

Mindfulness in Catholic Primary Schools: An Irish Perspective

Thomas Carroll

Mary Immaculate College, V94 VN26 Limerick, Ireland; tom.carroll@mic.ul.ie

Abstract: Irish Catholic primary education operates within a context increasingly marked by detraditionalisation and secularisation. As religious belief and identity recedes in Ireland, Catholic schools face challenges in enabling the children they serve to develop a personal relationship with God and nurturing their faith formation and development, an important element of the mission of the Catholic school. At the same time, mindfulness practice has grown exponentially in popularity across many sectors of society, including in Irish education. A growing body of research supports mindfulness practice in schools, citing benefits such as improved academic performance and enhanced wellbeing. This review examines the development of mindfulness practice in Irish Catholic primary schools. Curricular reform in primary education regarding the growing role of wellbeing is explored. The review also addresses opportunities and challenges to mindfulness practice in these schools.

Keywords: mindfulness in schools; catholic primary education; wellbeing

1. Introduction

Mindfulness meditation has significantly grown in popularity in many Western societies, including Ireland, in recent decades. The practice can be observed across different sectors of society, including in education. Mindfulness practice in schools is supported by a growing body of research, proposing benefits to students including emotional regulation, wellbeing and academic performance (Beauchemin et al. 2008; Bakosh et al. 2016; Pickerell et al. 2023). While mindfulness originates from Buddhist wisdom traditions, it is typically understood and practised as a secular activity in Irish Catholic primary schools (Reynolds 2019). The 2018 publication by the Council for Catechetics, entitled *A Reflection on Mindfulness: Rediscovering the Christian Tradition of Meditation and Contemplation*, attempted to address some of these questions and offered guidance to schools on mindfulness in Catholic schools (IEC 2018). This included recognising that meditation was an activity seen across many different wisdom traditions and contemplative prayer was also to be found in the Christian tradition. However, the Buddhist ancestry of mindfulness has raised questions over the compatibility of the practice in schools with a Catholic ethos. This was highlighted by the 2019 publication of a letter from one Irish bishop to the schools of his diocese, writing that mindfulness and yoga were non-Christian practices inappropriate for religious education lessons (Skelton 2019).

Against this backdrop, the aim of this review is to describe the place of mindfulness in the Irish Catholic primary school context. It seeks to contribute to contemporary discourse on the growth in popularity of mindfulness practices in these schools, filling a gap in the current literature. While focused on Catholic primary schooling, it is anticipated that the content of this article may encourage further study into mindfulness and contemplative practices in Catholic education more generally.

To this end, this article will first map out the radically changed religious landscape in Ireland within which Catholic primary schools are operative. It will highlight the transformational impact of detraditionalisation on the conditions of religious belief in Ireland and its implications for Catholic schools. Second, the emergence and evolution of mindfulness in the contemporary West will be outlined, charting how the original Buddhist meditative practice has been recontextualised into a secular psychological phenomenon.



Citation: Carroll, Thomas. 2023. Mindfulness in Catholic Primary Schools: An Irish Perspective. *Religions* 14: 1348. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14111348>

Academic Editor: Eamonn Conway

Received: 8 September 2023

Revised: 9 October 2023

Accepted: 16 October 2023

Published: 25 October 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Third, the growing presence of mindfulness practice in Catholic primary schools will be explored through the current curricular reforms within Irish primary education, particularly the increasing significance of the concept of wellbeing in the draft framework for the New Primary Curriculum. It will be contended that the concept of wellbeing is the chief vehicle for mindfulness practice in Catholic schools. Finally, the article will briefly offer several opportunities and challenges to mindfulness practice in these schools.

2. Catholic Schools in a Detraditionalised Ireland

Catholic identity and practice in Ireland have changed dramatically in recent decades. These developments can be seen in two striking statistics from the 2022 Census data, which found that 69% of the population identified as Catholic, a drop of 10% compared to 2016. Concurrently, those that identified as non-religious rose from just under 10% to 14%, consolidating its position as the second largest group in Ireland (CSO 2023). In the midst of these changes, over 88% of primary schools in the state are under Catholic patronage (DES 2022). These figures illustrate the tension between the former Catholic hegemony across Irish society, including in education, and the increasingly secularised contemporary Irish context in which “the monopoly religion of Catholicism has broken down and no longer commands widespread adherence” (Ganiel 2016, p. 2).

