Mindset and Meditative Inquiry

ADRIAN M. DOWNEY
University of New Brunswick

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses Carol Dweck's work on growth and fixed mindset and offers a conceptual critique of both mindsets' limitedness from a holistic perspective. Toward this critique, the author draws on Ashwani Kumar's writing on meditative inquiry. Kumar's writing is based on the premise that our external conflicts result from our fractured, internal psychological states. Whereas growth mindset posits that we should constantly be striving toward something, Kumar's writing asserts that striving toward a goal will only result in more internal conflict. Growth, for Kumar, is only desirable in as much as it does not interfere with one's self-understanding. Through holding Dweck's work in conversation with Kumar's, new insights into both perspectives emerge. This paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of meditative inquiry and growth mindset for teachers and students, ultimately encouraging both groups to ask serious questions and give themselves time to answer them.

Keywords: Growth Mindset; Meditative Inquiry; Holistic Education; Jiddu Krishnamurti; Spirituality and Education

RESUMÉ: RÉSUMÉ: Ce document examine les travaux de Carol Dweck sur la croissance et les états d'esprit fixes et propose une critique conceptuelle de la limitation de ces deux mentalités dans une perspective holistique. L'auteur s'inspire des écrits d'Ashwani Kumar sur l'enquête méditative. Les écrits de Kumar partent du principe que nos conflits externes résultent de nos états psychologiques internes fragmentés. Tandis que la mentalité de croissance postule que nous devrions constamment nous efforcer d'atteindre un but, les écrits de Kumar affirment que s'efforcer d'accéder à un objectif ne fera qu'engendrer davantage des conflits internes. Pour Kumar, la croissance n'est souhaitable que dans la mesure où elle n'interfère pas avec la compréhension de soi. A travers une conversation de Dweck et de Kumar, de nouvelles connaissances émergent dans les deux perspectives. Cet article se termine par une discussion sur les implications de l'enquête méditative et de l'esprit de croissance pour les enseignants et les étudiants, encourageant les deux groupes à se poser de sérieuses questions et à se donner le temps d'y répondre.

Mots-clés: mentalité de croissance; Enquête méditative; Éducation holistique; Jiddu Krishnamurti; Spiritualité et éducation

Introduction

Since the publication of Carol Dweck's *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006), the terms growth and fixed mindset, or what Dweck has called elsewhere incremental and entity self-theories (2000), have become ubiquitous within the educational discourse in schools (Dweck, 2015, 2016), higher education (Lang, 2016; Wu, 2014), and scholarship (Dweck, 2000; Furnham, 2014; Seaton, 2018). Indeed, despite a recent study suggesting that the interventions conventionally used to build a growth mindset may be less effective than previously reported (Sisk et al., 2018), the terms growth and fixed mindset seem permanently lodged in the minds of educators and scholars alike.

Mindset is the result of over 30 years of empirical study (Dweck, 2000, 2016). In this essay, however, I am concerned with the conceptual rather than the empirical. My intent is to conceptually compare Dweck's writing around mindset to the work of Ashwani Kumar around meditative inquiry (2013).[i] Kumar's meditative inquiry takes its philosophical grounding from the writings of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1968, 1992), an Indian-born spiritual philosopher, and James B. Macdonald (1995), a prominent American curriculum theorist. Kumar's writing is highly critical of Western systems of thought, which tend to emphasize intellectual engagement, development, and problem solving over more holistic, existential, and spiritual approaches, such as those expressed by Krishnamurti. There is, however, a mutual emphasis in Dweck's and Kumar's work around achieving heightened levels of intelligence and fulfilling human potential. It is for this reason that I believe there is much to be gained through their—potentially dialectic—comparison.

Indeed, there is always something to be gained by engaging ideas from divergent paradigms. Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) has called the result of such efforts trans-systemic knowledge: knowledge which transcends paradigmatic boundaries. Thus, toward a trans-systemic view of mindset, here I examine the tensions and agreements between the Western conception of growth and fixed mindsets with the holistic thinking of Jiddu Krishnamurti as taken up by Ashwani Kumar in his work around meditative inquiry (2013). First, I present a brief summary of Dweck's writing about mindset with particular emphasis on the concept of self. Second, I summarize Kumar's work on meditative inquiry toward the articulation of what I call a *meditative mind*—a term meant to parallel mindset while also depicting the fluidity of meditative inquiry (note the absence of "set"). Third, I explore the tensions and agreements between these thoughts. Finally, I conclude by explaining the implications of this discussion for teachers, students, and education more broadly.

