Article

Embodied Presence, Responsible Active Citizenship and Dissent in Hong Kong

Marcus T. Anthony[1,*]

[1]*Associate Professor of Futures Studies at the College of Global Talents, and, Coordinator Global Talent 2050, Beijing Institute of Technology, Zhuhai, China*

Abstract

Protests and riots in Hong Kong in 2019-2020 have occurred over concerns about perceived increasing threats to political freedoms, especially surrounding the proposed extradition bill. Underpinning the protests are broader issues of social and economic grievances. In short, there is a sense of increasing disempowerment. However, one's sense of power can also be framed internally, as the capacity to control one's thoughts and feelings, as well as one's relationship to the world. Most social justice narratives today lack this internal perspective. The paper thus introduces the concept of responsible active citizenship, which is in turn founded upon the ideas of embodied presence and cognitive responsibility. This paper makes the argument that the development of a greater internal sense of agency may form part of the long-term response to the shift in power balance between the citizens of Hong Kong and the governments of the SAR and Beijing; not as a replacement for activism, but as a cognitive structure which might underpin it in the future.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

> Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing. (O'Brien, in George Orwell's 1984)

> Why is the sea master of ten thousand streams? Because it lies beneath them. (Lao Zi, *Tao te Ching*)

The recent protests and riots in Hong Kong involving students and other citizens may be seen as both a crisis and an opportunity. Yet given the authoritarian nature of the Beijing government and the greatly unequal power arrangement between that government and Hong Kong's, how might Hong Kong citizens who feel aggrieved or marginalized actively go about creating desired systemic change with a greater sense of personal empowerment?

From a broader perspective, much social justice activism in Hong Kong and western countries in recent decades has focused upon injustice and oppression, and this has resulted in notable increase in awareness of many problems such as environmental degradation (Revkin, 2019) as well as human rights-related issues like racism (Kernahan & Davis, 2010) and sexism (Cundiff, Zawadzki, Danube, & Shields, 2014). Yet according to some critics, along with such awareness has come an attitude of dissatisfied agitation, focused upon finding oppression in ever-smaller spaces, while inculcating a culture of grievance, victimhood, blame and resentment towards broader society and leaders (Hicks, 2004; Murray, 2019). While all this has encouraged some introspection regarding the kinds of social justice issues mentioned above, it has not been balanced with a deeper mindfulness regarding the relationship with oneself and the world. In short, much social justice philosophy has not developed a healthy respect for psycho-spiritual development.

In Hong Kong there is a perceived common threat: the potential for the Chinese Communist Party to remove freedoms from Hong Kong citizens. It is reasonable to assume from interviews with Hong Kong protestors as well

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: marcus.anthony@cgt.bitzh.edu.cn (M. T. Anthony).

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as the British and American flags seen flying from the protesting crowds, that much influence has been taken from the western history of human rights (Gopalan, 2017). Yet as with social justice activism abroad, there is little evidence that any kind of introspective or mindful methodology has arisen or emerged amongst Hong Kong activists during this time. Political activism in Hong Kong and the west thus shares a common quality of predominantly projecting outwards onto the world, but with a lack of introspection. The recent anger and violence in both locales may be being impacted by this imbalance.

The purpose here is not to dismiss the genuine concerns of Hong Kongers in the current context (or protestors elsewhere). Rather it seeks to posit a more introspective approach to the situation. This paper introduces the author's concept of "responsible active citizenship" (RAC) and how it might play a role in the futures of the mainland-China-Hong Kong crisis. RAC is related to the ideas of social justice activism and participatory citizenship. Where it differs from the latter ideas is in its focus upon balancing inner and outer worlds - emphasizing mindfulness and in doing so establishing "cognitive responsibility." The broad possible applications for Hong Kong citizens in the current situation will be discussed. It will be argued that RAC is compatible with activism in general, and might permit individuals to go about making positive contributions to the future of their country, society or communities via peaceful, effective actions. This may include acts of social critique and political dissent.

The focus of this paper is not upon specific possible actions Hong Kong citizens might take using responsible active citizenship. Instead, it brings attention to two concepts which underpin RAC as I have developed the idea: "embodied presence" (EP) and "responsible cognition" (RC).[1] Embodied presence is the deliberate and mindful relaxation into the present moment, while responsible cognition is the deliberate witnessing of one's thoughts and feelings as they arise, including one's beliefs, narratives and agendas for power and control. CR can be thought of as an integral component of EP. The former entails the latter.

My essential thesis is that there are benefits in refocusing one's sense of power within oneself, rather than focusing attention predominantly upon authority figures, politics, governments and institutions. My argument is not meant to deny the important role of more traditional forms of externally-focused social and political activism. I do not see the two as mutually exclusive. Using Inayatullah's (2018) layered perspective on addressing problems - Causal Layered Analysis - embodied presence can be seen as a psycho-spiritual intervention, akin to the deepest myth-metaphor level of CLA.[2] It is my perception that a general failure to develop the inner dimensions of empowerment and social activism has exacerbated the sense of disempowerment in the populace of Hong Kong (and across the globe), especially in the young. This lack of equanimity and embodiment may be contributing to an increasing anxiety, depression (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018) and projection amongst many in the societies of the twenty-first century.

What is embodied presence?