This shift from religious and cultural homogeneity to a pluralised, secularised Ireland has been accelerated by a collapse in the moral authority of the Church due to several factors, including the perpetration and mishandling of clerical child sex abuse cases and the systematic oppression of women in Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalen Laundries (Smith 2007; Scally 2021). The erosion of Church’s moral credibility in society is evidenced by recent referenda that legalised same-sex marriage and abortion in Ireland (McGraw and Tiernan 2022, pp. 3–4). Against this backdrop of scandals, secularisation and social liberalisation, Turpin presents the emergence of a fragmented landscape of practising Catholics, cultural Catholics and a rapidly growing sector of ex-Catholics, arguing that for many, the Irish Catholic Church has become utterly desacralised (Turpin 2022).

Parallel to this, the processes of detraditionalisation have further destabilised the once dominant status of Catholicism as the overarching source for meaning and identity in Ireland. Belgian theologian Lieven Boeve proposes that “Detraditionalisation as a term hints at the socio-cultural interruptions of traditions (religious as well as class, gender... traditions), which are no longer able to pass themselves from one generation to the next” (Boeve 2012, p. 145). In the Irish context, this means a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of Catholic values, traditions, beliefs and practices. This is problematic for the Church in Ireland, as while parents are recognised by the Church as the primary educator of their children in faith formation (Gravissimum Educationis 1965, #3), fewer parents actively practice this faith, or even identify as Catholic anymore. This has resulted in the Catholic school becoming, in many cases, the sole site for evangelisation. As such, in a radically changing religious landscape, these schools must take on a missionary role, bearing witness in countries even with historically strong links to the Christian faith, including Ireland (CCE 2013, #57).

Detraditionalisation has significant implications for Catholic education (Rymarz 2021, p. 807). One outcome is an increased religious illiteracy, which renders the experience and ritual of faith alien to Catholic students. This is less a secularisation of ideas but a more profound secularising of the imagination and outlook (Gallagher 2003). Questions of meaning and identity, along with modes of living authentically, can now be imagined within an immanent framing (Taylor 2007). This fading of the religious imagination in this detraditionalised Ireland has been recognised not just as a major challenge facing Catholic education, but the Irish Church in general (Lane 2008, p. 45). As such, in Catholic schools, these younger generations of students may hear the Gospel story, but the language can seem strange and unintelligible. This interruption of tradition transmission also has implications for younger generations of Catholic school teachers, many of whom themselves have not been religiously socialised, facing deep challenges in presenting and articulating the

Christian faith tradition (Sheridan 2022, p. 64). Moreover, these detraditionalised Catholic pre-service teachers, as well as an emergent non-religious pre-service teacher cohort, may feel hesitant or insecure when teaching faith formation to students. (Heinz et al. 2018, pp. 232–45; Kieran and Mullaly 2021, p. 434).

This does not mean the end of religiosity in Ireland, rather its transformation (Taylor 2007, pp. 428–29; Halik 2016, pp. 12–32). The predictions of zero-sum secularisation theories that religion would be eclipsed by widespread atheistic rationality have not materialised (Berger 1999; Cox 1999). Religion remains a potent force of meaning for many, and a desire for living fully and authentically is pervasive. Rather than arriving at a stage of comfortable unbelief, a search for authenticity and a spiritual hunger remains, albeit increasingly outside the parameters of institutional religion. An “autonomous, diffused off-piste religiosity” has emerged, illustrated mainly through variables which are typically less Christian (Lambert 2004, p. 38). These variables include: “... (the) importance of meditation and contemplation; belief in a higher power, spirit, or force, rather than a personal God; belief in life after death (including reincarnation); an interest in different religious traditions rather than one particular tradition” (Boeve 2007, p. 18). Like many Western counterparts, Ireland is increasingly becoming a post-secular marketplace of contested and contesting spiritual and religious worldviews, driven by “... internal motivations rather than external constraints” (Davie 2015, p. 159). This shift from an overwhelmingly Catholic religiosity to a more “spiritual but not religious” outlook highlights the continued search for ultimate meaning in the lives of many. It is within this fragmented spiritual milieu that mindfulness has exploded in popularity.

