, Barad 2007: 23

As the practice starts with equanimity *(upekṣā),* we set the stage to practice compassion as a detached, peaceful state of mind, that we can extend to everyone equally.[122] The next step is the practice of gratitude, which is a sense of joy that we experience because of others — this reminds us that it is not only suffering, but also happiness that can connect us in a fuller experience of compassion. Finally, before we approach suffering, we focus on wishing well to all beings, by practicing loving-kindness *(maitrī).*

The practice can be summarized like this: we start practicing equanimity by picturing three specific people in front of us: a friend, an enemy, and someone neutral. We reflect on the idea that at any given time none of these people are more likely to harm or help us. Any harm or help is something fleeting and temporary: so it is an unrealistic and arbitrary basis to designate someone as "friend" or "enemy" based on this. Once we really understand this, we should feel a sense of equanimity towards all three people. We then gradually extend this feeling to all beings in all directions.

In the next step, in cultivating gratitude, we reflect on all the kindness that has been shown by others. Everything we have, even our very bodies are the products of other beings. If it was not for other beings, we would not have anything to eat, we wouldn't have clothes to wear, we wouldn't have houses where we can live. It is a reminder to appreciate everything that brings us life, health, comfort and happiness as coming from others.

In the last two steps we first return kindness to all beings, by wishing them health and happiness, then by recognizing that they all experience suffering, we wish them to be free from it. Both of these steps can start with oneself, then expand gradually in all directions.[123] To make the practice more relevant to climate anxiety, in the last step we can focus on our own climate-related suffering, then developing compassion for ourselves, we extend that to all beings, considering their potential suffering due to climate change or climate anxiety. Additionally we may reflect on the suffering and guilt of those who we feel most responsible for the climate crisis. By extending compassion this way, we can challenge our in-group bias, and lessen internal tension.

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[120] Cregg and Cheavens 2021: 414

[121] Thich 2013: ch. 2, sec. 2, par. 4

[122] Lee and Oh 2019: 136

[123] In some cases, for example those who experienced abuse, extending loving-kindness and compassion towards oneself can initially be difficult. If this is the case, it is advised to extend these attitudes first towards those who are considered "easy to love".

Besides easing anxiety, compassion cultivated this way can be expected to motivate pro-environmental behavior,[124] by reframing these in the context of compassion. If we remind ourselves that climate change has the potential to worsen the suffering of countless beings, everyday choices like choosing a train instead of our car, or opting for the vegan option instead of the hamburger can become meaningful acts of compassion and climate action.

b. Taking and giving meditation: transforming climate-suffering

Another method with which a compassionate and generous attitude can be developed is the "taking and giving" meditation, known in Tibetan as *tonglen*. This is a Tibetan Buddhist practice whose traditional aim is to deconstruct our self-centered attitude, but it is specifically recommended by Thubten Chodron — a famous contemporary American Tibetan Buddhist nun — as a way to deal with feeling overwhelmed about climate change, especially as a way of remaining connected to others, and strengthening a sense of agency even when we feel powerless to help.[125] A version of the practice is also described in the online Buddhist magazine Tricycle, as it is taught by Ogyen Trinley Dorje — also known as the 17th Karmapa — to deal with climate despair.[126] Another name of the practice is "exchanging ourselves with others", and it is the seventh aphorism in Chekawa Yeshe Dorje's *lojong* (mind training slogans), written in the 12th century. Although currently there aren't many studies analyzing the effects of *tonglen* meditation on anxiety, based on what we know about related practices it can be assumed that therapeutic benefits can be gained from utilizing it. This can be the topic of further research.

Ogyen Trinley Dorje suggests preparing for the practice by sitting down, and acknowledging the support of the earth beneath us. He says we have to recognize our own climate anxiety with compassion, understanding that our worry can also be taken as a sign of our own compassion for the world, nature and wildlife. Difficult emotions should be let to flow into the earth beneath us. Next, we should focus on the breath, and recognize that the air that keeps us alive comes from the trees, the plants, and the oceans around us. This realization should develop into an understanding that

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124 Lee and Oh 2019: 141

125 https://thubtenchodron.org/2010/09/environmental-action-without-fear/

126 https://tricycle.org/article/eco-anxiety-meditation/

everything that keeps us alive comes from nature. Knowing this, we should "inhale the Earth's compassion, and exhale gratitude".

The Dalai Lama gives a practical description of the taking and giving meditation in his teaching about the Eight Verses of Training the Mind by the 11th century Kadampa master Geshe Langri Thangpa.[127] The seventh verse says:

"In brief, may I offer benefit and joy
To all my mothers, both directly and indirectly,
May I quietly take upon myself
All hurts and pains of my mothers."[128]

The practice can immediately follow the compassion meditation described above, to gain sufficient motivation. The Dalai Lama says it's helpful to sense the suffering of beings until it is "almost unbearable". (Ogyen Trinley Dorje suggests focusing on a single being, that can be a person, an animal, or even a river). Here also we can "tune in" to all the pain and mental anguish the climate crisis brings to beings. Visualizing all their suffering, the causes of suffering, and their negative thoughts and emotions as a dark smoke, we consciously take it all in, seeing it as it dissolves into us. This action emphasizes the voluntary nature of compassion, which increases resilience and a sense of agency.[129] We express to ourselves, that we are capable of taking in all the suffering, and transforming it into something positive, which is the next step. We focus on our own positive qualities and emotions, our insight and virtuous actions; then visualizing it as a white beam of light, we share it with all beings, healing their suffering. We are transforming suffering into healing — Thich Nhat Hanh says we can work with negative emotions like composting: with mindfulness and compassion the "compost" can be turned into "flowers".[130] In Chekawa Yeshe Dorje's description of the exercise, we alternate between the "taking" and the "giving" phases while breathing in and out, respectively. Ogyen Trinley Dorje suggests taking breaks by becoming grounded in the Earth's compassion if the practice becomes overwhelming. He also encourages us to finish the practice by returning to the preparatory breathing exercise.

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[127] https://www.dalailama.com/teachings/training-the-mind/training-the-mind-verse-8

[128] The image of motherhood is often connected to the practice of loving-kindness and compassion in Buddhism. The Karaniya Metta Sutta instructs practitioners to love beings like a mother loves her "only child". The verse refers to another common compassion cultivation method, where the practitioner reflects on the idea that in a beginningless series of rebirth, all currently living beings could have been our mothers in the past, caring for us.

[129] Barad 2007: 23

[130] Thich 2012: ch.14

Although the Dalai Lama emphasizes that quite probably *tonglen* practice will not have a material effect on the beings we visualize (because the actual point is training our own mind), it's interesting to note that there has been some research that attempted to investigate if such effects exist.[131]

2. Śīla: integrity, responsibility and forgiveness

a. Cultivating personal responsibility and agency through repentance practice

One dimension of climate anxiety is feeling overwhelmed and powerless against the changes that are happening. This can be counteracted by developing and expressing a sense of personal responsibility. The importance of taking universal responsibility for tackling the climate crisis is emphasized by the Dalai Lama in his recent book "Our Only Home".[132] Thubten Chodron points out that placing the blame and the onus of action only on CEOs and politicians is just a way that we practice helplessness and justify our lack of involvement.[133]

Repentance is an important Mahāyāna practice that has the potential to enhance one's sense of personal agency and power. It can perhaps be most useful to those whose anxiety includes shades of shame and eco-guilt. Adapting repentance practice to psychotherapies in the west is not without difficulties: it might be perceived as too moralistic, and due to existing conceptions of the Catholic practice of confession it might create confusion as to how it can function in a secular context.[134] Nevertheless, some studies already demonstrated positive psychological effects of repentance practices originating in different cultural backgrounds: for example recently it has been shown that Islamic repentance was helpful in relieving anxiety symptoms in university students.[135]

Mahāyāna repentance evolved from early Buddhist monastic practice, where monks confessed their misdeeds in front of the community. Today it is practiced by monastics and laity alike: it's an important ritual that exists in several different versions. In Chinese Buddhist temples, the Great Compassion Repentance, Repentance in Front of Eighty-eight Buddhas, and Emperor Liang's Repentance are some of the most often performed services. It is not only considered to be a necessary condition of meditation practice (to cleanse one's conscience of disturbing thoughts arising from negative actions), but it has soteriological significance on its own: there are several traditional Chinese Buddhist stories of practitioners achieving awakening as a result of repentance.[136]

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[131] Pagliaro et al. 2016. The results provided no evidence of distant healing effects of *tonglen* meditation.