Embodied presence is a psycho-physiological state and attitude which potentially facilitates an increased sense of personal agency by returning the locus of control to one's inner experience, and this in turn may expand one's sense of personal empowerment. The idea of embodied presence has some parallels with teachings and writings within traditional spiritual and introspective traditions, including the meditative and introspective elements in Daoism and Buddhism (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006; Mitchell, n.d.; Rainbeau, 2018). Some overlap can also be seen in modern mindfulness research (Davis & Hayes, 2012; Petersen & Mitkidis, 2019; Cahn & Polich, 2006; Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000), and contemporary popular mindfulness teachings (Anthony, 2014; Holiday, 2019; Tolle, 2009; Jacobson, 2009).

Cognitive responsibility is underpinned by the attitudinal and behavioral decision to witness one's internal and external experiences and to accept them without judgment, and without projecting them onto other people or situations. Both internal or external experience can ultimately be owned as being within oneself. Even sensory experience of the external world is registered via our sensory organs and ultimately by the brain. Given this, the feelings and attitudes towards what one is perceiving can readily be witnessed.

Such introspective processes can be found within many meditative and spiritual traditions mentioned above, such as the Christian, Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu and Sufi (Anthony, 2008; Fairbank & Goldman, 2006; Rainbeau, 2018); as well as in the work of many contemporary spiritual advisors, most of whom draw from the aforementioned spiritual traditions (e.g. Holiday, 2019; Jacobson, 2009; Tolle, 2009).

The Problem in Hong Kong

The experience of embodied presence invites a return to mindfulness and cognitive responsibility. This paper will make the case for remaining "grounded" during times of disruption, specifically during and beyond the current impasse in Hong Kong. By implication, deliberately facilitating embodied presence potentially brings a shift in a person's relationship with their mind and its narratives, feelings and experiences. Such experiences incorporate broader societal information streams; and in today's context, especially information mediated by information technology (the internet, gaming, media, social media, educational materials, government pronouncements and so on). Embodied presence may also help shift one's relationship with the physical world of people, material objects and the biosphere.

In Hong Kong the immediate backdrop to discontent has been a perceived attack on freedom of expression and judicial independence, as the mainland has exercised its control over the former British colony. Specifically, the initial source of anger in June 2019 was the proposed Hong Kong extradition bill, which many thought would not only allow anyone suspected of criminality to be extradited to mainland China, but also undermine the territory's judicial independence and render political dissent dangerous. The "Five Demands" of the protestors included the withdraw of the bill (which occurred in September 2019), implementation of universal suffrage, and amnesty for detained protestors (The Hong Kong protests, 2019).

Taking a broader view on the relationship between governments and the governed, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab (2016), has noted that this relationship during "the fourth industrial revolution" is more tenuous than ever, and that leaders in the information age today have to be far more nimble and responsive than those in previous eras. This is even true of mainland China, where despite widespread censorship and media control, Chinese citizens now have far more access to information and freedom of expression than their grandparents could ever have dreamed possible.

This information stream is not the same as "data," or "the truth." A global crisis in sensemaking has emerged as online tribalism, endless spin, clickbaiting and plain "fake news" has come to saturate our online experiences (Anthony, 2020a; Rebel Wisdom, 2019b). Information technology has played a key role in embedding populations worldwide in a dynamic but fear-centered, memetic reality. This is an aspect of what I call ITopia, where populations increasingly live an IT-centred existence, effectively dissociated from the body (Anthony, 2020c). Levels of fear and distrust in government, media and information veracity have accelerated along with this development (Brenan, 2019; Rebel Wisdom, 2019a,b). Protests in Hong Kong, the US, France and elsewhere in recent times are occurring against this backdrop. Hong Kong protestors' calls for accountable governance represents an acceleration of global trends which have been apparent for some time.

A return to a more grounded experience of life via embodied presence may be one way of reducing the negative effects of ITopian life.

Drawing upon the ideals of mindfulness, non-violent resistance, Taoist thought and intuitive knowledge traditions, this article makes suggestions regarding how Hong Kong citizens (as well as other stakeholders) might broadly employ these ideas as they seek to create their preferred futures of Hong Kong. Embodied presence and responsible active citizenship may be able to play a role in reworking the social contract in Hong Kong between the SAR government and the Hong Kong people, possibly permitting freedoms to continue to flourish and expand, even under the increased control of Beijing.

In this paper I will argue that two perspectives missing from much of the current discourse are that of psycho-spiritual development (as framed via spiral dynamics) ; and individual psycho-spiritual maturity, especially the sense of personal empowerment, as framed via the concept of embodied presence.

Criticism online, in the media and academia

Kidnappings of Hong Kong citizens by Communist Party agents, arrests of protest leaders and the June 2020 introduction of the national security law are strong evidence of the trend towards diminution of the open society in the SAR. How might political dissent in Hong Kong proceed in public spaces (including public information platforms) given the threat of repercussions for expressing political dissent? We see a similar concern in many western societies where an increasing number of critics are now concerned about the loss of freedom of expression because of what they see as a suffocating political correctness and cancel culture (Cato Institute, 2017; Haidt, 2012;

A letter on justice and open debate, 2020).

A cultural environment which directly or indirectly encourages blame and projection at a perceived opposition or opposing system may potentially descend into chronic subversion of the system, if left unchecked. This is a criticism directed at the progressive and "neo-Marxist" ideology which has become prominent in much of the university system in the US and the west by some critics, conservatives in particular (Murray, 2019; Peterson, 2018; Ken Wilber in Rebel Wisdom, 2019a).

The idea that I am exploring here is that responsible active citizenship and embodied presence may help reduce the severity of problems in dissident populations by addressing the common expression of consciousness which tends to underpin their discontent. Present mindedness and cognitive responsibility by their nature shift us away from confrontational binaries. In the Daoist approach (Mitchell, n.d.), the other is seen as a mirror to oneself, rather than as an enemy. In particular, psychological projection is incompatible with cognitive responsibility, because the latter involves ownership of one's thoughts and feelings.