3. The Emergence of Contemporary Mindfulness

An operational definition is first necessary here, as mindfulness in recent years has been assigned multiple meanings, leading to the risk that the term becoming so nebulous that it loses any meaning at all (Bodhi 2011, p. 22; Brown 2016, p. 77). Bishop et al. offer an instructive definition, proposing that “... mindfulness has been described as a kind of nonelaborative, non-judgmental, present-centred awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is” (Bishop et al. 2004, p. 3). In this sense, the practice is grounded in nonevaluative attunement to the “here and now”, being present in and to the present moment. Moreover, this definition presents mindfulness as a universal human faculty, which can be achieved without religious or prayerful practices. Mindfulness as is commonly practised today is understood then as a secular activity, requiring no commitment to any faith or wisdom perspective (Langer and Piper 1987, pp. 280–87).

This secular framing of contemporary mindfulness has important implications for its practice in Catholic primary schools. In the aforementioned letter from Bishop Cullinan to diocesan schools, the correct assertion was made that Buddhist mindfulness did not have a Christian origin and, as such, the Catholic school was not a suitable site for such a practice during religious education. Such demarcations are of paramount importance as Catholic schools have a right and a duty to provide religious education in the Christian tradition, underpinned by appropriate content and pedagogies (IEC 1999). However, secular mindfulness does not face the same incompatibility with Catholic ethos as it is no longer rooted in Buddhist wisdom traditions. It is a contemporary Western phenomenon which has “... taken off its Buddhist robes” (Reynolds 2019, p. 678), characterised by the processes of secularisation and detraditionalisation.

It is necessary to chart this complex evolution of mindfulness from its Buddhist roots in order to appreciate both the significance the practice plays in Eastern wisdom traditions and the reasons as to why mindfulness has become so popular in Western society. Mindfulness is translated from the Pāli word *sati*, with an equivalent term in Sanskrit canon, *smṛti*, meaning “that which is remembered”. Tyler identifies an important connection between the two terms, arguing:

“...the cognate resonance of *sati* with the Sanskrit *smṛti* reminds us to recall our fundamental orientation to the precepts and the path of the Buddha as we engage in observation of the self-thus implying that there is such a thing as wrong mindfulness: the mindfulness of, say, a terrorist preparing to detonate a bomb or attack civilians”. (Tyler 2018, p. 9)

In this sense, mindfulness within its original Buddhist framework is not morally neutral, nor is there a nonevaluative outlook by the practitioner towards perceived injustices or suffering in the world around them. Rather, mindfulness in Buddhist traditions involves self-awareness informed by precepts such as the Noble Eightfold Path, one of the principal early summaries of Buddhist moral teachings, entailing interconnected rules including Right Action, Right Speech and Right Mindfulness, among others (Keown 2013, pp. 58–59). This understanding of *sati* as active vigilance or remembrance greatly differs from many contemporary iterations of mindfulness which emphasise nonjudgmental attendance to and acceptance of the present moment.

The migration and development of mindfulness meditation from this original Buddhist context to the contemporary West can be understood via a complex intellectual interaction between the Eastern traditions and Western Enlightenment over the past 150 years, which has been termed Buddhist modernism. This process signifies the ways in which various Buddhist doctrines, beliefs and practices, including mindfulness, have interacted with the prevailing narratives of modernity in the West. As a result, new understandings of Buddhism have risen as a result of cross-pollination between Buddhist elements and a Western context typically characterised by rationality and secularism. (Starkey 2023). In this sense, Buddhist modernism is “...the result of a process of modernisation, westernisation, reinterpretation, image-making, revitalisation, and reform” (McMahan 2008, p. 5). These newer forms of Buddhism are seen as congruent with a rationalist Western worldview, as they are perceived as non-theistic spiritual methods underpinned by empirical investigation. Traditional Buddhist teachings involving supernatural elements such as reincarnation and karma are demythologised, while religious rituals such as prayer wheels and chants to invoke protection are generally supplanted by meditative practices detached from tenets such as the Noble Eightfold Path.