Mindsets

Mindset is often presented as a simple dichotomy between growth (incremental) and fixed (entity), hinging around the word "yet" (Dweck, 2014). For those in the fixed mindset, ability, skill, and intelligence are innate—you either are intelligent, athletic, good with computers or you are not—there is little room for improvement. On the other hand, within the growth mindset, one may see themselves as unintelligent or a poor athlete, but it is generally recognized that with time and effort they will be able to achieve growth in the particular area of their focus: I am not a confident driver, *yet.* Though Dweck (2015, 2016) acknowledges that we are all made up of both mindsets, and that having a growth mindset for all things at all times is an impossible feat, it is clear that she considers growth mindset a goal to which the majority of people should strive.

The interest of this essay is the self and the beliefs we hold about ourselves. The self, or the core of our being, is a difficult concept to pin down and is presented differently by Dweck and Kumar. Dweck's work "does not portray the self as one monolithic thing. Instead it focuses on the self-beliefs and self-relevant goals that people develop" (Dweck, 2000, p. 138) and furthermore "highlights the processes that people engage in as they pursue self-relevant goals in their daily lives" (Dweck, 2000, p. 138). To my knowledge, Kumar never directly asserts what the self is. It is, however, hinted at in his distinction between subjectivity within autobiographical curriculum studies (informed by phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis) and his own meditative approach to subjectivity:

> Subjectivity-as-self invokes the methods of self-reflexivity and introspection that primarily aim at modifying the existing Ego. Subjectivity-as-awareness, on the contrary, requires choiceless awareness or pure observation of the mechanism of self without any judgement, analysis, comparison, or condemnation. (Kumar, 2013, p. 15)

In my reading, Kumar sees self as something with which to engage, understand, and form relationship through pure observation. The processes to which Dweck refer are egocentric movements in Kumar's view—the self is something much deeper.

These different views stem from the particular perspectives on truth from which the authors operate. For Kumar and Krishnamurti, "truth is a pathless land" (Krishnamurti as quoted in Kumar, 2013, p. 84) and is generally individual in nature. The process of coming to truth is marked by direct experience, though it is not limited to the senses or any claim to empirical observability. Truth, and by consequence the true self, "belongs to the one who discovers it" (Kumar, 2013, p. 86). Though Dweck is never explicit about her vision of what constitutes truth, it is clear from her paradigmatic positioning that she is working within the empirical tradition of Western science. Truth, from this perspective, is observable, testable, and

provable. This truth may also be based on direct experience, but that experience or observation must be replicable in order to be considered true. The difference in these views is that Dweck considers self-belief true once it is sharable (i.e., replicable) while Kumar is concerned with that which is observable within—it is the difference between one truth and many.

To further clarify these divergent views of self, I rely on John Miller's (2007) distinction between ego and soul:

> For centuries various philosophical and spiritual traditions have discussed the two selves of human nature. One self is our ego, which is our socialized sense of who we are. It involves all the roles we play such as wife/husband, father/mother, daughter/son, as well as our job identity. Beyond this self is what has been called our soul. (p. 14)

Miller goes on to discuss the way ego sees the world as divided and constantly pushes us into competing with one another. Soul, for Miller, is marked by an understanding of the innate interconnectedness of all things, and is thus free from ego-driven conflict. What Dweck calls the self is what Miller calls ego—the socially guided processes of constructing identity. Holding this distinction in mind, it is possible to proceed with a comparison of mindset and meditative inquiry with particular emphasis around the self-beliefs attached to each. Below, I describe the fixed and growth mindsets with reference to the beliefs one holds about themselves in each.

Those in a fixed mindset appear to work from the belief that the self[ii] is finite and unalterable: who we are is who we are, and there is no way to change that. Within the fixed mindset, one views their abilities and their skills as fixed, and by extension for many people *they* are fixed—the core of their being is finite and knowable. Dweck alludes to this notion when she says "the fixed mindset creates the feeling that you can *really* know the permanent truth about yourself" (Dweck, 2016, p. 50). Dweck goes on to state that this can be comforting but is quick to reiterate the drawbacks of the mindset, revealing her particular bias toward the growth mindset.