The reintroduction of a sense of responsibility (including cognitive responsibility) into our ideological perspectives of social justice may potentially provide individuals experiencing a sense of oppression to see themselves as empowered agents of change, rather than as victims of circumstances over which they have little or no power. The voicing of dissent, including (non-violent) action, can then proceed from a greater sense of agency.

Spirituality and social justice

A related issue which has been commonly discussed elsewhere is the tendency of social justice activism to become a quasi-religious movement. The general position taken here is that as religious and spiritual traditions have declined in many modern societies, social justice has arisen to replace it for some, unconsciously meeting the needs within individuals and groups for deeper meaning and purpose (Murray, 2019; Peterson, 2018; Rebel Wisdom, 2019a,b). I have also linked this to what I call "money and machines futures," which are closely aligned to the idea of ITopia. Here an IT-centred materialism leaves populations foundering in a psycho-spiritual vacuum.

In contrast, "deep futures" are conceptually aligned with societies which valorise human connection and compassion and psycho-spiritual development. They also value deeper connection with nature (Anthony, 2012, 2014). Embodied presence, accompanied by mindfulness or meditation practice may help to address this spiritual vacuum in individuals by reintroducing a spiritual practice into daily life. Deep states of presence are often accompanied by spiritual experiences, and may even facilitate consciousness of the transcendent (Jacobson, 2009; Tolle, 2009; Grof, Grof & Kornfield, 2020). I have argued elsewhere that introspective and mindful inner work and a prayerful attitude to life can help facilitate an expanded sense of awareness. I have called this integrated intelligence (Anthony, 2007a,b, 2014, 2017), and it mirrors the seemingly mystical intelligence which infuses the Tao Te Ching (Mitchell, n.d.), and the idea of the extended mind (Sheldrake, 2012).

A strong argument can be made that the society which has developed in Hong Kong today is quintessentially ITopian and reflects the values of a money and machines society. Hong Kong's GINI coefficient (2010) is one of the highest in the developed world and its business culture and society have become ruthlessly competitive. Mobile phone addiction has become a serious problem amongst the young (Kao, 2017), while hyper-urbanisation has created an estrangement from nature in a significant percentage of the children of Hong Kong, who now suffer from biophobia – fear of the natural world, plants and animals (Parry, 2009).

The key values of responsible active citizenship

There is a fundamental difference in base values between responsible active citizenship and most political activism today. Social justice advocates tend to see the basis of power as being situated in external locales. Conversely, embodied presence establishes power within oneself and by assuming responsibility for what arises within the mind and with one's *experience* of the world.

Political and social justice activism typically begin with a specific judgment, a finding that something is wrong in the world. Increasingly there is an attitude of rejection of the world and its people in much modern activism (Murray, 2019). Responsible active citizenship on the other hand, mirroring the "right relationship" of Buddhist practice, is founded upon embodied presence and cognitive responsibility; and they in turn begin with non-judgment; an attitudinal alignment with the world as perceived. The essence of embodied presence is the act of surrender. As

Buddhist scholar Eric Rainbeau writes:

> …when I spend my time in the realm of the intellect and the ego, i.e. my head, I am not in direct relationship to the world. I am relating to the world based on my filters and concepts. When we are in emotional distress it is important to ground our bodies, to connect with the earth, while allowing ourselves the space of the heavens above. We must come back to our bodies in times of emotional distress, to connect with what is really going on. (Rainbeau, 2018, p.125)

In Buddhist thought, we cannot relate directly to the situation at hand or to the moment unless we learn to relate properly to our emotions, and that requires a strong connection to the body (Jacobson, 2009; Tolle, 2009; Rainbeau, 2018).

Much of today's social justice and political activism begins with a sense of powerlessness (for oneself, or a perceived oppressed individual or group). There is typically anger that some other party (or *the* Party) is controlling the world, including our personal rights. With the Hong Kong protestors, the latter may include freedom of expression, freedom of information, and the right to choose one's worldview, attitudes and political affiliations (Gopalan, 2017). There is uncertainty, and a sense that power is mediated via an external locus of control.

Embodied presence and responsible active citizenship, conversely, begin with a high degree of agency, because it is the individual's inner world that is the focus of attention. Embodied presence is underpinned by the immediate experience that we have a high degree of power over the way we feel and act within any immediate context. There is a great sense that one can control the way one experiences the world, regardless of what is actually happening in the real world. The awareness of this is the essence of psycho-spiritual maturity.

The potential benefits of embodied presence
My recent research and writings aim at a broad civilizational exploration of embodied presence. To my knowledge, research in related areas is yet to be fully "tested' in the context of developed twenty-first-century social and political contexts. For this reason, this paper can be considered exploratory, and as an initiation of engagement of that idea with the mainland China-Hong Kong situation.

My essential goal (beyond the writing of this paper) is to establish (or refute) the hypothesis that embodied presence may form a central component in the healing of fractured modern IT-centred societies. The aim is to explore the potential benefits of a broader population-wide expansion of embodied presence and related enhanced cognitive responsibility. Such benefits might include:

- Reduced identification with the contents of the mind, and increased capacity to be the "witness."
- Reduced identification with personal and group identities.
- Increased capacity to be present with others without judgment, and thus for enhanced empathy and deep listening.
- A greater internalization of the individual's locus of power, thus increasing one's sense of personal agency.
- A decrease in desire to control others and the world; including the expectation that the world and those in it must conform to our expectations, beliefs and opinions.
- Less blame and projection at others, society and leaders.
- An improved capacity for accessing intuitive intelligence, including inner wisdom and spiritual guidance.
- A regular return to sensing one's connection with the emotional body.
- Gratitude for what one is experiencing.
- Non-judgment of life events, including opposing forces.
- Intuitive identification of appropriate action.
- Awareness that violence is likely to lead to a violent response, and perpetuate violence and projection.