As such, Buddhist modernism has brought about a significant reinterpretation of *sati* as a non-judgemental, nonreactive awareness also known as “bare-attention”. This can be seen in the works of Buddhist teachers including Mahāsi Sayādaw and Nyanaponika Thera, who promoted this type of moment-to-moment awareness which did not require any previous connection to Buddhist teaching to a Western audience (Scharf 2014, p. 472). The contemporary practice of “bare-attention” mindfulness in the Western context can thus be seen as a detraditionalisation of Buddhist teaching in that overt supernatural elements such as reincarnation, ghosts and demons are relegated in significance. Moreover, this deracination of meditation from its traditional Buddhist context can be so fundamental that the practice for many is no longer understood as a Buddhist practice at all:

“Paradoxically, while meditation is often considered the heart of Buddhism, it is also deemed the element most detachable from the tradition itself. It has in some sectors become disembedded from the Buddhist tradition and rearticulated as a technique of self-investigation, awareness, personal satisfaction, and ethical reflection, taking on a life of its own, in some cases altogether outside of Buddhist communities”. (McMahan 2008, p. 185)

These detraditionalised forms of mindfulness thus represent practices that have been recontextualised to an increasingly diverse spiritual marketplace in Irish society. Key to its popularity has been the framing of mindfulness as a secular psychological practice with a range of benefits to health and wellbeing. Developments in past decades such as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme by microbiologist Jon Kabat-Zinn has brought mindfulness practice, decoupled from its Buddhist origins, to a wider audience (Kabat-Zinn 1990). The practice is supported by a growing body of

literature, citing the positive impacts of mindfulness-based interventions on a wide variety of conditions, including mental health in children, adolescents and adults (Schumer et al. 2018; Tran et al. 2022; Pseftogianni et al. 2023).

However, some contemporary forms of mindfulness are open to criticism as a repudiation, if not outright contradiction, of their Buddhist origins. A downplaying of explicit Buddhist teaching is understandable insofar as deracinating mindfulness from its cultural, religious, and ideological origins enables it to be presented as an increasingly verified method of healing and treatment accessible to those of all faiths and none. But, the nullifying of the hitherto moral and ethical framework associated with mindfulness (i.e., Right Mindfulness) risks inverting the original intentionality of the practice; to forget the illusion of the self and to strive towards the reduction in suffering in the world, including the suffering of others (Scharf 2016, p. 140). In this sense, mindfulness is not just a technique or a “means to virtue and wisdom” (Keown 2013, p. 111). In its traditional context, mindfulness is active remembrance, honing an outlook that interrogates the moral valency of situations, rather than passive acceptance. The removal of the traditional ethical foundations of mindfulness is not problematic in itself; rather, the vacuum that is left is open to misappropriation and abuse. One such example is the application of mindfulness programmes in the US military to develop more alert, efficient soldiers, sometimes called “mindful snipers”, which is completely alien to the ethical foundations of the practice (Purser 2014; Vörös 2016, p. 7). These concerns notwithstanding, within a secularised, detraditionalised Irish context, secular mindfulness has been accepted as a beneficial meditative activity outside the parameters of religion or ethical systems, allowing it to interact with several areas of civic and commercial life. This includes within the Irish Catholic primary school.