Those in the growth mindset, on the other hand, view the self as malleable and capable of self-directed change. The growth mindset is concerned with the building of capacity, the embrace of challenge, and recognition that through time and effort improvement is always possible. Dweck summarizes the point thus: "[people in growth mindsets] believe that a person's true potential is unknown (and unknowable); that it is impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training" (Dweck, 2016, p. 7). As its name would suggest, growth mindset is necessarily progress-oriented. Dweck iterates this when she reminds educators that "effort is a means to an end to the goal of learning and improving" (2015, p. 20). Growth mindset is concerned with the development and, thus, change of self.

Meditative Inquiry

Meditative inquiry begins with the premise that "our world is in crisis" (Kumar, 2013, p. 1). Indeed, no matter where we look in the world we see environmental devastation, poverty, war, and injustice. Even in G8 countries such as Canada, there are no shortage of societal crises, from the environmental destruction evident in the tar sands to the continued colonization of Indigenous people through unjust school and prison systems (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Many scholars have pointed out the complex causes of these crises and suggested alternatives (e.g., Hensley, 2011; Ross & Gibson, 2007; Simpson, 2017). In this vein, Kumar takes the position that all of our external crises are a result of the internal, psychological, and spiritual crises existent within ourselves (2013; see also Miller, 2000, 2007). Kumar further iterates that Western thought has been far too concerned with intellectual responses to crisis and has not allowed for a full, holistic engagement (Kumar, 2013). Meditative inquiry, then, is an invitation to such a holistic engagement with the crises of our society—an invitation to understand ourselves at a deeper level and allow our self-understanding to permeate first our own being, and then our society more broadly.

Of interest to our discussion here is the manner in which Kumar believes our internal conflicts and crises arise. One way in which conflicts arise within ourselves is through the process of *becoming*. Society constructs ideals toward which we are constantly striving. Consider, for example, the image of a good teacher: a good teacher is often constructed as someone who is well organized, capable of managing student behaviours, and above all achieves government mandated curriculum outcomes. Kumar and Krishnamurti argue that when we compare ourselves to those ideals—and inevitably fail to measure up because they are ideals and, thus, abstract—we move further away from understanding ourselves and a series of negative emotions are generated. These negative emotions have something of a chain reaction because we inevitably react to those emotions with more emotions. I may be fearful that I will not live up to a particular societal ideal; that fear is not a part of the ideal of a good teacher, nor of a good person, thus I either repress that part of me in a renewed effort to live up to the ideal or I become saddened by the failure. The sadness then leads to more and more emotional reactions, all the while obscuring the initial conflict and adding to the perpetual state of internal crisis (Kumar, 2013).

For Kumar and Krishnamurti, release from this process of becoming comes through meditative awareness—a deep, holistic, meditative engagement with one's conflicts through which one is able to come into contact with oneself *as one is*. Once we encounter ourselves, we must accept ourselves without judgement of any kind, particularly not in relation to societally constructed ideals. We must not measure ourselves or say that any part of our self is good or bad; every piece of who we are simply exists. Once

we accept every part of ourselves, the conflicts, crises, and tensions begin to dissipate and release. We are able to come into contact with our deepest conflicts and accept them as a part of who we are and let go of the tension we hold around them.

There are several common critiques of meditative inquiry worth noting. The first is that the call to accept oneself as one is could potentially lead to an exoneration of oppressive, hateful ideologies. Likewise, some argue that self-acceptance and societal change are mutually exclusive goals and that focusing on self-acceptance takes focus away from addressing the material circumstances of oppression. Kumar is, however, clear on this point: we cannot change our society if we do not first change ourselves. The direction of that change is to be more coherent with what Miller (2007) calls our soul. Our soul is neither good nor bad according to human subjectivities, rather, it *is*. The soul in its natural, unfragmented state cannot truly project harm onto another because, as Miller (2007) notes, soul recognizes the interconnectedness of the universe, and to harm another would be to harm oneself.

Meditative inquiry is far more than a cognitive disposition, it is an approach to life. It is a quest "to come into contact with life through intense awareness, bringing your whole being together so that you can experience life as it is" (Kumar in Kumar & Downey, 2018, pp. 70-71). Indeed, Kumar is critical of the over intellectualization of both our societal crises and our personal fragmentations. Miller, who draws on spiritual thinkers from various traditions to make his point, supports Kumar when he says, "A consistent tread in the perennial philosophy is that the rational mind, which focuses on analysis, cannot fully grasp the wholeness of existence" (2007, p. 20). Yet, the cognitive manifestations of meditative inquiry do form a mind(set) unique from those described by Dweck. It is a mind that honours self-acceptance and self-knowledge and that neither ignores growth, nor attempts to strive toward it. This *meditative mind*, as I will call it, embraces growth as a natural byproduct of life and centers acceptance of all growth rather than a particular search for the tangible.

