

***Mind Cure: How Meditation Became Medicine.* By Wakoh Shannon Hickey. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 324 pages. \$29.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0190864248.**

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The primary concern of *Mind Cure* is the broad, diffuse Mindfulness movement that includes Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) developed by the microbiologist Jon Kabat-Zinn and “all the therapeutic derivatives of MBSR, collectively called MBIs [Mindfulness-Based Interventions]” (p. 8). In this timely study Wakoh Shannon Hickey aims to challenge many contemporary psychologists, physicians, and scientists’ presentation of the Mindfulness movement as secular. Drawing on her specialization in American religion, she associates the movement with the American Mind Cure or mind-body healing tradition “to tell a story that begins two centuries earlier, about people who set the stage on which Kabat-Zinn became a star” (p. 3).

The book comprises seven chapters in addition to an introduction and appendix. The first four chapters, chronologically structured, attempt to construct a history of Mind Cure from the late 1860s until the 1970s. The fifth to seventh chapters, thematically structured, examine the Mindfulness movement. The introduction maintains that popular-culture Mindfulness has been since 1971 an alternative healing method assimilated by mainstream medicine. Most of the chapters are well-written with research on English-language primary sources and critical engagement with Western scholarship to weave the various mind-body teachings and healing practices into a cohesive whole. The charts provided are valuable to map the genealogy of the groups and teachings and their relations with key figures mentioned in this book.

Chapter 1 introduces Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer, whose religious ideas influenced Phineas Quimby, the father

of Mind Cure in the United States. It sketches Swedenborg's theological treatises such as the possibility of union with God, the correspondence between spiritual and physical realms, and the progressive nature of spiritual awakening through education and self-discipline. In 1779 German physician Mesmer introduced the theory of "animal magnetism," a subtle fluid with magnetic properties that pervades the universe, claiming that restoring one's magnetic balance could eliminate psychosomatic or organic illness. The chapter maintains that Quimby accepted that illness was real but resulted from destructive and erroneous beliefs and mental states. By 1840, his practice of Mesmerism had attracted many visitors who were critical of mainstream medicine that relied on bloodletting, leeches, blistering, and toxic emetics and purgatives, all of which were especially dangerous for women.

Chapter 2 introduces some of Quimby's followers, Mary Baker Eddy, Warren Felt Evans, and Emma Curtis Hopkins, and their leadership roles in Christian Science and New Thought, the two earliest religious movements on mind-body healing in the United States. Hickey argues that these two movements are an "important and vastly underappreciated precursor to the modern Mindfulness boom" (p. 37). Both Baker Eddy and Evans put a decidedly Christian twist on Quimby's secular Mind Cure, with the former of them founding the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science). Evan's writings from 1869 to 1886 provided a theoretical basis to the ideas and methods of mental or metaphysical healing that became the New Thought movement. Whereas the Christian Science community was "hierarchical and doctrinaire," New Thought remained "diffuse, egalitarian, and eclectic" as it spread through printed materials, courses, conferences, and organizations (p. 10). Hopkins, a pioneer founder of New Thought churches, launched her own seminary, the Emma Hopkins College of Metaphysical Science, to teach healing methods inspired by Eddy's and Evans's work. The chapter then introduces Greenacre, a hotel Sarah Farmer cofounded in 1890 in Eliot, Maine. After being exposed to Bahá'í Faith in 1899, Farmer turned Greenacre into a center to foster dialogue between members of New Thought, the Theosophical Society, and Buddhist and Hindu traditions. One of Hickey's main points in this chapter, which I find convincing, is that New Thought has been diverse and open to various categories of people—the early leaders included not only many socially marginalized middle-class white women (from the 1870s to 1929) (p. 39), but also African American males (between the 1920s and

the 1940s). New Thought remains in flux and influential to this day through organizations such as the Universal Foundation for Better Living (1974) and Japan's Seicho-no-Ie 成長の家 (1930).

The story turns more complex and systematic in chapter 3, which introduces the arrival of Swami Vivekananda, Anagārika Dharmapāla, Shaku Sōen, and other Buddhists and Hindus to the World's Parliament of Religions as the first Asian missionaries to teach white Americans. The chapter examines the Greenacre conferences' pioneering effort in introducing Buddhism, neo-Vedanta, and yoga, especially the Buddhist and Hindu meditations. Between 1894 and 1915, Greenacre invited Indian gurus, Dharmapāla, Paul Carus, and Japanese Buddhists such as D.T. Suzuki to teach meditation, devotional recitation, yogic breathing, and other teachings. The chapter also discusses several New Thought leaders' and groups' interest in Buddhist and Hindu meditations, including their participation in the Greenacre conferences and study of meditative practices from the Asian missionaries. The multiple American religious traditions and movements converged and began to shape and be shaped by the practitioners of Asian meditative traditions. "By the summer of 1897," Hickey states, "meditation was a regular feature of the New Thought offerings at Greenacre" (p. 90). The conclusion highlights how in the late nineteenth century, a few New Thought congregations embraced yoga and Buddhist meditation as their regular practice, whereas meditation was not common among Protestants until after the 1960s, Quakers being something of an exception.