4. Mindfulness, Wellbeing and Irish Catholic Primary Schools

Mindfulness practice has enjoyed increasing popularity in Irish primary education in recent years (Naughton 2016; McBride 2017). This interest in mindfulness and education is also reflected in contemporary literature (Schonert-Reichl and Roeser 2016; Phan et al. 2022; Weare 2023). As outlined above, central to this “mindfulness revolution” (Boyce 2011) are the proposed benefits of the practice to students, in areas of wellbeing, emotional regulation and academic performance. While the growth of the research highlights important and potentially life-giving benefits to students, there remains a paucity of critical papers on mindfulness in education, suggesting “...an immature and over-optimistic phase of this discourse” (Ergas and Hadar 2019). In this sense, it is important that the zeal in sharing the good news of mindfulness in schools does not surpass the evidence supporting it.

There is not currently any prescriptive model nor explicit curricular area dedicated to mindfulness in Catholic primary schools. Instead, mindfulness practice is operative in an informal manner by individual teachers and schools. This is also the case with different patrons across the Irish primary educational landscape, albeit with implicit reference to meditation and contemplative practices (Community National Schools 2018, p. 27; Educate Together 2019, p. 28). For Catholic schools, the Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland highlights the rich tradition of contemplative prayer in the Christian faith (IEC 2015, p. 120). The Christian Meditation programme for Irish Catholic schools founded by Noel Keating offers a Christian approach to silent prayer, inviting pupils to become mindful of the Spirit of God within them. This approach offers a distinctively Christian approach to contemplative prayer, drawing upon the teachings of the Desert Father John Cassian (Keating 2017). While both secular mindfulness and Christian meditation share an immanent perspective of the present moment, the latter also has a transcendent dimension, insofar as the practitioner is called into being, drawn into a loving relationship with God (IEC 2018). This offers an important distinction between secular and Christian meditation. The former is a technique, and the latter is prayer. Techniques may aid a practitioner in achieving a desired goal, but a technique that elevates human nature and independence over dependence on grace is problematic for Catholics.

This is because technique or human action cannot bring about greater relationship with God, as God is not subject to human willpower. Prayer represents an openness to and dependence upon God's love as a gift, responding to what God wills of the one who prays. (CDF 1989, #23; Gawronski 2015, pp. 293–94). In this sense, both secular mindfulness and Christian meditation are valuable resources in Catholic schools, albeit with differing aims and foundations.

The rationale for secular mindfulness practice within Irish education, and, by extension, Catholic primary schools, is its benefits to pupil wellbeing, supported by a growing body of research. As such, wellbeing has become a chief vehicle for the growth of mindfulness in educational settings. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) offers an operative definition for wellbeing: "Student well-being is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical well-being, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community" (NCCA 2017, p. 17). Wellbeing has emerged as a central theme in Irish educational policy (DES 2019; NEPS 2019), with this prominence reflected in the international literature (Konu and Rimpelä 2002; Adler 2017; Cook 2019).

At a curricular level, wellbeing is set to be an important element within current reforms, as outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA 2023). This is observed in the categorisation of wellbeing as both curricular area and key competency. PE (Physical Education) and SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) will be incorporated into a single subject known as Wellbeing, with a time allocation of three hours per week. This is in contrast to the allocation of one hour for PE and half an hour for SPHE per week in the previous curriculum. As a key competency, wellbeing encompasses the multidimensional development of the child. It also includes "...self-acceptance and self-awareness" and supporting the child's "...ability to deal with the normal challenges of life, become resilient, and cope in a variety of situations and circumstances". Finally, "It also recognises the spiritual dimension of living, which enables children to experience a sense of awe and wonder and to know that life has a meaning" (NCCA 2023, p. 11). Mindfulness fits into this conception of mindfulness insofar as it enables children to achieve greater wellbeing, improved resilience, and a deeper sense of identity. Nothing in this conception of wellbeing contradicts the educational vision of Catholic schools, which promote the holistic development of the child (Gravissimum Educationis 1965, #8; Hession and Kieran 2005, p. 123; IEC 2014, p. ix). Moreover, resources such as mindfulness, which are demonstrated to promote positive wellbeing, should be welcomed by Catholic schools as invaluable additions to their mission.

