**Mindfulness and Detachment Exercises**

Caleb Cohoe, *Introduction to Ethics* using *Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*

“The [good practitioner] lives unattached and grasps after nothing in the world. Thus, a [good practitioner] lives observing the body as body.” (*Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, 2)

“In such ways the [good practitioner] lives observing feeling as feeling internally. Or, he lives observing feeling as feeling externally. Or, he lives observing feeling as feeling both internally and externally. Or, he lives observing in the feelings its arising factors. Or, he lives observing in the feelings its decaying factors. Thinking ‘there is feeling,’ his mindfulness becomes established to the extent necessary for knowledge and awareness. He lives unattached and grasps after nothing in the world. Thus, a [good practitioner] lives observing the feeling as feeling.” (*Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, 11)

Buddhists think that our attachment to things leads to suffering, when we cannot get what we want or hold onto it. The more that we identify with our bodies and our desires, the worse this suffering is. To understand their claims and how they propose to change things, choose one of the following exercises to complete (*you may turn in the other for extra credit*). You will only be submitting the final reflection to me.

**Option A: Reflecting on your body**

*Phase 1: Preparation and Mindfulness*

Start by considering these questions:

* Do you identify with your body or feel detached from it?
* How do you feel about your body?
* Which emotions do you anticipate feeling as you think through this topic more closely? Where will those emotions be directed?

After you’ve thought these questions through, read carefully over sections 2-10 of the *Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*. After you’ve done this, spend at least five minutes thinking about what the body is made of (organs, molecules, atomic structures, etc.), either reflecting on what you already know or using articles or videos to find out more about what our bodies are made of. Then spend five minutes considering what happens to human bodies after death, either reflecting on what you already know or using articles or videos to find out more about what our bodies are made of.

* How does thinking about what your body is made of affect your feelings about it? Do you feel better or worse about your body? Do you identify with your body more or less?
* How does thinking about what happens to bodies at death affect your feelings about your body? Do you feel better or worse about it? Do you identify with your body more or less?

*Phase 2: Detachment*

Pick out one positive judgment you’ve had about your body and one negative one. After you’ve picked your judgments, consider each of them from an external perspective, as a feature of a body that just happens to be yours and fill in the following statement:

“Yes, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_is true about this body, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

*Phase 3: Final reflection*

* In what way (if at all) did reflecting on what bodies are and where they come from change how important you take your body to be and how much you value it?
* In what way (if at all) did looking at your judgments about your body from an external perspective change your experience? Did it lead you to feel differently about your body? Did you experience the same effect for both your positive and your negative judgment?
* Has this reflection made you more or less likely to identify with your body? Did it lead to you feeling more or less connected to your body?

**Submit a reflection which incorporates your answers to all the bulleted questions in Phase 3. (200-400 words)**

**Option B: Reflecting on your feelings**

*Phase 1: Preparation and Mindfulness*

Start by considering these questions:

* Do you identify with your feelings or feel detached from them?
* Do you struggle more with feeling too much or too little?

After you’ve thought these questions through, read carefully over sections 11-13 of the *Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*. After you’ve done this, pick two feelings that you’ve experience today. Then answer the following questions for each of your two feelings:

* Is this feeling pleasant or unpleasant or both? What is this feeling about? Does it involve a judgment or belief about what’s good or bad?
* How did this feeling arise? Did it come from a particular event or interaction? What role did your physical or mental condition play in it arising?
* How could this feeling go away? Would changing your judgments get rid of the feeling? Would changing your physical or mental condition get rid of the feeling?

*Phase 2: Detachment*

Using the same two feelings from the previous phase, consider them from an external perspective, as mental phenomena that happen to be occurring, and then fill in the following statement:

“Yes, I am experiencing this feeling, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

*Phase 3: Final reflection*

* In what way (if at all) did reflecting on what your feelings are and where they come from change the way they affect you and how much you value them?
* In what way (if at all) did looking at your feelings from an external perspective change your experience? Did it lead you to feel differently or detach you from your feelings?
* Has this reflection made you more or less likely to trust your feelings? Did it lead to you feeling more or less connected to them?

**Submit a reflection which incorporates your answers to all the bulleted questions in Phase 3. (200-400 words)**