[132] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. IV, sec. 2

[133] https://thubtenchodron.org/2010/09/environmental-action-without-fear/

[134] Eckel 1997: 122

[135] Uyun et al. 2019: 188

The practice in general has three main stages: (1) reflecting on one's harmful actions, (2) confessing these in front of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and (3) vowing not to commit such actions again. The process is thought to have a purifying effect on the practitioner, as the positive karma or "merit" raised counteracts the negative results of the confessed actions — this effect is often strengthened by chanting sutras and *dhāraṇīs* that are also supposed to have a positive karmic impact. We can think of the whole process as a ritualized method of "self-forgiveness": one's inherent wisdom and compassion is externalized as the enlightened beings invoked, and as their forgiveness is sought, in effect one's own forgiveness is actualized. Ultimately, it is enlightened insight that truly "forgives", or eliminates the karmic effects of negative actions. The Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra — also called "Repentance Sutra" due to Samantabhadra bodhisattva's association with the practice — poetically says:

"The ocean of impediment of all karma
Is produced from one's false imagination.
Should one wish to repent of it
Let him sit upright and meditate
on the true aspect of reality.
All sins are just as frost and dew,
So wisdom's sun can disperse them."[137]

Following the structure outlined above, the actual adaptation of Mahāyāna repentance practice to increase a sense of personal agency and responsibility in the context of the climate crisis can take the following form:

First, we reflect on our roles in the unfolding crisis. We explore our own actions that we know are contributions to climate change. When we encounter thoughts that want to shift responsibility, we can directly challenge our narratives of powerlessness by recognizing that we, and our actions are parts of the same system as the greatest emitters. The big corporations and governments are not fundamentally different or separate from us. For example, if we had never bought products or services that contributed to climate change, we wouldn't be where we are now. Perhaps we wouldn't be *much* better off, but we would still *be better off*.

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[136] Greene 2021: 159
[137] Kato (tr.) 1993: 224

When we feel sufficient remorse, we can visualize being surrounded by beings whom we regard as moral authorities — a secular version of being in the presence of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, but of course we can visualize them as well, if we feel comfortable with what they represent. We can imagine our ancestors, notable figures like the Dalai Lama — anyone who we think of as morally upright. At this point we can use a ritual text — either in silent meditation, or by saying it out loud — adapted from the vows of Samantabhadra in the Avatamsaka Sutra (commonly used in repentance):

All my actions that have contributed to the climate crisis,
Ever since I have been alive,
Arising from ignorance, prioritizing comfort, or simply not caring,
Wrong thoughts, speech and acts,
I now repent them all.[138]

At this point we can visualize the noble beings we are surrounded with extending their love and forgiveness to us. If we find it hard to receive forgiveness, to forgive ourselves, or to let it all go, it might be useful to meditate on the empty nature on our actions (if we can), as instructed by the Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra: we can see our actions as resulting from our upbringing, our genetics, our social conditioning, ultimately without a real "doer". Finally, we declare our commitment that in the future we do our best to avoid contributing further to climate change as much as we can.

The final act in Mahāyāna rituals is the "dedication of merit". This is also a kind of compassion practice, where the good (karmic) results are dedicated and "transferred" to those who need it more. In this "climate repentance" practice we can take the "energy" of our self-forgiveness, and direct it to those who did more for the degradation of the climate than us, realizing that they are also suffering beings. This can ease internal tensions, and thus contribute to more peace of mind.[139]

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138 The original reads: "我昔所造諸惡業，皆由無始貪恚癡， 從身語意之所生，一切我今皆懺悔"□ Own translation: "All my evil actions in the past, all due to greed, hatred and confusion from beginningless time, arising in body, speech and mind, I now repent them all.

139 Lin 2021: 267

b. Cultivating integrity by taking an "ecosattva" vow

Taking vows *(praṇidhāna)* in the Mahāyāna begins where repentance ends: whereas the latter is focused on past negative action and avoiding them in the future, vows are future-oriented, and often entail something positive. The semantic field of the corresponding Chinese term 願 *(yuàn)* includes "wish", "desire" and "vow", but it is perhaps most aptly interpreted as "aspiration". "Vow" is commonly used to translate the term, so I will continue to use it in this paper.

The most important vow in the Mahāyāna is that of the bodhisattva: it's the expression of *bodhicitta*, the aspiration to liberate all sentient beings through reaching buddhahood. David R. Loy, American Zen Buddhist teacher, in his book *Ecodharma* suggests that in our current circumstances — for the welfare of all beings — we take an "ecosattva vow" to commit ourselves to transforming our actions to tackle climate change.[140]

Śīla is often translated as "ethics" or "morality", but I prefer the term "integrity". As we have seen it in the repentance text, in the Buddhist tradition actions are often imagined as happening on three interconnected levels, or "faculties": body, speech and mind. The mind is the source, whatever mental state we have is going to be expressed in our speech, and finally, in our actions. But these in turn have an effect on our mind, reinforcing or changing our deep-seated habitual tendencies and mental patterns. Śīla is about bringing body, speech and mind in harmony: in other words, it means living authentically, according to our values. When we are taking a vow, we are expressing our positive mental aspirations (mind) with our speech, culminating in bodily action: the three faculties are in harmony.

In positive psychology, integrity is seen as a very important character trait. Research shows that people who live with integrity are often more successful,[141] and have better romantic relationships than others.[142] More crucially to this present paper, it seems that moral integrity is negatively associated with anxiety.[143] Thich Nhat Hanh explains that even if the outcome of the climate crisis is uncertain, doing what we can to the best of our abilities, already brings a degree of peace.[144]

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140 Loy 2019: Appendix 4
141Rogers 1961
142 Steen 2003
143 Olson 2002: 26
144 Thich 2021: part I, ch. 20, par. 3

Actively doing something to save the planet is already a form of therapy for climate anxiety.[145] ACT also places an emphasis on the therapeutic role of setting goals consistent with our values: in this sense, a vow is more-or-less the same as a "committed action".[146] Similarly to the repentance practice, taking a vow and following through is a way of cultivating personal power, agency and responsibility, and in this way it can counteract the powerlessness that some people experience with negative climate emotions.

Ven. Master Hsing Yun — in a teaching he gave about the climate crisis — recounts a jataka tale about a previous life of the Buddha, when he was a parrot.[147] When his forest was on fire, he started taking water in his beak to put it out. Although the task seemed insurmountable, he just kept on going. The gods were so impressed by his "vow", that they put out the fire themselves, and saved the forest. The moral of the story is that we never truly know how anything is going to turn out, but making a vow, and taking action about what is right is already a worthwhile effort.