However, while recognising the laudable aims this reorganisation of wellbeing as curricular subject sets out, two concerns arise. First, the increase in curricular time for wellbeing corresponds to a decrease in time for religious education from two and a half hours to two hours a week. This reduction downplays the largely positive impact religious identity and practice can have on wellbeing (Van Cappellen et al. 2016, pp. 485–505; VanderWeele 2017, pp. 476–81). Religious education provides students with the opportunity to consider deeper questions of meaning and life (Meehan 2018). Within the Catholic school, students are invited to consider questions of ultimate meaning, grounded in the Holy Mystery of God. This openness to mystery is central to cultivating the spiritual development of the child. To put it another way, religious education provides a space for the child to question and contemplate transcendent meaning, growing in right relationship with God. This contributes to the spiritual wellbeing of the child as part of an integral Catholic education.

"What is at stake here is the human capacity to seek the truth, even to inquire about the ultimate mystery of existence. Granted that the pupils in Second Class will not be struggling with the higher reaches of metaphysics, but if they are not taught to deal with mystery and to wonder at things that cannot be proved or experimented upon by the scientific method, and if they are not helped to listen

to the tradition of faith which sees God's presence and God's love everywhere in creation, they are not being educated as whole persons". (Murray 2009)

Second, while the strengthening of wellbeing in curricular reform shares Catholic schools' commitment to the holistic development of the child, a word of caution is necessary. For Catholic education, Christ, as the human *par excellence*, is the source of living in a fuller and more authentically human way (John 10:10). In this sense, language relating to flourishing can assist in articulating the operative anthropology underpinning the Catholic school, offering a distinctive vision of life and flourishing. However, approaches to wellbeing promotion, which proposes transcultural character strengths and virtues, are potentially problematic, as such approaches do not take heed of the historical contingency and particularity of virtues (McIntyre 2011). Abecina highlights the challenge this presents for Catholic schools in living out their distinctive vision of education when promoting universal or transcultural approaches to wellbeing promotion:

"Whose virtues? Which character strengths?... Those shaped by Christ, or of liberal modernity?... Which practices? Whose traditions are we actually commending to our students as we seek their wellbeing? Those of the Spirit of Christ or rival ones that conform to the spirit of the age?". (Abecina 2014)

Fortifying wellbeing in primary education is to be welcomed, as it embeds the holistic development of the child in a more explicit manner. Approaches such as mindfulness which are found to improve wellbeing should thus be welcomed. However, within the Catholic school, flourishing has a more profound, ultimate aim, concerning the person growing in relationship with God, who is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the epistemological and ontological foundation of the school (McKinney 2011, p. 151). This transcendent conception of human flourishing is taught explicitly in faith formation, and while increased time for wellbeing can present a humanistic framework for flourishing, it cannot undermine the distinctiveness of Catholic school ethos. The operative anthropology of the Catholic school is theocentric, seeing each child made for right relationship with Creator and Creation, for God and for good. "What is entailed here is not only the fullest possible human flourishing in this world but a hope for the world to come. It means looking to the fullness of life with God which will never end and which makes sense of our whole human existence" (IEC 2008, p. 5).

This rich expression of Christian wellbeing calls for the flourishing of the young in each aspect of their being. In this sense, where Wellbeing and the practice of mindfulness contribute to this educational vision, Catholic schools have found a potentially life-giving resource. However, these schools first need to be able to articulate how their Catholic ethos enables children to flourish, and how wellbeing as both a subject and key competency, as well as mindfulness practice, enhance their educational vision rather than replace it.

5. Opportunities and Challenges

Mindfulness practice is set to become an increasingly visible element in Irish primary education, boosted by the embedding of wellbeing in curricular reform. For Catholic schools, this raises questions over how and when mindfulness can contribute to their underlying educational vision. These questions are operative within the broader context of the opportunities and challenges Catholic schools face in a detraditionalised Irish society. Mindfulness contributes to this discourse, as it offers a resource to these schools for pre-evangelisation, both as a contemplative practice and as a nurturing of a sacramental outlook in students (Carroll 2023).