Having now discussed both Dweck's mindsets and made a case for a meditative mind supported by Kumar's concept of meditative inquiry, I will now delve into a full discussion of the relationship between these concepts.

Tension and Release

Both growth and fixed mindset share common ground with the concept of meditative inquiry. Tensions also exist. Exploring this common ground and these tensions will allow for a fuller understanding of what I have called the meditative mind.

In fixed mindset, there is no developmental goal where the self is concerned; the overall mandate is to avoid change in order to preserve the ego (Dweck, 2000). This, in a limited sense, could be considered a tacit

acceptance of the self. From the fixed mindset, one sees no necessity in striving toward anything because striving is perceived as ineffective and risky—"what if I fail and am found to be inadequate?" This manifestation of fixed mindset is somewhat congruent with meditative inquiry—at least superficially. Within meditative inquiry, striving or struggling toward any particular goal is against one's nature and generates psychological distance between one and oneself (Kumar, 2013). Striving, or trying to become something other than what one is, only results in internal conflict between one's true self and one's professed goal. In Kumar's words, "when we look at ourselves with an ideal in mind, we have already gone against ourselves" (Kumar, 2013, p. 11). The difference in terms of the self-acceptance in fixed mindset and meditative mind is found in the psychological base from which one makes the decision to accept oneself as one is. The meditative mind moves beyond the fixed mindset's acceptance, which is rife with inconsistency, fragmentation, and internal conflict. Within the meditative mind, self-acceptance comes from pure observation of oneself and results in an organic and non-judgmental relationship. One does not accept oneself within the fixed mindset because one is aware that the societal ideals toward which one has been told to strive are artificial human constructs that only succeed in distancing us from our natural, whole states. Rather, the acceptance stems from the fact that one is immobilized by the fear of not living up to those ideals. In the fixed mindset, one becomes controlled by competition, comparison, and the need to be better than others, and one requires constant validation of one's skills through praise and awards (Dweck, 2016). Though those in fixed mindsets may be willing to accept themselves as they are in a particular area, according to Dweck's description of the mindset and the self-theories that underpin it, they only accept themselves because they do not see themselves as capable of becoming any better. Dweck acknowledges that this kind of self-acceptance, which is really more of a self-suppression, is certainly detrimental to one's well-being.

There is, perhaps, more overlap between the growth mindset and the meditative mind. First, both are concerned with the development of human potential, and even the method of developing that potential are, on the surface, not dissimilar. Again, growth mindset operates from the position that one can change oneself. As people in the fixed mindset are seen as being limited by their psychological profiles and finite beliefs about themselves, growth mindset posits that if one can establish more positive or *productive* views of oneself, growth will be inevitable. This is similar to the idea in meditative inquiry of removing one's psychological blockages so that life can flow through uninhibited (Kumar & Downey, 2019). Both are focused on removing the concerns of the ego so that one can get on with the process of learning and living respectively. The differences arise in whether one approaches the ego cognitively (growth) or holistically (meditative), whether one tackles the superficial symptoms of ego (growth) or ego at its root

(meditative), and whether one's goal[iii] is growth (growth) or self-acceptance and self-understanding (meditative). Ultimately, these difference stem from whether or not growth is seen as a goal or a by-product and from the absence of what Miller calls soul in Dweck's conception of self. Below, I discuss each of these interconnected differences in detail.

First, within growth mindset, one's approach to the concerns of the ego are limited to the cognitive or intellectual. This, in part, stems from the rooting of mindset within Western psychology which, as Kumar has pointed out, has been rather restricted to the cognitive (Kumar, 2013; Kumar & Downey, 2018). The approach of change in Dweck's work is limited to a changing of one's mind, with little reference to a changing of one's heart, spirit, or body. From the perspective of Krishnamurti (1968), this kind of intellectualizing can only take us so far. To draw again on Miller's (2007) distinction, our mind can only calm and interact with those concerns which are of the ego; those concerns of the soul must be met and accepted through direct observation and meditative awareness. This is not a cognitive exercise, but a holistic engagement. The meditative mind, then, is informed by holism and the search for one's true self. It is a holistic engagement and is thus concerned with living fully, of which learning is a by-product, rather than learning for its own sake.

Second, growth mindset does not deal with the root of egocentric activity, but rather with the symptoms. Indeed, "the whole of idea of growth in itself can be an egocentric activity" (A. Kumar, personal communications, July 19, 2018). Although on the surface growth mindset appears interested in the silencing of ego, it is actually concerned with suppression and direction rather than acceptance. This stems from the overall goal in growth mindset of individual growth, development, and learning—the building up of self. In general, Western psychology views the self as something to develop, something which should be given greater esteem. In meditative thought, however, the self is seen as the source of suffering and something of which to be free. Kumar states:

> Western psychology seems to think that there is a dichotomy between being jealous and the positive self, but… jealousy is part of the self… Eastern thinkers like Krishnamurti tried to question this division between the so-called "good" self and the "bad" self. They said that the self in itself is the cause of suffering, but they didn't mean that we should suppress self or control it. Their intention was to encourage us to observe how the self operates in day-to-day life without calling it bad or good. (Kumar in Kumar & Downey, 2018, p. 62)

Making the shift from fixed to growth mindset involves a cognitive realization that our intelligence and personality are not fixed. In this, the voices of our ego, which remind us we may fail, seem to disappear. Yet without going further and asking from where those voices come—without getting to the root—any change will be superficial. If we silence ego just to get on with our own learning, we will only succeed in moving further from

ourselves. The meditative mind, therefore, is concerned with self-understanding for its own sake. Again, growth is only a by-product.

Finally, whereas the growth mindset operates with an all-too-human interest in growth, the meditative mind is interested in growth only so far as it does not interfere with one's sense of self or what Kumar calls *intuitive intelligence* (Kumar in Kumar & Downey, 2019). To illustrate this difference, it may be helpful to draw a comparison between these ideas and two extremes of our present physical reality. Growth mindset is progress oriented: it begins with a love of puzzles, challenges, or practice and extends through sustained effort into the pursuit of excellence and perfection because one loves what one is doing. This is somewhat analogous to the mentality that has resulted in the technological advancements of the Western world as manifest in the urban landscape. Over the course of human history, people have 'progressed' to develop more and more comfortable ways of living. That progress may have made many lives better, but it has also created distance between us and our natural selves. At the other end of the spectrum is the natural world, where growth and progress happen all the time, but in a manner supportive of our natural selves. Consider the life cycle of a caterpillar, which transforms itself in around one month. Is the caterpillar striving toward becoming a butterfly or is the caterpillar simply *being*? There are obviously no concrete answers to this question possible given our current, rather limited, empirical understanding of caterpillar consciousness, but the metaphor stands. Meditative inquiry is concerned with a natural, conflict-free growth; "It is self-inquiry without a purpose" (A. Kumar, personal communications, July 19, 2018). Furthermore,

> It doesn't matter whether you are engaging with holistic education for mechanical gains or for spiritual gains, because if the focus remains on the strengthening of the self without understanding its deeper nature and structure, transformation still doesn't happen. The deeper connection between ourselves and the world doesn't happen; the connection is being mediated by egocentric activities. (Kumar in Kumar & Downey, 2018, p. 62)

Growth mindset is ultimately concerned with the building up of self (ego), and not a deeper understanding of the nature of oneself (soul). The meditative mind, on the other hand, is concerned only with doing those things that result from a true understanding of who we are—the things that come from our soul, not from our ego. Once there is self-acceptance, any activity will yield incredible growth, but growth is not the guiding principle.

Implications for Education

Despite the semantic differences upon which I have dwelt above, I believe that growth mindset and meditative mind are interconnected. In my mind and experience, if one has a meditative mind, they will also behave in a way reminiscent of growth mindset—though they may not be interested in

growth at all, but rather focused on self-acceptance and self-understanding. Having a growth mindset, however, does not necessarily mean one has accepted their internal fragmentations and blockages, and thus they may not have a meditative mind. Through a more holistic, meditative engagement, I think we are capable of moving beyond a growth mindset into something deeper—what I call the meditative mind. Below, I comment on the potential for understanding education more holistically through the lens of the meditative mind.

For teachers, the meditative mind begins by asking yourself serious, meaningful questions and giving yourself time and space to answer them. For example, you may examine the role of fear in your classroom. Of what are you afraid? From where is your fear originating? Is your fear organic to your being or has it come from some external stimulus? Are you, as I was for many years, afraid of not being a "good" teacher in the eyes of your administrators? How do those fears manifest themselves in your behavior? How do you react to your own fearfulness? Are you suppressing it? Can you accept your fearfulness as a part of your being? The list of questions is endless, but in the process of questioning, one may develop a deeper understanding of one's self and perhaps step away from one's ego for a time and listen to one's soul. In my experience, as we begin to ask these questions our pedagogies will change. Miller discusses this change as non-violent and remind us: "From a holistic perspective it is important to work from the inside out (Hunt, 1987). Change, then, should be congruent with our centre, not with some external set of expectations" (Miller, 2007, pp. 60-61). When change comes from the core of our being, we will no longer be concerned with control nor maintaining pretenses for the sake of pleasing our societal superiors; we will let our soul speak unencumbered by ego. The result, in short, is inward growth as well as outward growth.

The implications for students are not dissimilar. Whereas much of the curricular movement in schools over the last fifty years has been focused on standardization, accountability, and measurement (Hensley, 2011; Kumar, 2014; Pinar, 2012; Ross & Gibson, 2007), holistic educators have been pulling in the opposite direction (Kumar & Downey, 2018; Miller, 2007). Giving students the opportunity to ask questions about who they are and what is true for them, connecting to their truest self, is a form of honoring autonomy, the educative potential of which lay in the radical efficiency of unfragmented relationship and love. Kumar touches on this love through the work of Krishnamurti:

> Krishnamurti says that love is the most efficient thing in the world. He is making fun of people's concept of efficiency because people want to be efficient whether they love it or not. If you love something, you will be efficient [emphasis original]. (Kumar in Kumar & Downey, 2019, p. 110)

The growth mindset has elements of this efficiency of love. If we love to learn and are genuinely intrigued by questions and challenging ideas, then

our learning will be efficient. The meditative perspective, however, attempts to move beyond ego-driven, selfish love of learning into a more radical love of all existence. It is when we are filled with this love, this meditative awareness, that we then can learn wisdom from everything around us, and not just knowledge from difficult problems. Learning may take place through a math problem, through a walk in the park, through a dance recital, or though seated meditation. So long as one is engaging with their whole, unfractured being in a way that comes from a true understanding of oneself, there will be learning. This is, for me, the true purpose of education.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the relationship between Carol Dweck's writing around mindset and holistic, spiritual thought particularly as manifest through Ashwani Kumar's concept of meditative inquiry. I have discussed the relationship between mindset and self and made the point that both the fixed and growth mindset are concerned with the ego rather than the soul. Additionally, I have described Kumar's concept of meditative inquiry and introduced the term meditative mind as the cognitive manifestation of a more holistic engagement with life. Furthermore, I have held the fixed and growth mindset in contrast with the meditative mind and explored the commonalities and tensions that arise. Finally, I have shared the implications of my discussion for the field of education, specifically to teachers and students.

Within empirical research, there is often a call in papers such as this for further research into particular areas. I suspect there is tremendous merit in such endeavors, and I could perhaps suggest several potential avenues for such research. A more interesting suggestion, however, is simply to invite you into your own personal engagement in meditative inquiry. In meditative inquiry, the most important step one can make in any endeavor is to accept oneself as one is—a flawed human being. This does not mean one should stop asking deep questions; it simply means that as one asks those questions the answers ought to be based on actuality rather than some fabricated ideal. In other words, we should attempt to see ourselves as we are rather than how we would like to be. Seeing ourselves as we are requires rigorous self-examination, which is a profoundly countercultural act. But such self-examination is a necessary starting point for social change. As noted above, "our world is in crisis" (Kumar, 2013, p. 1), and here I agree with Kumar, Miller, Krishnamurti, and many others that the answers to our crises begin within.

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Address for Correspondence
Adrian M. Downey
University of New Brunswick
Email: adowney3@unb.ca

[i] Dr. Kumar and I have been engaged in research together since 2017. I was hired by Dr. Kumar as a research assistant to work on The Dialogue Project where I acted as the questioner in a series of dialogues. My role in these dialogues was to hold space for Dr. Kumar to deepen and theorize his ideas regarding meditative inquiry and its implications of teaching, learning, researching, and living (see Kumar & Downey 2018, 2019; see also Kumar, 2013). Here, I take up some of Dr. Kumar's thinking in relation to other work in education.

[ii] For the remainder of the essay, I use "the self" in the same sense as Miller—to include both ego and soul.

[iii] From the meditative perspective, it is not a goal. It either is or it is not; its existence is not subject to judgement. I use goal here for lack of a better alternative.