Many of these outcomes have been noted both in popular discourses (Tolle, 2009; Holiday, 2019; Jacobson, 2009); and observed in the spiritual, mindful and meditative traditions referred to above (Mitchell, n.d.; Rainbeau, 2018).

The best-scenario outcome is that once these cognitive outcomes are established within any given individual or in any given population, improved relationships between governments and citizens, institutions and their

stakeholders will follow.

Power and Relationship

The paradox of power and presence

From what has been written thus far it can be seen that the kind of "power" associated with embodied presence and responsible active citizenship is not about "power and control" in the traditional sense. Its primary aim is not establishing authority over other people or circumstances. Instead it is foremost about establishing greater self-awareness and power over one's own mind, and only then entering the fray of politics and dissent.[3] The enhanced sense of control is a secondary quality which emerges from a shift in behavior and attitude, and this entails a *surrender* to what is - both within oneself and externally. As thanatologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has stated, this is the essential paradox of the power of presence. In order to access the power of presence, you must first relax into the right relationship with your body, your mind and your world: to *release* the need for power and control (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2004).

Representations of power

There are various ways to think of power. In the Marxian worldview it is the capacity to control the means of production, and to level the playing field in terms of the power of the classes. In the neo-Marxian world of intersectionality, it is equalizing opportunities for specific social groups, especially in regard to race, gender and sexual identity (Hicks, 2004).

Typically, we tend to think of power as being the ability to control or perhaps even manipulate others, or to get what we want in the world. It may or may not entail a clear moral agenda. Thus, Robert Greene outlines dozens of expressions of power in *The 48 Laws of Power*. Amongst his principles are: "conceal your true intentions;" "say less than necessary;" "court attention at all costs;" and "keep people dependent on you." Other forms of power outlined by Greene include authoritarian and covert imperatives such as: "crush your enemy totally;" and "pose as a friend, work as a spy."

It may be noted that Greene's expressions of power and their typical agendas for control often emerge in pathological expression.

We can also think of power in political terms. In Hong Kong, recent protests have been motivated by a perceived lack of ability for protestors to control the future direction of their own territory, while the Beijing government itself governs without the democratic consent of the population. Hong Kong has never had true democracy, but it has long had a high level of freedom of expression, economic freedom and prosperity.

Embodied presence represents a more essential power within us. It is the power to be able to understand and gain greater control of our own minds, including our sense of wellbeing. Though this human potentiality is rarely spoken of when discussing the idea of power, my contention is that it is arguably just as important as the development of the external capacity for power and control. Indeed, the traditional spiritual masters often had little of the latter power. Lao Zi was said to have resided in the countryside, possibly in a cave (Mitchell, n.d.). The Buddha famously renounced his earthy aristocratic power and wealth. Contemporary mystic Leonard Jacobson (2009) quit his job as lawyer to sit for hours a day in meditation. Eckhart Tolle (2009) daily sat on a park bench watching seagulls for several years before he wrote *The Power of Now*.

It is not reasonable to expect current day people to become ascetics, least of all the young in a bustling, materialistic and technologically savvy city like Hong Kong. Nor am I suggesting that social and political power should be given up for a purely "spiritual" existence. Yet perhaps there is a middle ground to be had, where we can be in the world and ground ourselves in presence. What I am arguing is that if an individual is grounded in presence, this may transform their relationship to the external expressions of power in the world, including political power.

Situating Embodied Presence

Mindfulness and the modern world

In the enlightenment and mindfulness traditions of the East and many spiritual traditions, awakening is an inner process, where typically one observes the content of the mind, and develops a deeper awareness of how thought and perception arise (Davis & Hayes, 2012). An important aspect of this is witnessing the mind and coming into right relationship with it, to use the language of Buddhism (Jacobson, 2009; Rainbeau, 2018). As this way of relating to the experience of consciousness is established, one then begins to see more clearly how one's perception of the external world is often intimately related to one's inner story, and the unconscious narratives, beliefs and agendas that the mind has set up. These narratives may in turn emerge from the trauma or conditioning from one's personal biography (Jacobson, 2009); or suggestion and indoctrination by one's social group, political tribe, broader society or government.

Modern societies in the early twenty-first century have largely abandoned this approach to living life mindfully - although there is a resurgence of popular interest in mindfulness (e.g. Tolle, 2009; Holiday, 2019; Jacobson, 2009), with a corresponding scientific interest (Davis & Hayes, 2012; Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo, 2007; Petersen & Mitkidis, 2019).

With economic development and the arrival of modern societies there has come a greater individualism (Grof et al., 2020). The emergence of human rights, with such seminal historical events as the French Revolution, the American War of Independence and socialist ideals in the nineteenth century has underpinned this increased sense of the individual and their rights to be treated equally and fairly. In turn, an increased materialism has engendered a chronic state of want and need in the population (Grof et al., 2020). The population of Hong Kong has undoubtedly been influenced by such ideals under the influence of British colonialism. We have turned increasingly outwards and seek satiation in the world. We now ask for - and expect - more of life.

What constitutes legitimate dissent?