Catholic schools, as ecclesial entities, participate in the evangelising mission of the teaching Church (CCE 1998, #11). However, given the radically changed conditions of religious belief in Ireland (Taylor 2007; Ganiel 2016), faith development in Catholic schools has been stymied by a breakdown in religious practice and adherence, meaning many children have no connection to the Church or participation in the sacraments outside of the school (Hession and Kieran 2005, p. 59; Ronnie Convery et al. 2017, p. vii). On a deeper level,

a secularised imagination has emerged, in which people can conceive of conceptions of human flourishing and meaning without any reference to God or transcendence (Gallagher 2003, p. 7). This has led to the recognition that pre-evangelisation is a necessary preliminary step for many in coming to a relationship with Christ and the Church (Gallagher 2014, p. 3; IEC 2014, p. 51). Mindfulness contributes to pre-evangelisation first as a contemplative practice, which is "...the many ways human beings have found, across cultures and across time, to concentrate, broaden and deepen conscious awareness" (Roth 2008, p. 19). These practices enable students to become attuned to their inner life of thoughts, feelings and questions of meaning and identity. Contemplative pedagogy in schools represents a departure from narrower understandings of education as mere information transmission and preparation for the workforce towards one rooted in holistic development (Ergas and Todd 2016; Tan 2021). This commitment to wholeness is compatible with a Catholic educational vision in that it shares the view that because education is a human process, students need to be invited to reflect upon sources of meaning in their lives.

Mindfulness as a contemplative practice provides an opportunity for pre-evangelisation in that it provides a space for students to explore their own depths and sense of purpose in their lives. Gallagher's advice to a priest attempting to connect with young parishioners reflects this: "They needed help to find their own questions before they would be open to the wisdom emanating from the Christian tradition. They needed to pay attention to their own experience and discover their own depth before they would be ready to appreciate the depth of their faith" (Casey 2018, p. 114). Mindfulness is thus a means of disrupting secular understandings of reality and concepts of human flourishing that exclude a transcendent source of meaning, which Taylor calls the "immanent frame" (Taylor 2007). This disrupting of the immanent frame is central to the possibility of faith, God and ultimate meaning becoming a credible narrative for the young (Carroll 2022).

Linked with this disruption of Taylor's immanent frame, mindfulness is a resource for pre-evangelisation when it cultivates a sacramental imagination in students. Catholic education is permeated by this sacramental perspective, viewing creation as engraced with each moment of existence revealing something of Godself (Himes 1995; Sullivan 2008, p. 30). However, such an imagination has been impacted by the processes of secularisation and detraditionalisation, challenging the Catholic school's mission to invite children to see God's presence in every facet of their experience (Carroll 2023). Mindfulness can act as a catalyst for this blockage of sacramental perspective as grounding the students' attention to the present moment, inviting them to notice the holy in the ordinary moments of life. The novelist Marilynne Robinson summarises this sense of a theological attentiveness: "Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see" (Robinson 2004, p. 245). In this way, mindfulness can aid a de-secularisation of the imagination, dispelling notions of a sacred/secular dichotomy in life. This cultivation is an important step in pre-evangelisation in that it supports students noticing grace in their lives, opening the possibility of belief in God and in the Church as a credible source of meaning and community.

However, mindfulness in Irish classrooms should not be seen as a panacea. The issue here is not mindfulness itself, but rather the appropriations or misappropriation of the practice for outcomes contrary to the educational vision of Catholic schools. One such challenge is that "...mindfulness is in danger of being co-opted into the 'evidence-based' 'what works' agenda" operative in educational settings (O'Donnell 2016, p. 39). This instrumentalisation of mindfulness practice reduces a potentially life-giving practice to a tool which supports an overwhelming focus on measuring outcomes and performance, quantifying mindfulness rather than evaluating the quality of the practice (Van Dam et al. 2009; Baer 2013). Mindfulness, in this sense, risks being mutated to support a neoliberal educational agenda, in which the goals of schooling are reduced to academic output and performance at the service of the market. This commodification of education is at the heart of what several commentators have termed an educational emergency, also at work in Catholic schools (McIntyre 2006; McKinney and Sullivan 2013; Conway 2015). Catholic