Chapter 4 investigates how members of the mainstream medical and religious establishments adopted some of the Mind Cure movement's methods in the early twentieth century, contributing to the emergence of psychology and psychiatry over the next half-century. The Emmanuel Movement began in 1905 when Rev. Dr. Elwood Worcester and his associate teamed with orthodox physicians at Emmanuel Church, Boston's largest Episcopal congregation, to treat patients who were mostly females with mental health issues, despite the clinic's patriarchal, paternalistic attitude that differed from that of the female ministers of the early Mind Cure. One of Worcester's patients, Anton Boisen, launched Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to train clergy to work as chaplains in hospitals and other nonchurch institutions, ministering to people regardless of their religious backgrounds. Boisen would be soon followed by Norman V. Peale, a Manhattan pastor, who

in 1937 teamed with a psychiatrist to start a mental health clinic in the basement of his church. Peale combined New Thought and psychology and published *the Power of Positive Thinking* (1952). Finally, in 1955, Henry K. Beecher published his seminal article “The Powerful Placebo” to argue the importance of the mind in physical healing.

Chapter 5 appraises how modernist Zen Buddhism and Hinduism gained popularity in the United States and how the Mindfulness movement grew out of earlier movements to popularize Buddhism and Hinduism. Hickey identifies Paramahansa Yogananda, Suzuki, and Maharishi Mahesh as prominent popularizers of Hinduism and Buddhism during the mid-twentieth century. Hickey explains that the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act engendered another wave of modernist Hindu and Buddhist missionaries, who introduced meditation and various forms of yoga while collaborating with Western psychologists to seek scientific verification for their therapeutic methods. Interestingly, the aforementioned three chapters address white women’s experience in the religious movements, but they pay no attention to the exclusively male constituents of the Asian missionaries. As it pertains to Mindfulness, Hickey argues that it is indeed a religious movement, “a modernist, globalized, metaphysical one, which draws upon scientific discourse to validate its healing claims” (p. 147). Although Kabat-Zinn identifies his MBSR approach to meditation as universal, transcultural, and transhistorical, he preaches a modernist, metaphysical, and scientific version of Buddhism, and his “Dharma” is a “modern, American blend of Buddhism, neo-Vedanta, and American metaphysical religion, whose priests and evangelists are frequently clinical scientists” (p. 170). Hickey analyzes the complex motives that led Kabat-Zinn to decouple his clinic’s therapeutic methods from their religious origins that key stakeholders might find unscientific and to deploy Mindfulness and its underlying philosophy in secular contexts while avoiding the charges that the Emmanuel Movement and Transcendental Meditation had faced from medical specialists and even the general public.

Chapter 6 questions the effect of mindfulness in treating people with mood and emotional disorders. Kabat-Zinn sees mindfulness as “a way of being and not a technique,” stating that “healing takes place on its own over time as we align ourselves with what is deepest and best in ourselves and rest in awareness moment by moment without an attachment to outcome” (pp. 171–172). Hickey insightfully points out

that Kabat-Zinn interprets mindfulness in non-Buddhist terms because federally funded hospitals, prisons, and public schools are expected to follow the Constitutional separation of church and state. A secular, medicalized approach makes meditation accessible to a broader range of people beyond Buddhist followers. While Hickey confirms the transformative benefit of being mindful of one's mental habits based on her own experiences as a long-time practitioner of meditation, an ordained Buddhist priest, and a teacher of Buddhist meditation, she questions some of the researches on the brain, consciousness, and meditation. Specifically, she questions Daniel Goleman's claim that fMRI technology provided a "perfectly reliable image of brain activity" of a Tibetan Lama (p. 174), pointing out its methodological problems. She not only posits that mindfulness has no qualitative difference from other meditative practices on changing the brain (p. 175), but also questions MBSR's effectiveness especially as she believes that intensive meditation could surface traumatic memories or a distressing sense of depersonalization, to which she suggests the importance of guidance by an instructor with credentials and experience. The line of argument implies that Hickey does believe that meditation and mindfulness affect the unconsciousness, which renders her doubt on their mental effect less powerful. Her analysis might have been more convincing if she had taken into account Kabat-Zinn's guided mindfulness meditation practices and writings such as the *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) as well as Goleman's *Destructive Emotions* (2003).