Given the power disparity between Hong Kong protestors and mainland China's government, violent dissent is almost certainly a counter-productive means of attempting to create preferred futures of Hong Kong. Violence tarnishes the image of the protestors; with the most likely outcome being a hardening of the Beijing line. Indeed, Beijing's June 2020 national security law making it easier to arrest citizens for disrespecting Beijing's authority, has been an apparent response to the ongoing aggressive nature of protests. Beijing can probably afford to sit out the situation and simply watch Hong Kong's economy and society deteriorate. Though there are no reliable surveys, the Hong Kong protestors appear to have little or no sympathy from the nationalistic mainland Chinese, and that will not likely change in the foreseeable future. Beijing has probably already won that memetic war. For example, Chinese Harvard graduate Ren Yi's (2019) criticism of western media's supportive take on the Hong Kong protests is a common take in the mainland. Any violence committed by the protestors is often immediately relayed to mainland media, who are happy to share it and denounce it amongst their hyper-nationalist audience.

Further, it is also most likely futile for dissenting Hong Kongers to challenge the legal status of Hong Kong as part of China, simply because this has no legal validity under international law. Still, many of the concerns of protestors and concerned Hong Kongers might be considered to be legally and/or morally justified. In this sense, mere passive compliance with government is arguably immoral or even cowardly.

Given this delicate situation, non-violent dissent with an aim towards engendering gradual shifts in policy may be the best approach to protesting, and this is consistent with responsible active citizenship, as I envisage it. I draw inspiration from such ideals as Henry David Thoreau's duty of dissent, Gandhi's *satyagraha* (Gandhi, 1927), and Martin Luther King's non-violent resistance. Gandhi stated that he did "not give vent to anger… I cultivate the quality of patience as angerlessness" (IANS, 2017). As Gandhi's grandson Arun Gandhi has noted, the older Gandhi saw anger as fuel for change. Notably the younger Gandhi interpreted the Mahatma's teaching as rejecting even passive violence such as overconsumption or simply judging others (Gandhi, 2018).

More recently, Marshall B. Rosenberg's (2015) *Nonviolent Communication* outlines ways to work through problems peacefully, though in broader contexts.

Following such thinking, a vital question then becomes: what forms of dissent qualify as "violent" and can be deemed inappropriate. The following can be considered.

- Physical violence which might cause damage to public and private property, or cause physical harm or death to opponents.
- Threats of physical violence and intimidation.
- Online bullying and intimidation of citizens, journalists and officials, including coordinated attacks and hacking.
- Racial and ethnic stereotyping, and bigoted projections.
- Deception with the purpose of gaining advantage over the other.

There are several forms of protest seen in Hong Kong in recent times which would fall under such categories. These include throwing petrol bombs at government buildings; smashing traffic lights and security cameras; vandalizing shops and damaging public buildings and universities; and physically attacking police officers, mainland Chinese tourists and pro-Beijing supporters (Yeung, 2020).

It is true that there are grey areas with all these categories, and various arguments can be made for and against more aggressive forms of protest. Yet the general point being made here is that peaceful but assertive protest is probably optimal in the current context in Hong Kong, and that the extant (and often legitimate) anger can be honoured, even as responsible (non-violent) action follows from that.

The deliberate breaking of laws as acts of dissent is one such problematic area. Gandhi famously encouraged that Indians produce salt on his march to Dandi in 1930 (Guha, 2018). The British government had a legal monopoly on salt production at the time, and the act was a deliberate act of dissent, a challenge to British colonial rule, including rule of law (Guha, 2018). The key here is that the act was harmless (except perhaps to British economic interests, and their control over India).

In Hong Kong, protestors have deliberately broken several laws, some of which might fall under the category of legitimate dissent. Perhaps most notably, hundreds have been arrested for breaking the recent national security law, a vague legislation which criminalises secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers (Regan & Berlinger, 2020). These acts of dissent have included gathering illegally on July 1st, 2020, waving flags (including independence and foreign flags), and shouting pro-independence slogans.

The merits of dissent of this nature - distinguishing legitimate from the illegitimate - is not easily determined, and will likely vary according to which side of the fence the arbiter resides. There are multiple other factors to consider, both in terms of immediate effects, and long-term consequences. For example, waving a foreign flag may harm nobody (personal offence notwithstanding) in the immediate context, but oft-repeated the act may lead to a hardening of government policy and action against protestors and citizens in general. It might cause more harm than good to one's cause.

Finally, in terms of cognitive responsibility (as being initially outlined in this paper), and within the idea of responsible active citizenship, the motivations for any given action should ideally be deeply reflected upon by the individual. Is there an element of irresponsible projection or "violence" underpinning the act itself? If so, when such motivation is acknowledged and "owned," does the intended action take on a different meaning - such that other actions may be seen as preferable, or perhaps to the extent that the intended action is no longer deemed necessary?

Participatory citizenship and Beijing
The concepts of democracy and representative government are effectively taboo in mainland China at present. Yet these ideals are not the only way that citizens within a nation or region can become a force for positive change. Nor is democracy itself any guarantee of wise leadership and effective governance. Further, any overt calls for democratic reform in the SAR will likely continue to trigger the ire of the Beijing authorities and Hong Kong's leaders, leading to both further conflict and stalemate.