What should an ecosattva vow look like? Exploring one's values, introspectively uncovering what is truly important in one's life is a good preliminary exercise. We can reflect on what is truly in our power, what and how we can change in our life to live in a more environmentally conscious way. It can take any shape from recycling more diligently to dedicating our life to climate activism. We can start within by vowing to train ourselves to become more mindful. Thich Nhat Hanh says: *"there's one thing we have the power to change, which will make all the difference, and that is our mind."*[148] He suggests taking inspiration from people who already made aspirations to help others — doctors, nurses, social workers — whom he regards as manifestations of Ksitigarbha bodhisattva, known for making a vow to empty all hell realms.[149] One form that our aspiration can take is cultivating three positive aspects of our personality: that of the "inner artist, meditator, and warrior". The artist is creative, and sees beauty and joy in all things, the meditator trains the mind diligently, and the warrior perseveres in the face of difficulties.[150]

We can also take inspiration from the five precepts, the "training vows" that are traditionally considered to be the foundations of *Śīla*. They are: avoiding killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, wrong speech and intoxication. One way of integrating the spirit of the first precept is suggested by the Dalai Lama: he suggests reducing meat consumption, or to go fully vegetarian, if our body allows.[151] Thubten Chodron also says if the Buddha was alive today, he would institute a "precept for recycling".[152] Thich Nhat Hanh reframes the precepts as "mindfulness trainings": his second one is particularly relevant to the climate crisis, and can form the basis of an ecosattva vow, particularly its last two sentences:

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[145] Clayton 2020: 19
[146] Lee et al. 2016: 217
[147] Hsing 2010: 11
[148] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 1
[149] Thich 2021: part II, ch. 3, sec. 3, par. 3
[150] Thich 2021: part II, ch. 1, sec 2

"I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming."[153]

In his fifth mindfulness training, he draws attention to the importance of moderate and "mindful consumption":

"Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming."[154]

Finally, we can make use of the ecosattva vow suggested by David R. Loy (borrowed from Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone):

"I VOW TO MYSELF and to each of you:
To commit myself daily to the healing of our world
And the welfare of all beings.
To live on earth more lightly and less violently
in the food, products, and energy I consume.
To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth,
the ancestors, the future generations,
and my brothers and sisters of all species.
To support others in our work for the world
and to ask for help when I need it.

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[151] https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/dalai-lama-promotes-the-compassion-of-vegetarianism-for-world-animal-day/
[152] https://thubtenchodron.org/2010/09/environmental-action-without-fear/
[153] Thich 2021: part II, sec. 3, ch. 16
[154] Thich 2021: part II, sec. 4, ch. 15

To pursue a daily practice
that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart,
and supports me in observing these vows."

Expressing our aspiration is of course not the end of the story. Thich Nhat Hanh points out that our vow is a kind of desire.[155] In order to maintain a strong motivation, we regularly have to reflect on the ideas that fuel the desire to make a positive difference.

3. Kṣānti: courage, resilience and acceptance

a. Embracing the discomfort of climate anxiety with mindful acceptance

Kṣānti is usually translated to mean patience, forbearance, or mental fortitude. It is an inner strength to withstand adversity and difficulty, and to remain peaceful and calm in the face of it. Cultivating this kind of resilience can be a very useful tool to manage climate anxiety.

The basic method to build resilience in the face of anxiety is to face the emotion head on. (This approach is also utilized in CBT).[156] Even if it's uncomfortable, Thich Nhat Hanh advises us to *"learn the art of suffering"*. It may seem paradoxical, but according to his view, this will enable us to suffer less, and help others suffer less. Furthermore, the act of facing our climate anxiety becomes an expression of courage and love for ourselves.[157] But how can we embrace something that's uncomfortable? Thich Nhat Hanh's suggestion is to *"find a stable position"*, and to focus mindfully on the breath.[158] Mindfulness of breathing is the most fundamental meditation practice in most Buddhist traditions: developing this skill can enable one to remain present with the emotion — even if it's very strong — by anchoring the awareness to the movements of the breath.

But we have to go further than merely being present. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, the way to skillfully handle negative emotions in this way is to mindfully embrace them. We "smile" at them with love, and "tell" them: *"Hello, I will take good care of you"*. Once we establish our loving mindfulness at our anxiety, it will begin to lose strength. It's important to note that this sense of loving acceptance seems to go beyond the normal clinical definition of mindfulness as "nonjudgmentally paying attention to the present moment".[159]

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[155] Thich 2021: part II, ch. 4, sec. 2
[156] Freeman 2005: 33
[157] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 2, par. 7
[158] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 23, par. 3

Another important component of developing resilience with climate anxiety is to clearly identify it as it comes up, along with all the physical sensations that accompany it.[160] This will help us be with the emotion, and see it for what it is: just a mental formation that can't really hurt us. On the other hand, it may be able to help: perhaps it can guide us as to what actions would be wise to take.[161]

b. Reframing adversities as opportunities for growth

Another important concept in the Mahāyāna, closely related to emptiness, is non-duality. According to this idea, the dichotomy — particularly that of the object-subject — that we normally perceive in the world is merely an illusion: opposites deeply depend on, and interpenetrate with each other. This implies that what we generally regard as difficulties are not merely that: they must also contain the potential for happiness.

To illustrate this principle, Thich Nhat Hanh uses the common Buddhist metaphor of the "lotus in the mud". The mud represents suffering, the lotus normally stands for awakening or compassion. As lotus grows out of mud, an ignoble substance, so does the enlightened mind blossom on the ground of unhappiness. In Thich Nhat Hanh the lotus is an image of "opportunity for inner peace", which is to be found in the mud of adversities. Whenever we encounter some difficulty, we can look "deeply" in it to see the opportunity for growth and happiness. In this way we can also reframe our climate anxiety, or any negative event or information that contributes to it as something that has positive perspectives. Positive reappraisal is an important method also recognized in cognitive psychotherapies, and it has classical western parallels in Stoicism. It is also worth pointing out, that Buddhism itself first developed in response to an age of social crisis, which provided the opportunity to question basic assumptions about life and the world.[162]

The Dalai Lama also draws attention to the significance of how we frame events. *"If we are too oriented [toward] problems, we see problems everywhere"*[163] — reality is not wholly external to us, it is something that we also actively construct with our views. This idea goes back to the earliest periods of Buddhism: the first verse of the Dhammapada already says *"all things arise from the mind"*. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the classic proponents of this idea are the members of the Yogācāra school, which is also called "Perceptions-only". According to them, whether a true, external reality beyond us exists is immaterial, as we only ever come in touch with our own mind: but this is also something that we can exert control over.

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[159] Chiesa 2013: 258
[160] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 27, par. 10
[161] Kelly 2017: 37
[162] Ryu 2019: 8
[163] https://www.mindandlife.org/media/embracing-hope-in-times-of-crisis-6-lessons-from-the-dalai-lama-and-leading-scientists/

Perhaps the most well-known Mahāyāna proponent of cognitive strategies to positively reframe negative events is Śāntideva. In his Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, on the chapter on *Kṣānti*, he says:

"Therefore, just like treasure appearing in my house
Without any effort on my behalf to obtain it,
I should be happy to have an enemy
For he assists me in my conduct of awakening."[164]

When we encounter an episode of climate anxiety or some news that contributes to it, we can see it as an opportunity to grow in mindful acceptance and resilience. Focusing on the breath, we can reflect on the possibility of reframing the experienced difficulty. We can verbalize the reflection like this:

"This is the situation, and I don't have the power to change it now. But I have power over my mind: I can change my response to it. I am suffering now, but instead of approaching it with aversion, I choose to approach it with acceptance and love. This way I can use it to my advantage: this situation can become my teacher."

Then we can apply our creativity in finding ways that the situation can be utilized in positive ways. We can gain insights by reflecting on what we can and can't accept, and by seeing if there is room for growth. For example we can hear some news about another climate conference that yielded little practical results: we can take this as motivation to put more effort into individual action, and to engage in organized activism.

Commenting on Śāntideva, the 15th century Tibetan philosopher Tsongkhapa outlines five "good qualities" of suffering, that can be adapted as another, similar reflection on the positive aspects of our climate related distress:[165]

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[164] Batchelor (tr.) 1979: 53 (6.107)

The first positive quality is that suffering motivates us to free ourselves from it. Encountering climate anxiety, we can reflect on how this feeling motivates us in our current practice. We can use its energy to be more focused on our breath and sensations in the present moment. The second good quality is that suffering dispels arrogance, a sense of superiority that separates us from everyone else. In the context of the climate crisis, we can remember that we are suffering beings, just like anyone else, just like any person or animal that experiences distress due to climate change. The third and fourth good qualities are that suffering motivates us to shun wrongdoing, and encourages virtuous action. Here we can use our repentance reflection about how our actions contributed to our current distress, and how positive action can help so that it arises less in the future. Finally, suffering creates compassion: as we experience climate suffering, we can remember that it's an opportunity to deepen our compassion to ourselves and to others.

This approach can strengthen our motivation and capacity for practicing mindful acceptance, and can prepare us for more difficult practices outlined in the section dedicated to Prajñā (II.6). Taking events that would normally make us anxious, and transforming them into opportunities can fundamentally alter our relationship with the climate crisis.

4. Vīrya: energy, connection and joy

a. Connecting with the energy of the natural world

The mental health benefits of spending time in nature is well-documented — it has also been suggested as an intervention for the treatment of climate anxiety.[166] A recent meta-analysis shows that forest bathing (also known as *shinrin-yoku* in Japanese, as the practice originated in Japan) is particularly effective against anxiety.[167] Buddhist practice has been associated with forests and mountains from the earliest times.[168] Eihei Dōgen, considered the founder of the Sōtō branch of Zen Buddhism often describes the natural landscape as a source of inspiration and awakening.[169] One of his most important works, the Mountains and Waters Sutra[170] interprets being in nature as being in the presence of the Buddha's enlightenment: *"The mountains and waters of the immediate present are the actualization of the path of the ancient buddhas"*.

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[165] McRae 2018: 398

[166] Clayton 2020: 18

[167] Kotera et al. 2022

[168] The Anapanasati Sutta, the foundation text of "mindfulness of breathing" suggests monastics to find a hidden spot in nature to practice meditation.

[169] Leighton 2022: 103

Both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh suggest connecting with the natural world as a useful method to deal with climate anxiety. *"When you spend time in the forest and hear birds singing, you feel good inside"* — says the Dalai Lama.[171] (A recent study led by academics from King's College London found that birdsong is indeed beneficial for mental health).[172] He claims that this is due to the fact that as humans, our relationship with nature is very old, so being surrounded by living things is conducive to being peaceful, whereas an artificial environment can create internal tension and distrust.

A Mahāyāna approach to spending regenerative time in nature is described by Thich Nhat Hanh's writings about climate change. In *Love Letter to the Earth*, he suggests we practice mindful walking, treating the wilderness as a "sacred place"[173] — echoing Dōgen's sentiments. As we walk, we should be mindful of our breathing, and our bodies. Every step should be a reminder that the Earth we walk is not a dead thing: it's a living breathing being, and we are a part of it. Walking becomes a spiritual act of communing with the living power of the Earth. It should have the quality of compassion, or "love", and insight: we should notice the color of the trees and the tree barks, the changes of the seasons, the subtle movement of life around us; recognizing both the beauty and the suffering should motivate us to care for it.[174] "Looking deeply", we can understand that all these are inseparable from each other, and from us. Most crucially, for this exercise, we have make an effort to quiet our thoughts, and just be present. Thich Nhat Hanh also suggests that reading the Avatamsaka Sutra — containing the beautiful image of Indra's Net (an endless net of reflecting spheres, in which all spheres reflect all others), illustrating the interconnected and interpenetrating nature of all being — before the walking meditation, the practice can be greatly enhanced.[175]

One of the ways *vīrya* is translated is "energy": an inner power that fuels bodhisattva practice. It has connotations of enthusiasm and joy. Thich Nhat Hanh says that mindful walking in nature can connect us to the healing energy of the Earth: it can heal our climate anxiety, and we can trust that it can heal itself as well. He suggest a number of "mantras" that can be repeated during this practice, if one finds it helpful:

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[170] The words "mountains and waters" (山水) literally means "natural landscape" in Sino-Japanese.
[171] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. VI, sec. 1, par. 19
[172] Hammoud et al. 2022
[173] Thich 2013: ch. 2, sec. 7
[174] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 2
[175] Thich 2008: 103

"With each step, I come home to the Earth.
With each step, I return to my source.
With each step, I take refuge in Mother Earth.

I love the Earth. I am in love with the Earth.

I know the Earth is my mother, a great living being.
I vow to protect the Earth, and the Earth protects me.

Thich Nhat Hanh says we can practice being mindful of nature, even when we are home. He recounts his morning practice, when he opens the faucet, and mindfully washes his face with the water. Bringing to mind that the water travels long distances from the mountains to him brings him a sense of connectedness and awe. He makes a point that the ability to find joy in every moment like this is crucial to maintain inner peace, especially, as we are facing climate change.[176] Furthermore, seeing nature in "artificial environments" actively eats away at the illusion of the duality of nature and humanity.

b. Being there: cultivating joy through community

Traditional Buddhist rituals often begin by saluting the "Three Jewels": the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In Mahāyāna context, the latter usually refers to the spiritual community of practitioners: its prominent place right besides the Teacher and the Teaching shows the high value attached to interpersonal support in Buddhist self-cultivation. Practicing with a community is an important source of motivation, solace and energy: for this reason, it can also enhance approaches to dealing with climate anxiety and the wider crisis.

There is evidence in scientific literature indicating that communal approaches to managing climate anxiety could have potential benefits. Group-based CBT interventions are proven to be effective against different anxiety disorders,[177] and perceived social support has a protective effect against common mental health problems, particularly depression and anxiety.[178] This was also demonstrated during a number of crisis situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic.[179]

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[176] Thich 2013: ch. 2, sec. 3
[177] Wolgensinger 2015: 349

The Dalai Lama often points out that humans are "social animals", who can only truly flourish within the context of a community. He emphasizes that this fact is especially relevant as we are facing climate change: we have to learn to take responsibility for each other.[180] Thich Nhat Hanh calls on practitioners to form communities to face the suffering of the climate crisis together.[181] He argues that while practicing mindfulness, and taking vows can be powerful practices for an individual, its "energy" is amplified in a like-minded "sangha".[182] Practicing together is a way to "cultivate joy", which can counteract the fear and anxiety brought on by climate change; and it can motivate pro-environmental behaviors together which has a bigger potential impact. While the individualism of our culture fuels a sense of fear and anxiety, community can provide important support: *"with a community to walk with us, support us, and always remind us of the blue sky, we'll never lose our faith, and our fear dissolves".*[183] In a group we can share our fears and anxieties, and then we can "hold them together", making it easier to bear.[184] Tackling climate change in groups also gives us better chances at reaching the necessary insight: he suggests "holding" the problem of climate change like a Zen koan, together as a community, until answers arise.[185]

Thich Nhat Hanh also gives guidance on how potential climate support groups can operate successfully, based on Mahāyāna Buddhist principles of compassion and mindfulness. He adapts the "Six Principles of Harmony" (六和)[186] that are used to guide communal life in Chinese monasteries (ultimately deriving from the Kosambiya Sutta).[187] He calls these the "Six Principles of Togetherness":[188]

1. Physical Presence: *"Showing up"* and *"being available".*

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[178] Roohafza et al. 2014: 947
[179] Özmete and Melike 2020: 612
[180] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. III, sec. 3, par. 2
[181] Thich 2013: ch. 4
[182] Although he refers to it as a "sangha", he also points out that such groups don't have to be Buddhist.
[183] Thich 2012: ch. 12, sec. 2-3
[184] Thich 2012: ch. 14, sec. 4
[185] Thich 2021: part III, ch. 12
[186] Thich 2021: part III, ch. 3
[187] MN 48. The original six principles are: (1) bodily kindness, (2) verbal kindness, (3) mental kindness, (4) shared material possessions, (5) shared precepts, (6) shared views.
[188] The principles of the Kosambiya Sutta's mental kindness (3) corresponds to "Sharing from the Heart" in Thich, as the character for "heart" and "mind" is the same in Chinese (心). Bodily kindness corresponds to "Physical Presence". The rest of the correspondences are more-or-less straightforward.

2. Sharing Material Resources: *"The more we share the more we can be in harmony".*
3. Sharing Ethical Principles: *"It's essential to agree on the values and direction".*
4. Sharing Insights and Views: *"Doesn't mean we necessarily hold the same ones; it means we are creating an environment in which all views and voices are safe to be expressed and heard."*
5. Sharing from the Heart: *"We practice expressing our own experiences and truth deeply and honestly, and do our best to create space for others to speak from the heart too."*
6. Compassionate Communication: *"We tain to speak out with calm and compassion."*

The last principle is also called "deep listening and loving speech".[189] Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes the healing effect of being mindful, present, open, and truly listening to one another, without passing judgment. During listening like this, our attitude should be: *"I am listening to him because I want to relieve his suffering".* We should remain mindful, and handle our negative emotions by focusing on the breath. If we can't continue, we should ask the other person to continue some other time, to give us the opportunity to truly listen when we can. He invites us to take inspiration from the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara: widely regarded as the manifestation of the Buddhas' compassion, they are described in the 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra as always listening to those to call out to them.[190]

A final interpersonal practice that Thich Nhat Hanh describes is that of the "Four Mantras".[191] Mantras are traditionally thought of as powerful spiritual phrases: he presents these four formulas as being powerful in the sense of having the ability to remove fear and isolation. They can be thought of as basic blueprints to guide deeper relationships within social settings. The Four Mantras are:

1. The mantra of offering our presence: *"Dear one, I am here for you."*
2. The mantra of recognizing others: *"Darling, I know you are there, and I am so happy."*
3. The mantra of relieving suffering: *"Darling, I know you are suffering. That's why I am here for you."*
4. The mantra of reaching out for help: *"Dear one, I am suffering; please help."*

5. Dhyāna: openness, mindfulness and peace

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[189] Thich 2012: ch. 14, sec. 2

[190] The 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra is a very popular sutra on its own, officially called 觀世音菩薩普門品 (The chapter on the universal gate of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara), and often referred to as simply 觀音經 (Avalokiteśvara Sutra). The bodhisattva's name means "Mindful of the Sounds of the World", translated to Chinese as Guanshiyin or in a shorter form, Guanyin.

[191] Thich 2012: ch. 13

a. Cultivating a "beginner's mind" with mindful chanting

"Beginners' mind" or *shoshin* (初心) is a Zen Buddhist concept originally taught by Dōgen, and popularized in the west by Suzuki in his book "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind". It is an attitude that *"approaches every moment and every challenge with a sense of possibility, curiosity, and humility"*.[192] It is also called the "don't know mind": cultivating openness to different possibilities, and being comfortable with the uncertainty of not knowing. Thich Nhat Hanh equates it with *bodhicitta*, or a "mind of love", and frames it as a useful tool to cope with the climate crisis.[193]

As it has been emphasized before, a sense of uncertainty is at the heart of climate anxiety. We don't know how climate change is going to turn out, we don't know how bad things can get for the Earth, for our society, and individually; and most crucially, we are not sure how to adapt, and if our efforts are going to be worthwhile. In this paper, we have already looked at cognitive strategies to reframe the challenges posed by climate change, as well as ways to generate positive emotions like hope, joy and compassion that can counteract climate anxiety. Adopting the concept of, and cultivating a beginners' mind can be a further strategy that can be uniquely effective at increasing resilience in regard to uncertainty, and so challenging the causes of climate anxiety. Another potential benefit that we can gain from this practice is that detachment from expectations can "clear the stage" for unconventional insights and solutions for the climate crisis.[194]

The origin of the word Zen is *dhyāna*, or meditative concentration.[195] Mindfulness meditation practice — ideally — in some sense already entails the cultivation of a beginners mind: when observing the phenomena arising in the present moment, we approach them with openness and curiosity, as if encountering them for the first time. Approaching climate anxiety with a beginner's mind is similar to mindfully accepting the discomfort of anxiety, but it goes deeper: here we focus on accepting being in the space between certainties. Whenever we encounter any information or thought that induces climate anxiety, we can train ourselves to focus on "not knowing", and resist the urge to being attached to deciding between possibilities. For example if we doubt the effectiveness of our individual effort, we can remind ourselves that we have no way of knowing the ultimate outcome, and relying on mindful breathing, we can make peace with it.

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[192] Ray 2020: 50

[193] Thich 2021: part I, ch. 27

[194] Ray 2020: 50

[195] Zen comes from the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese transliteration of *dhyāna, chán* (禪), originally *chánnà* (禪那).

Another method the beginner's mind can be practiced is through the popular Mahāyāna practice of *dhāraṇī* chanting. Also related to Vajrayana, *dhāraṇīs* are like long mantras, or "magical incantations" that are chanted for their purported benefit of healing, material gain or purifying karma. Often originally written in Sanskrit, their meaning is not often known to practitioners[196], and might be completely untranslatable.[197] Instead of the meaning, the emphasis is on the correct pronunciation, the ritual practice, and the mythological framing that explains the origin and the purpose of the *dhāraṇī*.

In the Sino-Japanese Mahāyāna sphere — including Zen Buddhism — one of the most widely chanted *dhāraṇī* is the *Nīlakaṇṭha Dhāraṇī*, also known as the Great Compassion Dhāraṇī (大悲咒).[198] It is a formula that is associated with a certain manifestation of Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva[199], and is known to produce miraculous effects detailed in the Great Compassion Dhāraṇī Sutra, which became popular in China during the Tang dynasty.[200]

Mindful chanting of the Great Compassion Dhāraṇī can be adopted as a method to deal with climate anxiety, by cultivating a beginner's mind. It is generally regarded as a simple method to reach a meditative state, reducing mental attachments and anxiety.[201] Since the words of the *dhāraṇī* are not understood, the practitioner is not distracted by meanings: they can focus solely on pronouncing the syllables as mindfully as possible. It can be theorized that chanting the *dhāraṇī* requires maintaining an open-minded attitude: we don't understand what we chant, we don't know if it will produce any benefits. Going with the flow and trusting the process, and chanting each syllable as if for the first time trains the mind in adopting the required open-minded perspective. Optionally, to decrease the chance of getting used to the practice, we can alternate between using different *dhāraṇīs*.[202] Although some evidence shows that chanting *dhāraṇīs* or mantras can reduce anxiety symptoms, further research is warranted to better understand the underlying mechanisms, and whether it represents a more accessible modality of meditation than mindfulness practice. The role played by underlying beliefs and the spiritual context is also worth investigating.

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[196] Talking with Chinese Buddhist practitioners, observing and participating in rituals made it clear to me that most have little understanding of not only the *dhāraṇīs*, but also of the sutras, as they are written classical Buddhist Chinese, which is quite far from contemporary Mandarin. Sutras, just like *dhāraṇīs* are chanted for their spiritual benefits, and as mindfulness practice.

[197] Tseng 2022: 3

[198] The most often used version of the text is given in Appendix A.

[199] Avalokiteśvara's regular epithet is "Great Compassionate" (大悲).

[200] Yü 2001: 268

[201] Tseng 2022: 6

[202] Mantras are also suggested to be used as a way of associating and evoking certain positive mind-states, like compassion. (Lee and Oh 2019: 142)

b. Mindful eating and mindful consumption

Mindful eating is a well-known aspect of mindfulness practice: many people's first experience with mindfulness is the raisin exercise developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Mindful eating is often recommended for weight loss — in fact, even the Buddha himself taught it to a king once for the purpose of dealing with his overeating problem. But as a mindfulness practice, besides the obvious physical benefits, it also has positive psychological impacts, like reducing anxiety. This can be particularly helpful for those who are prone to cope with climate anxiety by seeking comfort in eating.

The connection between the climate crisis and what we eat is well-explored in scientific literature. Large-scale agriculture, particularly animal farming has been shown to have negative impacts on crucial biodiversity and methane emissions, while also using significant amount of water.[203] As a result, reducing animal-product consumption is one of the most impactful things we can do individually to fight climate change: it is estimated that even by switching from a high meat diet (most adults in the UK, where the research was conducted, corresponding to an average of 110g of meat intake per day) to a low meat one (up to 50g a day) can save 920kgs of carbon emissions a year, which is roughly equivalent to that of an economy return flight from London to New York. These savings can be almost doubled by becoming vegan.[204]

While the clinical definitions of mindful eating don't usually involve the ethical dimensions of our food, it is inseparable from the Buddhist practice. Thich Nhat Hanh lists mindful eating under his "fifth mindfulness training", which is based on the fifth upasaka precept, forbidding the consumption of alcohol, and widely interpreted as applying to any mind-altering substance. The mental health effects of what we eat (for example through affecting our microbiological health) is an important area of research. But as food addiction and obesity is an increasingly prevalent problem worldwide, the inclusion of mindful eating within a contemporary understanding of the fifth precept seems well justified. The traditional understanding of this "training rule" suggests that when we are under the influence of addictive substances, we are less likely to act mindfully and ethically. In this sense, nurturing a healthy relationship with food through mindfulness can be an important asset not only to deal with climate anxiety, but also to fight climate change.

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[203] Poore and Nemecek 2018: 987

[204] Scarborough 2014: 186

Thich Nhat Hanh's description of mindful eating practice also goes beyond the clinical definitions of mindfulness, as it involves a dimension that can be categorized under "insight meditation". Similarly to other mindfulness practices he teaches, in mindful eating he invites practitioners to "look deeply" into the food they consume, and reflect on interbeing through it: as the food becomes part of the body, the boundaries of the self and other disappear; as our nourishment ultimately a manifestation of the "Sun, the Earth, the plants and animals", through eating we commune with the natural world.[205] Again, this practice of insight challenges the sense of separateness from nature, that is at the heart of climate anxiety and climate change.

Thich Nhat Hanh extends the idea of mindful eating into a more general concept of "mindful consumption". He says consuming information, entertainment, but also products and services is like eating: they can heal us, or they can make us "sick". The practice of being aware and proactive in our choices about what we consume can be relevant to climate anxiety in at least two different ways. First, as we consume with our economic power, we are making choices that can affect climate change directly. Understanding this connection and making better choices are related to improving our sense of agency, which we looked at in more detail in the section about *Śīla* (II.2.). Second, since the direct cause of climate anxiety is often information received from the media, we can manage it better by becoming more mindful about our triggers, and about what we are reading and watching. For example we can expand the traditional concept of fasting, by designating "social media fasting days". If done mindfully, this is not escapism, on the contrary: understanding ourselves well enough to know when we need time off is a sign of both wisdom and self-compassion.

6. Prajñā: insight, meaning and transcendence

a. Shifting perspectives with the Diamond Sutra

The Diamond Sutra, at its heart, is about transcending our pre-conceived notions. Its message is arguably a very timely one: if our narrow-minded, self-centered views led to the environmental crisis, then the way out of it is getting rid of those notions, by realizing their illusory nature. But as I have argued before, in the Buddhist view, taking a more global view doesn't only address the causes of climate change, but also that of climate anxiety through transcendence and a sense of deeper meaning. Thich Nhat Hanh says: *"Only when you have this right view, this insight, will discrimination no longer be there, and there will be deep communion, deep communication between you and the Earth. All kinds of good things will come from it. You transcend the dualistic way of seeing things: the idea that the Earth is only the environment, and that you are in the center; and that you only want to do something for the Earth so you can survive."*[206]

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[205] This practice is also connected to first the "Five Mealtime Contemplations" (食時五觀) that are regularly chanted before meals in Chinese Mahāyāna monasteries. In this contemplation, practitioners reflect on the origins of the food they are about to receive, both in karmic and physical terms.

In the first chapter we have outlined Thich Nhat Hanh's interpretation of the Diamond Sutra as a text of "deep ecology" (I.1.c.). His vivid explanations easily lend themselves to be adapted into a guided meditation practice — just as the sutra itself can be thought of as a meditative tool. In this section I describe how a contemplative practice aimed at reducing climate anxiety can look like based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings:

As the first step of the practice, we start by reflecting on our oneness with the Earth. We can utilize elements of mindful eating: by bringing to mind what we ate last time, we can recognize that all those elements came — directly or indirectly — from nature. They are now a part of us. We can also explore other ways we exist in continuity with our planet: through the sensation of the ground under us, the air we breathe, or sights or the natural world around us. We observe the process of continuous movement, the taking and giving of energy. We inquire: where is the boundary between me and the Earth? Where do I start and where do I end in relation to the planet? Am I a part of the planet? Is the planet a part of me? At the end: is there really a "me" separate from the Earth?

In the second step, we reflect on humanity's relationship with other species. We ask questions like: how do other animals and plants contribute to our well-being and existence? What do we get from them? How do animals enrich our culture, our stories and language? What would life be like with no other species than us? If other species were gone, would a part of humanity be gone as well? Are animals and plants parts of us? Are we animals? Are we plants? Do plants and animals have humanity in them? Most importantly: is there truly a separate human race from other species?

In the third step, we explore the relationship between animate and inanimate. We can bring to mind the mountains whose rocks were formed through millions of years by the bodies of prehistoric creatures. We can ask: is the Earth alive or dead? Is it solid, or is it breathing? A fruit cut down from a tree: is it animate or inanimate? Or a rotting fruit? Is it dead, or fully alive? Can something be ever truly "inanimate"? Can a living being be independent of inanimate matter? And finally: is there truly a strict boundary between the two?