Chapter 7 argues that Mindfulness training could be unwholesome because it lost at least three important things: "the ethical frameworks in which the disciplines of meditation and yoga historically have been embedded, the benefits and challenges of long-term spiritual community, and systemic analysis of suffering" (p. 187). The chapter summarizes how the Mind Cure's religiously motivated social justice agenda and openness to women was eclipsed by the rise of the Emmanuel Movement and Freudian psychotherapy. Both the early Mind Cure and the Mindfulness movements consider religion as transcultural and transhistorical, distancing meditation, yoga, and other spiritual disciplines from their Asian context to "repackage them for Western consumption"—a practice of "strategic Occidentalism," while espousing "strategic Orientalism," deploying the Eastern wisdom to critique aspects of Western culture (pp. 188, 195). Both movements appreciate a disciplined mind and contemplative practice, claiming their

compatibility with modern science while using science to validate their healing claims, an irony which the chapter points out. MBIs focus on an individual's psychological and physical health, with most of its advocates being highly educated, affluent white males. Hickey insightfully concludes that as meditation became individualized, medicalized, instrumentalized, and commodified in the postwar era, the benefit of long-term immersion in a community was lost.

In the appendix Hickey shares the methodological and archival challenges she has encountered in studying the metaphysical movements, most of which had little denominational structure. The study was time-consuming and expensive since the movements have no denomination headquarters nor archives, and materials were scattered in serial publications like magazines and preserved at a handful of libraries around the country. To avoid a "simplistic, linear searches for origins" (p. 223), Hickey tries to tell a meaningful story of mind-body healing movements by showing their tangled histories, interactions, and overlapping networks. She successfully offers an interdisciplinary history of religion and medicine with insights drawn also from other disciplines and discourses—feminist and race studies, Buddhist and Hindu studies, and postcolonial theory.

Mind Cure is a broad, instead of deep, account of the development of mind-body medicine and holistic healing in the United States, revealing connections between the various metaphysical and mind-cure movements. As an interdisciplinary *tour de force*, Hickey's study invokes Catherine Albanese's insight that metaphysical religions are best studied in terms of "networks"—that is, contact and connection that overlaps "between and among cultural worlds"—rather than "institutions or denominations" (p. 223) as well as Thomas Tweed's insight that religions are "dynamic and relational," permeable and ever-changing as they move across landscapes and cultures (p. 225). Her research spans three centuries and covers Asia, Europe, and the United States, attempting a diachronic explanation of modern self-help programs by searching for regularities in metaphysical healing movements in American history to argue how they shaped Asian meditative traditions' acculturation from the end of the nineteenth century on and prepared for the mindfulness phenomena. Hickey makes important contributions to the fields of American religion, comparative religious studies, Asian religious studies, and history of medicine. Her introduction of these healing movements draws our attention to their relations

with mainstream medicine, their religious and institutional developments, and their mind-body healing, gendered, and racial dimensions (chapters 1–4). The contrast between emic and etic views allows her to observe the relations between mainstream medicine and periphery healing practices and between religious praxis and changes in their organization, suggesting the limitations of Mindfulness therapeutics (chapters 5–7).

Despite the book's strengths, there are several questionable points. The organizational structure of the book is loose and occasionally incohesive. Some of the main chapters contain subsections whose relevance to the main arguments are not always clear. Hickey sometimes summarizes a religious group or a teaching in two or more pages that reads more like short surveys instead of the content of a scholarly monograph. This method is also helpful since most of these movements are obscure even by American religious standards. Hickey culls the scattered particulars from neglected archives, reaffirming their value to the history of American religion. Recently a few scholars such as Tweed, Robert Sharf, and David McMahan specializing in Asian Buddhism and familiar with American religion have begun to study Buddhism's modernization and acculturation from national, transnational, and comparative perspectives. Some of their studies began to identify the historical and cultural contexts within which Americans misunderstood Buddhism. Hickey incorporates these studies and offers insightful analysis of the research on meditation and mindfulness. However, her examination of neo-Vedanta and yoga teachings' background in India is not as clear as Buddhist meditation's background in Japan. Moreover, her study suggests that New Thought promoted meditation and yoga a century earlier than mindfulness; however, as the author admits, a more thorough investigation of the Mind Cure's understanding of the non-Western influences would require more extensive review of early New Thought materials.

These issues aside, *Mind Cure* is a useful resource that reveals important facets of the metaphysical movements and holistic healing that are amalgamated and complicated due to their unique continuities and discontinuities within the American religious tradition. The book's study suggests that these movements ought to be respected alongside Judeo-Christian traditions in equal esteem. Hickey's fascinating insight on meditation and mindfulness suggests that Buddhist doctrines and monastic practices have a richness that is being ignored or silenced by

neuroscientists, advocates of secularized meditation, and modernist Asian Buddhist and Hindu missionaries. As I see it, she urges her reader to take meditation seriously without making it the handmaiden of cognitive sciences and advocates of MBSR and other MBIs. This book is highly recommended as an introduction to American mind-body healing movements and the Mindfulness phenomena and to those involved in the academic study of either movement.