Therefore, an argument can be made that a better overt strategy for building more desirable futures in Hong Kong is to work through the concept of 'participatory citizenship," a term that can be found in central government documentation regarding south China's Greater Bay Area, of which Hong Kong is a part. This document is evidence that at least some of China's policy makers find the general idea of participatory citizenship acceptable, and are pushing in that direction. The proposal for the Greater Bay Area states the following as one of its aims:

> To broaden public participation in the development of the Greater Bay Area, ensure the smooth flow of channels for the public to express their views, and support the joint participation of various market

entities in the development of the Greater Bay Area. (Framework agreement, 2017)

The recent violence and ongoing disruption involved with the Hong Kong protests have probably done great damage to the likelihood of such participation developing in the foreseeable future. The recent widespread violence in the US regarding the George Floyd protests (2020) is likely to have made the situation even more precarious in Hong Kong. It is reasonable to assume that from where the CCP stands, western democratic societies led by permissive local, regional and federal governments and leaders look to be unstable and perhaps even self-destructive.

Healing, the Shadow and Responsible Cognition

Healing and responsible cognition

Responsible cognition rests on self-awareness, as well as a deep willingness to assume responsibility for what arises within one's mind and deeper psyche. This includes one's perceptions, judgments, feelings and thoughts about what is occurring in the outside world of people, things and events.

The intention to practice responsible cognition is inversely related to one's conscious and/or unconscious agendas to project against the other.

There is a price to pay for responsible cognition. That is, one is required to pull out of the narratives and dramas that tend to occupy the mind on a daily basis, including those which increasingly dominate many social media and media platforms. In the understanding of many of the mindfulness and wisdom traditions, an overactive mind is not merely a bad habit; it may be related to an unwillingness to feel what lies within. The untamed "monkey mind" ensures that one does not relax enough to feel one's personal and existential pain (Anthony, 2014; Tolle, 2009; Jacobson, 2009; Rainbeau, 2018). Once we still the mind and become present, it is likely that our "pain body" (Tolle, 2009) will begin to activate. In this way of thinking about mental activity, the payoff for conflict and drama is that the individual is distracted from their own suffering.

Once the mind is stilled, the next step is to be able to work with any emotional pain that arises and to heal it, such that it does not become a drama projected out into the world of politics, ideology and (quasi-)religious zealotry. Shadow work can be part of that process, representing a movement towards a greater psychospiritual maturity.

Shadow work

Personal and group healing is an important component of responsible active citizenship, as developed in this exploratory paper.

Shadow work can be seen as a vital part of the cognitive responsibility and healing that typically underpins psychospiritual maturity. (Anthony, 2007b, 2020b). Shadow work is an advanced healing tool, mostly suitable for those who are well versed in some kind of related therapy or tradition, such as Jungian psychology (Jung, 2014; Grof et al., 2020) holotropic breathwork; Jacobson's process of deep relaxation into presence; and Author's (2007) Harmonic Circles. This aspect of RAC is thus probably best left for the small proportion of citizenry willing to go to such deep psychological spaces, and under the watchful eye of somebody highly skilled in the area.

Though there is not space in this paper to detail such shadow work, I shall briefly outline its essential nature.

All the shadow work healing modalities mentioned above rest on a foundational claim that the conscious human mind is embedded within a deeper psyche (or unconscious), which includes repressed or hidden impulses, emotions and beliefs. These become hidden (repressed) due to the unpleasant nature of such thoughts and feelings. In general, anger, destructive rage, fear, grief, guilt and shame may lie buried within the psyche. In more mainstream psychological perspectives, these tend to be seen as a function of personal biography (Grof et al., 2020).

Yet by its very nature, shadow work practitioners and professionals tend to draw from an eclectic base of knowledge, including alternative and non-western philosophies and ways of knowing. Many such approaches see the non-local or collective mind as a reality (e.g. Anthony, 2007b, 2020b; Grof et al., 2020; Jacobson, 2009; Jung, 2014). In this sense, mind or consciousness may be seen to permeate other spaces and times, and connect us with other people and groups. Shadow work may therefore include working not just with one's individual mind, but with collectives of consciousness that one is connected to.

Processes which can be applied to retrieve and integrate the deeper impulses of the psyche can include: inner child work (Bradshaw, 1990); and dream work, meditation and trance, regression therapy, and controlled partaking of psychotropic substances such as LSD and ayahuasca[4] (Grof et al., 2020; Jung, 2014). Harmonic Circles (Anthony, 2007b, 2020b) employs a stream of consciousness process to permit strongly repressed or denied emotions, feelings and attitudes to surface, and then to be acknowledged. In this way, the practitioner or group may assume greater responsibility for the contents of the personal or collective psyche; with the aim of facilitating more responsible behavior.

In short, shadow work practitioners and facilitators claim that it helps promote responsible cognition by bringing thoughts, feelings and impulses which are unconscious (and possibly driving behaviour) to the surface, where the individual can then assume responsibility for them.

Dancing with the Tao, dancing with the monster

I have argued elsewhere that a deep state of relaxation and presence helps to facilitate an expanded state of intelligence (Anthony, 2014, 2017), or what I call integrated intelligence. Integrated intelligence is an enhanced intuitive capacity, an alternative way of knowing which draws upon the extended mind (Sheldrake, 2012). It also draws philosophical inspiration with the expanded cognitive functions found explicitly or implicitly in many traditional spiritual traditions; most notably in Taoism (Mitchell, n.d.) and Buddhism (Rainbeau, 2018). With ancient Chinese mystic Lao Zi's way (*tao*), one may know the world without so much as looking out the window. Awareness of the *tao* allows one to move fluidly through life situations, metaphorically flowing like water, and with minimal resistance. Like the *tao*, integrated intelligence in its ideal state is ultimately a receptive intelligence which helps facilitate gentle action (Anthony, 2014; Mitchell, n.d.).