education is committed to the intellectual development of the students, promoting rigorous academic performance, but this can never be to the detriment of the holistic vision of the human person. The operative anthropology of the Catholic school views each person as possessing an innate dignity, meaning their value can never be solely determined by test results. (Murray 1991, pp. 6–7; Evans 2013; D’Souza 2016). For mindfulness to be then congruent with Catholic school ethos, it cannot be used to support a reductive educational model where academic performance becomes the definition of flourishing and exam results the metric of success.

Aligned to this is the potential danger of the oversimplification of mindfulness to nonevaluative “bare attention”. The reduction of mindfulness to an individualised, passive activity poses a danger that the individual may never move beyond their own experience of the present to reduce suffering in the world around them and in others (Hyland 2016). This therapeutic approach is not transformational, deracinated from its Buddhist ethical foundations with its commitment to the reduction in suffering or *dhukka* (Scharf 2016, p. 140). A morally neutral mindfulness in education risks a buffering of the practitioner from the causes of suffering around them, internalising rather than challenging those sources of stress:

“The therapeutic approach is conservative, directing attention away from the outside world. Mindfulness could be an empowering and emancipatory practice, exploring ways to change social conditions and priorities. Instead, it maintains the status quo. Students are taught to meditate away their anger and accept their frustrations (non-judgementally of course). This might help them focus on work, but unless they also learn about the causes of stress in social, economic and institutional structures, links between education and democracy are severed”. (Purser 2019, pp. 183–84)

In this iteration, mindfulness in educational settings has lost its ability to see and react to the suffering of others. Such a practice falls short of the mission of Catholic schools, to care for those who suffer from injustice, marginalisation and poverty in society (Grace 2016; McKinney 2020). This misappropriation of mindfulness risks leaving the practitioner more selfish than ever, as they learn to accept rather than challenge societal structures that reinforce the suffering of others. This darker aspect of some contemporary spiritualities of the self means that forms of mindfulness may mutate into practices that have lost any capacity to be transformational (Lash 1996, p. 174; Taylor 2007, pp. 635–36; Koči and Roubík 2015, p. 117), instead existing as a “...vague be-here now mentality” (Wallace 2008, p. 62). The emergence of such harmful misappropriations of mindfulness must be challenged in Catholic schools, where, instead, mindfulness must cultivate an awareness in students that their own personal wellbeing is radically connected to the wellbeing of others, especially the poor. Mindfulness in Catholic schools must thus be kenotic, in that they foster the practitioner forgetting themselves, instead putting them at the service of others, particularly those who suffer oppression and injustice.

6. Conclusions

This overview has sought to address a gap in the current literature regarding the role of mindfulness in Catholic primary schools. This review is situated within the broader context of the processes of detraditionalisation and secularisation which have transformed the conditions for religious belief and practice in contemporary Irish society. Mindfulness has grown in popularity in this post-Christian Ireland as a secular practice, decontextualised from its original Buddhist framework. Mindfulness in schools is supported by a growing body of evidence that the practice leads to improved wellbeing in students. Wellbeing is set to play a significant role in the New Primary Curriculum in Irish schools, meaning that mindfulness practice will also be a more visible element in classrooms. For Catholic primary schools, mindfulness practice will be beneficial when it contributes to pre-evangelisation of pupils. However, challenges remain with possible misappropriations of the practice

contributing to instrumentalising trends in educational settings, as well as accepting stress rather than challenging its sources, wasting its emancipatory potential.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Abecina, Alex. 2014. Whose Virtues? Which Character Strengths? Positive Psychology in Christian Schools. Available online: <http://www.ethos.org.au/online-resources/engage-mail/whose-virtues-which-character-strengths-positive-psychology> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Adler, Alejandro. 2017. Well-Being and Academic Achievement: Towards a New Evidence-Based Educational Paradigm. In *Future Directions in Wellbeing*. