



Introduction to Philosophy – Drexler – Fall 2018  
Philosophy as a Way of Life

## Module 4 Activity #1 Expansive Gratitude

**In class**, and while learning some of Buddhism’s central ideas and principles (e.g The Four Noble Truths, The nature and causes of Dukkha, and the EightFold Path), we explored through freewrite reflections how intentional mindfulness and attention can be used to understand more fully the dimensions and interconnections of our lives. (In class, we focused on the first two Noble Truths, exploring the depth and breadth of suffering and its causes: the three types of suffering, the three “poisons” that cause suffering, etc.)

**In this Module Activity**, you are being asked to cultivate mindfulness and attention further, through another example of a Buddhist exercise: **a Gratitude Meditation**.

This particular type of Gratitude Meditation – slightly modified for our class purposes – is designed to help get deeper and broader understandings of ourselves in the world...to see the bigger perspectives, or as Group 3 said of Plato’s Allegory last class, “to Widen our Perspective.”

*As Philip Moffitt explains, “practicing mindfulness of gratitude consistently leads to a direct experience of being connected to life and the realization that there is a larger context in which your personal story is unfolding. Being relieved of the endless wants and worries of your life’s drama, even temporarily, is liberating. Cultivating thankfulness for being part of life blossoms into a feeling of being blessed, not in the sense of winning the lottery, but in a more refined appreciation for the interdependent nature of life.”*

**This is a THREE DAY activity.**

So, you have to spend at least five minutes today, tomorrow and Thursday, to complete it. (It will be due on SUNDAY this week, so you will have a few extra days to get your three meditations done).

To prepare for this exercise, make sure to **read the Philip Moffit article**, “Selfless Gratitude”

*See the back of this sheet for instructions*

## Instructions for your Expansive Gratitude Exercise

### Day One:

- 1) Find a comfortable place to sit and relax. Have a piece of paper and writing tool close to you.
- 2) Starting with the example from your in-class freewrite on your own experience of suffering (or, by all means, select a different example if you like). (Write a heading that captures that example at the very top of the paper).
- 3) Turn your attention to gratitude using a phrase similar to the one Moffitt offers: *“Yes this is terrible...and I am grateful for...”* That is, even in the context of that terrible situation, what in it can you point to say, yes, I am grateful. **Identify three things**—it could be people, opportunities, histories (memories), places, feelings, etc. And **spend five minutes** sitting and reflecting on—that is, really trying to feel/experience—the gratitude for those three things/people/aspects.
- 4) Write those three things down across the top of the piece of paper. Set aside.

### Day Two:

- 1) Find a comfortable place to sit and relax with your page from yesterday’s meditation.
- 2) For one or two of the items across the top of your page, practice gratitude about it now: **identify two or three aspects of that top-of-page list-item** that you find yourself also grateful for, by extension (perhaps you find yourself grateful for what caused the existence of that list-item, or for the people that support that list-thing, or social structures that enable that list-thing, or what-not). And **spend five minutes** sitting and reflecting on—that is, really trying to feel/experience—the gratitude for those things/people/aspects.
- 3) At the end of those five or so minutes, end the reflection by restating Moffitt’s prompt, *“Yes, that first example of suffering I started with is terrible, and I am grateful for these things/people/aspects that I have just finished reflecting on.”*
- 4) Write down those newly identified items of gratitude below the first “top-of-page” item. Set aside.

### Day Three:

- 1) Find a comfortable place to sit and relax with your page from yesterday’s meditation.
- 2) For one or two of the items across the middle of your page (that is, the second list from Day 2), practice gratitude about it now: That is, Repeat Step 2 from Day 2.
- 3) Repeat Step 3 from Day 2.
- 4) Write down those newly identified items of gratitude below the second-item list.

### To Turn in by Sunday, (Sept 30)

- 5) A screen shot or document of your paper-list-of-gratitudes.
- 6) A write-up (at least 1 full typed page) of your experience with this gratitude exercise (insights gained, patterns of gratitude you saw emerging, how it affects your sense of suffering that you started with, or what-not).