Embodied presence and cognitive responsibility may help to quieten the mind and permit a space for expanded awareness (Jacobson, 2009; Tolle, 2009). In this greater awareness of the connectedness of things, "power" takes on a different meaning. There is a greater receptivity to life, as well as an improved sense of what actions can facilitate desired outcomes most efficiently (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2004). One's sense of locus of control becomes more internalized. In short, one feels more empowered, even without having taken any action within a given situation or perpetrated an act of dissent.

In philosophies underpinned by a more receptive consciousness, life challenges and struggle itself are typically seen as an opportunity to deepen into awareness, to "awaken." This can include such life experiences as addiction (Rainbeau, 2018); childhood trauma (Bradshaw, 1990; Jacobson, 2009; Tolle, 2009); birth and even death itself (Grof et al., 2020; Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2004). We learn to dance with the monster. In shadow work, the prime function of the monster is not to denounce it or to be rid of it, but to allow it to speak to us such that we can learn from it or perhaps better understand how we may have helped create it. In examining our relationship with the tyrant, we come to learn what beliefs, narratives and behaviors have helped to bring him or her into our lives.

In this approach, an opposing force takes on an entirely different meaning from that commonly represented in social justice philosophies. In the latter representation, it is often a case of oppressor and oppressed, good versus evil.

The idea of "dancing with the monster" may be anathema to many. Are we to joyfully cooperate with Xi Jinping, Donald Trump? Hitler himself?[5]

An introspective approach to empowerment and healing is not meant to excuse the abuse of any opposing entity or group, but to see what we can learn from the relationship. Have we given our power away to the other because we feel we are unworthy, guilty, or corrupted? Conversely, have we aroused the ire of the other by being abusive, arrogant, bigoted or morally superior, either explicitly or implicitly?

One way to look at these two seemingly opposing approaches to suffering at the hands of a more powerful other is to see them as compatible modalities. Social justice movements ideally should contain both a call for accountability in the opposing force, as well as reflection upon one's role in the dynamic.

Perhaps it is that in the internet age of memetic reality, we have not so much created our monsters, but distorted and expanded them to the point that they have become virtual caricatures; dehumanized leviathans who can only be met with brute force, and never engaged personally or in presence. Perhaps we have helped create our own Wizards of Oz, given our power away to them, then recklessly, and sometimes violently rebelled against the images that we have helped erect. Could it be that we are fighting the shadows within our own psyches, as much as fighting genuine

demons, genuine oppression? Are we fighting ourselves?

Shall we fight angrily to maintain that illusion, so invested are we in its existence?

Where would we find ourselves if we no longer had demons to destroy? Could we endure the emptiness? The terrible realization that we have no meaningful life outside that conflict? No "spiritual" life? This again touches upon the idea of social justice and political activism as substitute religion.

An integral perspective
One last perspective I would like to introduce in this paper is that of psychospiritual evolution. Invoking the language of Beck's (2018) spiral dynamics and the associated integral theory (Wilber, 2001), Hong Kong is perhaps at late orange stage of development (associated with rationality and capitalistic intent), and looking to shift into green (worldcentric and post-modern); while the mainland is predominantly at the more tribalistic and ethnocentric purple phase (shifting to red), according to research conducted by Viljoen (2018).

Assuming that the spiral dynamics model has validity, if Hong Kong is to be reintegrated into the mainland socio-political system there will likely need to be a synthesis of the two general consciousness structures at play. In turn, two general possible outcomes might be expected.

In the first scenario, Hong Kong citizens might experience a general regression in consciousness, as they cede freedoms of expression and the drive towards individuation, instead adopting a more collectivist, ethnocentric mindset.

Alternatively, the populace of Hong Kong might maintain their higher stage of consciousness (including their more liberal "western" worldview) while under mainland legal jurisdiction. Here, the best-case scenario is arguably that the Hong Kong mindset would slowly and peacefully filter into the mainland and help shift that pool of consciousness into a higher expression. As a consequence, the CCP or subsequent governments could then begin to relax their authoritarian hold on the population and China could become a more free and progressive society.

Of course, a hypothetical postcolonial perspective might see this as a kind of hegemony. Why should China adopt what appear to be "western" value structures like personal rights and freedoms? Yet if the shift is towards more freedom and the open society, it is difficult to see this hypothetical outcome as an oppressive development. Further, the spiral dynamics model finds that values development in cultures follows a fairly consistent structure, globally. Whether this in itself is a "colonial" model is open to debate (Beck, 2018; Wilber, 2001).

Unknowns and shortcomings
There are certain problems and delimitations we can contemplate when considering the potential role of responsible active citizenship and embodied essence as applied to political resistance in Hong Kong and elsewhere. The following represents a brief overview.

- Embodied presence and responsible active citizenship do not represent an ideological movement. They entail no specific political stance, despite drawing inspiration from the non-violent ideals of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Thoreau. The way I have situated RAC is arguably closer to the psycho-spiritual than the political, relative to those activists I have cited here (though all clearly reference the psycho-spiritual domain). RAC is not a substitute for political activism or any sort of protest movement. Nonetheless it could theoretically enhance the peaceful development of such a movement.

- We can assume that most governments encountering resistance from populations would prefer peaceful non-resistance to violent and disruptive protest. An overly pacifist population might not be taken seriously by some governments. Further, citizens may fall into a collective habit of tolerating that which is not in their highest good. If there is a legitimate case for immediate resistance, deferring strong action might simply delay making the necessary hard decisions, producing frustrations which render later actions more extreme.

- The approach cannot guarantee that all those practicing this way of life might not slip back into more aggressive political activism at a later point. Many may find it an unattractive or incomprehensible approach. With Gandhi's (1927) *satyagraha*, it is notable that his extensive training of the Indian population in non-violent resistance did not prevent all conflict, including the mass violence and deaths of hundreds of thousands during the partition of India and Pakistan.

- The goal of embodied presence is not political power. While it has potential broader applications during times of political and social engagement, its prime focus is to gain greater mastery over one's mind (or ego),

and from that state of "right relationship" with the mind, one might then establish the "right relationship" with one's society, leaders and power structures.

- Given the high level of psycho-spiritual maturity entailed in practicing responsible active citizenship, it is probably not an approach that could be widely applied in Hong Kong or most other populations at present. It is arguably a process and ideal compatible with the "green" or postmodern level of development (or higher), in the integral model.

    Perhaps a workable model to draw from when considering how RAC might be developed in Hong Kong and elsewhere is that of the folk schools developed in Scandinavia around a century ago (Bjorkman, 2019). Though only ten percent of the population attended such institutions, these retreats (which lasted four to six months) imbued the largely agrarian and impoverished population with a worldview and (arguably) a consciousness structure which helped totally transform Scandinavia socially, politically and economically into one of the most progressive regions on earth. Notably, these folk schools had a heavy focus upon personal and psycho-spiritual development as well as social development. This lies in strong contrast to the progressive ideology which dominates many western education structures today, where the focus is largely upon naming and correcting social and political ills, identifying and shaming political opponents (Cato institute, 2017; A letter on justice and open debate, 2020), and with minimal emphasis on developing psycho-spiritual maturity.

- It has to be acknowledged that the exploratory concept of responsible active citizenship is founded upon several underpinning concepts which are either incompletely developed or unproven scientifically or practically. These include integrated intelligence, shadow work approaches to healing, and the claim that witnessing the mind can reduce projections and violence. Given its highly undeveloped nature, responsible active citizenship must therefore be viewed critically in the academic sense.

- Finally, this paper has made no attempt to outline any specific programmes or initiatives which may help to develop responsible active citizenship in Hong Kong, and has focused on broader philosophical points.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced the concept of responsible active citizenship and explored some possible general applications in Hong Kong at the current time of political and social disruption.

There are genuine social, economic and political issues in Hong Kong, and unless they are addressed it is unreasonable to assume that they will simply go away. It is unreasonable to believe that the young will simply fall in line and not demand and expect changes that are considered reasonable in most developed economies. Further, it has been argued that the populations of economically developed societies across the globe are becoming increasingly dissociated from the body and psycho-spiritual experience, and this in turn is directly related to the development of ITopian cultures founded on "money and machines" futures. Ideally, we need to permit the facilitation of "deep futures" where we can reconnect with the body, the psyche, nature and integrated intelligence.

The practice of embodied presence and responsible active citizenship do not represent a total solution to this broader socio-political dynamic, nor to that which exists between Hong Kong and mainland China. The process outlined here in broad strokes primarily operates at the psycho-spiritual level, and may help individuals to engage in political activities with a greater degree of self-awareness, personal responsibility and sense of personal empowerment. It has been argued that this may be a potential long-term approach to developing a more harmonious society and (introspectively) more empowered population in Hong Kong (and elsewhere).

When societies neglect to teach the young the art of introspection and a capacity to encounter the spiritual, they fail to instill a great gift that all humans are entitled to. This failure may also lead to a pathological state of dissociation which in turn creates a deep dissatisfaction with the status quo. Neither this spiritual vacuum nor the broader economic and political dissatisfactions in Hong Kong are going to be addressed merely by having an authoritarian government assume greater control over Hong Kongers' lives and choices.

Responsible active citizenship, like Gandhi's *satyagraha*, requires more patience and more inner work than some of the radical kinds of activism that we have recently seen in Hong Kong and elsewhere. It may also require the allowance of a more gradual transition to change, as well as social experimentation. However, its advantages lie in that it might potentially return a greater sense of empowerment to citizens, while avoiding harsh pushback from governments and revolt from resistant segments of society.

Notes

1- I introduced the concepts of embodied presence and cognitive responsibility in a paper recently written for the *Journal of Futures Studies* (Anthony, 2020c). This paper is a continuation of a personal exploration of those ideas. Responsible active citizenship is being introduced here for the first time.

2- There are four levels in Inayatullah's (2018) Causal Layered Analysis: the litany, the systems/social, the worldview/paradigm and the myth/metaphor. One way to think about these levels is that each represents a broadening and deepening of analysis, and of awareness.

3- At what point one is deemed "ready" for responsible active citizenship is beyond the scope of this paper.

4- Psychotropic substances have been associated with serious side-effects, including psychosis in worst case scenarios. Indeed, they are typically illegal without medical prescription. Psychiatrist Stan Grof (Grof, Grof & Kornfield, 2020) has developed psychotropic breathwork as a safer, legal means towards the same ends. Despite a recent resurgence in interest in psychedelics, as seen on Youtube personalities like Time Ferris and London Real's Brian Rose, I have preferred to work with more "natural" processes like stream of consciousness modalities, breathwork and dreamwork.

5- We could also speculate what shadow work might entail for Xi, Trump and indeed any other world leader, and what it might draw from within their psyches. However, I am aware of no current world leader willing to publicly declare an interest in such introspective modalities. I might also add that from my experience, it is not wise to publicly share one's shadow material. Most people are simply not capable of "receiving" it. A good example is the hostile response to actor Liam Neeson's recent confession that as a young man he went out to seek revenge against any black man (he did not find one), after a friend was raped by a man of that ethnicity.

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