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[206] Thich 2021: Introduction

Finally, we come back to our own lives. We ask: did my life start when I was born? Did it start with my parents? Did it start with the air they breathed, or the food they ate? Did my life start with my ancestors? With the Earth? With the stars? When will my life end? Will I be alive in my children or in humanity? Will I be alive through the influence of my actions? Will the elements of my body be parts of other living beings? Was there really a beginning? Will there really be an end?

b. Making peace with our deepest fears: meditating on the death of civilization

One of the dangers inherent in climate anxiety is its capacity to paralyze us: the threats we face and the scope of the problem can be so overwhelming that it leaves us depressed and unable to act. One way to transcend this obstacle is by directly confronting our deepest fears about climate change.

One of the most fundamental teachings of Buddhism is the impermanence of all conditioned phenomena. Everything we experience is in a constant state of flux and transformation. On the phenomenal level we see things and beings come and go, arise and perish. But on a deeper level, there are no things, and no beings, only perhaps a *flow.*[207] Nāgārjuna designates these two different perspectives as the two levels of truth: conventional truth, and ultimate truth. The aim of the previous exercise was to get in touch with the deeper level of ultimate truth, to realize a non-differentiation between oneself and the planet, and to understand that from this perspective, birth and death are illusory. Although in the current exercise the focus is on conventional truth — we focus on impermanence and death — the aim here is to transcend one's ordinary perspective, too.

The Buddha instructed his disciples — both lay and monastic — to regularly reflect on their own mortality. The *Upajjhatthana Sutta*[208] describes the practice of the Five Remembrances: reflecting on the fact that (1) we all age, (2) we all get ill, (3) we all die, (4) we all get separated from what is dear to us, and (5) that our experiences are the results of our actions (the teaching of karma). The idea is that these reflections lessen our attachments to impermanent phenomena, thereby making us suffer less. Perhaps surprisingly to some, regularly thinking of our death is indeed associated with less greed and selfish behavior,[209] more gratitude (an important factor to well-being)[210] and happiness.[211]

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[207] The Heart Sutra says: "Truly, all phenomena have the quality of emptiness: not arising and not ceasing, not impure and not pure, not increasing and not decreasing. So in truth, in emptiness there are no forms, no feelings, perceptions, volitions or consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind; no sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or mental phenomena." ("是諸法空相，不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減。是故，空中無色，無受想行識；無眼耳鼻舌身意；無色聲香味觸法。") — Own translation.

[208] AN 5.57

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that in the context of climate change, we extend the practice of death contemplation to our civilization. For many, the greatest fear associated with the climate crisis is the end of humanity as we know it. Although both the Dalai Lama[212] and Thich Nhat Hanh emphasize the importance of cultivating hope,[213] they also point out the necessity of embracing uncertainty and impermanence. Thich Nhat Hanh's disciple, Sister True Dedication refutes the idea that this practice would imply any kind of "defeatism": on the contrary, by deeply accepting the possibility of humanity's failure, we understand that we have *nothing to lose,* and paradoxically, this realization can give us both peace and a chance at success. Thich Nhat Hanh says that if we deal with the grief and the fear by facing it now, it will generate both compassion and insight: by accepting the potentiality of the death of our civilization, we can also "touch eternity", and see that there is no real death to talk of. Just as an individual self, the "self" of a civilization is illusory, it exists in deep interdependence with everything else.

The ideal outcome of this meditation is that by facing one of our greatest fears, it will have less power over us, thereby reducing climate anxiety. It can enable us to mindfully work for our goal of saving the planet, but without being attached to the end result — an idea often emphasized in Zen Buddhism. But undoubtedly, contemplating the end of our civilization can be very challenging. Sister True Dedication points out that if the exercise is not done correctly, it can easily lead to more despair and paralysis. Therefore it can be only advised if one has sufficient insight or guidance.

This practice can be conceptualized as having three stages: (1) contemplation, (2) "holding" the truth, and (3) acceptance.

In the first stage we contemplate the potential that our civilization can end. In the words of Thich

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[209] Cozzolino et al. 2004: 288

[210] Frias et al. 2011

[211] DeWall and Baumeister 2007

[212] H.H. the Dalai Lama 2020: ch. IV, sec. 1

[213] Fostering hope is also one of the currently used themes in climate anxiety interventions (Baudon and Jachens 2021: 4)

Nhat Hanh: *"The life of a civilization is like the life of a human being: at the level of appearances, it also has its life span and will have to end one day. Already there have been many civilizations that have been destroyed, and ours is no different. We know that if we continue to live the way we do, destroying our forests, polluting our waters and skies, disaster cannot be avoided. There will be catastrophes, floods, and new diseases and many millions of people will die. If we continue to live the way we are living, the end of our civilization will be certain."*

Sister True Dedication also suggests visualizing the Earth in its previous, prehistoric stages, to get a firmer grip on the idea that the planet continuously changes, and extinction events come and go.

In the second step we try to "hold" this truth in our hearts. Sister True Dedication warns: *"there may be resistance; there may be tears, anger, and frustration as we hold the possibility in our heart. But, ultimately, the intention is to break through to a new horizon of realism, possibility, and, as Thay*[214] *says, peace."*

This takes us to the third, and final step, where we embrace the truth. We try to accept it as fully as we can. Again, we can take Thich Nhat Hanh's advice: *"You have to breathe very deeply in order to acknowledge the fact that we humans may one day disappear. How can we accept that hard fact and not be overwhelmed by despair? Our despair is fueled by views we have about ourselves and the world. When we start to re-examine our views and change our way of thinking and seeing things, it becomes possible to transform the mind of discrimination that is at the very root of our suffering."*

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[214] Thich Nhat Hanh is normally called by the affectionate name Thay by students which is Vietnamese for "teacher".

Conclusion

Man-made climate change is an unprecedented challenge for humanity. It's a problem that threatens our very survival, yet its solution possibly requires radical changes in the way we live. Although most often presented as merely a physical issue that can be addressed by reducing carbon footprints through improving technology or by changing our modes of transport and the food we eat — it is clear that it is also a psychological and a spiritual one. From Christianity to indigenous traditions, religious groups express similar views: the key to understanding and solving the crisis is by reflecting on our relationship with the world, and ourselves. This "internal work" is becoming even more urgent as an increasing amount of evidence is starting to underline the detrimental effects of climate change on mental health — besides, and connected to, the obvious physical costs.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism transcending views of duality is an important theme: looking at the climate crisis, this means developing a more holistic view of the problem than our current one, by integrating both internal and external perspectives: psychological and physical solutions together. The teaching of karma is not just a metaphysical one: it's based on the realization that our states of mind create our actions, and in this way, it shapes our experience of the world in very tangible ways. As the last of the Five Remembrances says: *"I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions (...) Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir."* We create climate change, but climate change brings climate anxiety, and climate anxiety can make climate change worse. It is a whirlpool of suffering like the larger whirlpool of Samsara. The question we have to ask ourselves is: as climate change starts to affect our lives in increasingly negative ways, will we be able to respond with love, courage and wisdom? And if we can't, and our actions are instead fuelled by anger, sadness and fear, aren't we just creating more problems for ourselves down the line?

Buddhism is often seen as a philosophy that aims to completely transcend and "escape" the world, and which is therefore not concerned with "mundane" matters. But this is very much a misinterpretation — at least, certainly, of the Mahāyāna tradition. As Thich Nhat Hanh often puts it: *"the way out is in"* — for the bodhisattva, helping living beings, and easing their suffering is the very foundation of the soteriological path.[215] In this paper I explored Mahāyāna Buddhist techniques that were developed to help sentient beings deal with their difficult mental states and unhappiness. I found that they are not only valuable from a spiritual perspective, but that they are also very relevant to the crisis we face today. They seem to be well adaptable to help people manage and overcome climate anxiety, and perhaps also motivate them to live more eco-conscious lives in the process.

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[215] This is also the basic premise behind the development of "Humanistic" or "Engaged" Buddhism, an approach to (mainly Mahāyāna) Buddhism that emphasizes social responsibility and involvement.

I aimed to cover a spectrum of exercises, to go beyond the already well-known practice of mindfulness meditation. I did this with the help of the six *pāramitās* — representing different aspects or stages of the bodhisattva path — by trying to find examples of practices that can be conceptually related to each. In the end, this turned out to be a somewhat arbitrary choice, as the practices are so deeply connected to each other, that almost any one of them can be related to any one of the *pāramitās*. Nevertheless, I believe that this organizational principle is still useful in emphasizing important aspects, and the connected nature of the practices; as well as illuminating the different Mahāyāna approaches to dealing with mental suffering.

During my research, I gained insight into the many ways Mahāyāna practices can help with climate anxiety. I explored different versions of compassion meditation, which are recommended by contemporary teachers as ways to develop a sense of connectedness, meaning and joy. I found that traditional practices, like repentance and the taking of a bodhisattva vow — which can help create a deeper sense of agency and responsibility in the face of powerlessness — can be easily adapted for the climate crisis, even in a secular context. Following the guidance of Thich Nhat Hanh, Śāntideva and Tsongkhapa, we can increase our resilience by accepting the discomfort of difficult climate emotions, and by reframing it as a fuel for growth. Buddhist mindfulness and insight can give additional depth to the well-attested mental health benefits of spending time in nature and forming supportive social connections. I learned that meditation, mindful chanting and deeper awareness about what and how we consume, can enrich us with new perspectives in facing climate change. And finally, I came to understand that developing more insight into our deep interconnectedness with nature, together with bravely accepting the potential catastrophic outcomes of our actions, challenges the very roots of both climate anxiety and the climate crisis itself.

The collection of practices I have presented here is just "scratching the surface": Mahāyāna Buddhism is a treasure trove of traditional insights into the workings of the mind, and exercises developed to deal with psychological ailments; not to mention the closely related family of Vajrayana techniques. In other words, what is presented here is far from being a complete overview of what is available, and future research is warranted to expand it. Furthermore, studies designed to verify the efficacy of these techniques — in themselves, or integrated into existing therapeutic strategies — and developing ways to improve them in the light of findings would constitute another important avenue for scientific exploration. I deeply hope that this work can contribute to humanity's growing momentum to face the climate crisis, and that it can be a stepping stone on the path to putting out the fires once and for all.

Appendix A: The Great Compassion Dhāraṇī

南無 喝囉怛那 哆囉夜耶。 南無 阿唎耶。婆盧羯帝 爍缽囉耶。
NAMO HELADANA DUOLAYEYE, NAMO ALIYE, POLUJIEDI SHUOBOLAYE,
菩提薩埵婆耶。 摩訶 薩埵婆耶。 摩訶 迦盧尼迦耶。 唵。薩皤囉罰曳。
PUTISADUOPOYE, MOHE SADUOPOYE, MOHE JIALUNIJIAYE, AN, SAPOLAFAYI,
數怛那怛寫。 南無 悉吉栗埵 伊蒙 阿唎耶。婆盧吉帝 室佛囉楞 馱婆。
SHUDANADAXIE, NAMO XIJILIDUO YIMENG ALIYE, POLUJIDI SHIFOLALENG TUOPO,
南無 那囉謹墀。 醯唎 摩訶 皤哆沙咩。 薩婆阿他 豆輸朋。
NAMO NALAJINCHI, XILI MOHE PODUOSHAMIE, SAPOATUO DOUSHUPENG,
阿逝孕。 薩婆薩哆 那摩 婆薩多 那摩 婆伽。 摩罰 特豆。 怛侄他。
ASHIYUN, SAPOSADUO NAMO POSADUO NAMO POQIE, MOFA TEDUO, DAZHITA,
唵 阿婆盧醯。盧迦帝。 迦羅帝。 夷醯唎。摩訶 菩提薩埵。 薩婆 薩婆。摩囉
ONG APOLUXI, LUJIADI, JIALUODI, YIXILI, MOHE PUTISADUO, SAPO SAPO, MOLAI
摩囉。 摩醯 摩醯 唎馱孕。 俱盧 俱盧 羯蒙。 度盧 度盧 罰闍耶帝。
MOLAI, MOXI MOXI LITUOYUN, JULU JULU JIEMENG, DULU DULU FASHEYEDI,
摩訶 罰闍耶帝。 陀囉 陀囉。 地唎尼。室佛囉耶。 遮囉 遮囉。 麼麼
MOHE FASHEYEDI, TUOLAI TUOLAI, DILINI, SHIFOLAYE, ZHELAI ZHELAI, MOMO
罰摩囉。 穆帝隸。伊醯 伊醯。室那 室那。 阿囉嘇 佛囉舍利。 罰沙
FAMOLAI, MUDILI, YIXI YIXI, SHINAI SHINAI, ALASHAN FOLASHELI, FASHAN
罰嘇。 佛囉舍耶。 呼盧 呼盧 摩囉。 呼盧 呼盧 醯利。娑囉 娑囉。 悉唎
FASHAN, FOLASHEYE, HULU HULU MOLAI, HULU HULU XILI, SUOLAI SUOLAI, XILI
悉唎。蘇嚧 蘇嚧。菩提夜 菩提夜。菩馱夜 菩馱夜。 彌帝利夜。那囉謹墀。
XILI, SULU SULU, PUTIYE PUTIYE, PUTUOYE PUTUOYE, MIDILIYE, NALAJINCHI,
地利瑟尼那。婆夜摩那。 娑婆訶。 悉陀夜。 娑婆訶。 摩訶 悉陀夜。 娑婆訶。
DILISENINA, POYEMONAI, SAPOHE, XITUOYE, SAPOHE, MOHE XITUOYE, SAPOHE,
悉陀喻藝。 室皤囉耶。 娑婆訶。 那囉謹墀。 娑婆訶。 摩囉 那囉。 娑婆訶。
XITUOYUYI, SHIPOLAYE, SAPOHE, NALAJINCHI, SAPOHE, MOLAI NALAI, SAPOHE,
悉囉僧 阿穆佉耶。 娑婆訶。 娑婆 摩訶 阿悉陀夜。 娑婆訶。 者吉囉
XILASENG AMUQIEYE, SAPOHE, SAPO MOHE AXITUOYE, SAPOHE, ZHEJILA

阿悉陀夜。 娑婆訶。 波陀摩 羯悉陀夜。 娑婆訶。 那囉謹墀 皤伽囉耶。
AXITUOYE, SAPOHE, BOTUOMO JIEXITUOYE, SAPOHE, NALAJINCHI, POQIELAYE,
娑婆訶。 摩婆利 勝羯囉夜。 娑婆訶。 南無 喝囉怛那 哆囉夜耶。 南無
SAPOHE, MAPOLI SHENGJIALAYE, SAPOHE, NAMO HELADANA DUOLAYEYE, NAMO
阿唎耶。婆嚧吉帝 爍皤囉夜。 娑婆訶。 唵 悉殿都。 漫多囉。 跋陀耶。
ALIYE, POLUJIDI SHUOPOLAYE, SAPOHE, ONG XIDIANDU, MANDUOLAI, BATUOYE,
娑婆訶。
SAPOHE.

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