

## Review: *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* by Patricia Owen-Smith

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*The development of the field of contemplative education depends on diverse perspectives, justifications, empirical studies and conceptualizations. One crucial perspective requires the advancement of dialogues between contemplative practices and the field of education, its ancestries and its contemporary discourses. Such dialogues can take different forms, one of which is undertaken in Owen-Smith's highly recommended book *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*.*

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The development of the field of contemplative education depends on diverse perspectives, justifications, empirical studies, and conceptualizations. One crucial perspective requires the advancement of dialogues between contemplative practices and the field of education, its ancestries, and its contemporary discourses. Such dialogues can take different forms, one of which is undertaken in Patricia Owen-Smith's highly recommended book *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. In this concise book she explores the encounter between two discourses that have been developing separately in the past decades: contemplative education (CE) and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). These discourses have much in common, yet they are also different in many ways. In her nuanced account, Owen-Smith clearly establishes that her intention is not to merge them but rather to articulate how they can learn from each other. As the book's title suggests, in this case the encounter leans more toward bringing the contemplative into SoTL than toward bringing SoTL into the contemplative.

The introduction and the five chapters that follow offer the reader a discussion of the common features of and distinctions between CE and SoTL, the history of their development, an overview of contemplative practices in higher education and critiques of this orientation, a review of research methods that can be applied to study them, and finally a vision of the contemplative mind in higher education for the 21st century that stems from the previous chapters. Throughout these chapters Owen-Smith relies on a substantial amount of literature from both CE and SoTL to establish how she views the contemplative mind as contributing to the SoTL.

Offering an overview of CE and SoTL, Owen-Smith opens with their shared ethos: an ethics-based commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning bound with the quest to transform higher education (p. 1). Both discourses celebrate the qualities of curiosity, imagination, insight, attention, collaboration, self-authored inquiry, and citizenship (pp. 3-4) as undergirding such an ethos. At the same time, Owen-Smith demonstrates that despite this shared ethos these two discourses have been developing independently due to their groundings in and commitments to different epistemologies. With contemplative education being grounded in wisdom traditions and SoTL emerging from educational paradigms committed to standards of third-person knowing, the two discourses have been set apart.

To a great extent Owen-Smith's progression reflects analyses and claims made about the sciences of mind (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Wallace, 2004), which are here applied to the field of education. My own reading, at least, suggests that perhaps the main theme that runs as a thread throughout these chapters is one expressed by Harold Roth (2006): "We have become the masters of third-person scientific investigation, but we are mere novices in the arts of critical first-person scientific investigation" (p. 1787). Owen-Smith elaborates on this idea by showing how the term "scholarship" in SoTL has mostly remained situated within an interpretation of consensual, intersubjective, scientific knowing. However, she makes a point of presenting SoTL's awareness of the limits of this approach, as prominent figures in the SoTL discourse have acknowledged the need for "a new paradigm of research methods...that legitimizes multiple ways of knowing, examines new approaches to learning, and offers a wide range of methodological methods" (p. 75). Despite such calls, SoTL discourse has not developed in these directions. This void becomes a fertile ground for contributions that CE is equipped to offer.

What seems to be at stake here, which I would pose as a question to Owen-Smith, is whether her exploration is not only an inquiry into CE within SoTL but also in fact a study of the dialogue between the two main activities in higher education institutions—teaching and doing research—and how these are associated with the idea of "education" (Ergas, 2017). As demonstrated in various chapters of the book, both activities always involve an epistemology, and epistemology is always a form of ethics: ways of knowing are ways of being (Palmer, 1994). What Owen-Smith demonstrates, I believe, is that CE and SoTL have engaged differently with this inevitable relationship between epistemology and ethics in teaching and its scholarship. CE has acknowledged their inseparability at its outset, with the idea of contemplative inquiry as a clear appreciation of first-person methods as both modes of knowing and modes of teaching and learning. SoTL, on the other hand, has been struggling with this relationship. While clearly moving beyond theoretical knowledge toward an appreciation of practical knowledge that acknowledges its idiosyncrasies, its inquiry into teaching and learning has still been one in which these activities are to be examined from the outside rather than the inside. Thus, the embrace of the practical still separates the practice-as-lived from the practice-as-inquired-into.

In light of this question, if I were to place my finger on the main distinction between CE and SoTL that Owen-Smith's analysis seems to bring up, it would be the place of body and embodiment. While SoTL has been clearly grounded in practices such as reflection, its understanding of reflection has evolved mostly from Donald Schön's (1987) work. Here subjectivity, as John Miller (2012) showed, is embraced and inquired into only partially, remaining within the realm of a reflective practitioner but not that of a contemplative one. While hardly to be underestimated as a mode for improving and understanding teaching and learning, the realm of the embodied mind—our lived, present first-person experience—embraced in body-based practices within CE remains neglected in SoTL. Scholars of SoTL have not quite been willing to make that leap and accept the idea that practices such as yoga or mindfulness—which, as the late neuroscientist Catherine Kerr demonstrated, “start with the body” (Kerr, Sacchet, Lazar, Moore, & Jones, 2013)—are not only a mode of being but also a mode of knowing and inquiring. While Owen-Smith's book does not explicitly make this claim, it seems to lurk behind it, and her book is a gateway for further establishing it, as has also recently been done within the broader field of contemplative studies (Komjathy, 2018).

Along with its agenda of introducing the contemplative mind into SoTL, Owen-Smith's book provides a map of the field of contemplative education. She covers a huge amount of ground, reviewing and integrating knowledge from numerous books and peer-reviewed publications in the field as well as discussions on the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) network and case studies of contemplative pedagogy. Reading this book manifests both how much this field has developed over the years and how much nuance and diversity exists in the various voices heard within it. Owen-Smith illustrates this rich tapestry of voices and expresses the potentials, challenges, and critiques that many of us face as we go about implementing these practices in teaching on a daily basis. She also dedicates a full chapter to discussing research methodologies as they apply to contemplative teaching and are shared with SoTL, thus pointing to various possibilities for contemplative lecturers and educators. Owen-Smith's book not only substantiates the place of contemplative practices in higher education, it reflects that justifications for their place can be made using the highest standards of academic rigor. This book is a substantial contribution to the field of education in general and to the field of contemplative education in particular, opening new avenues of research and teaching for us all.

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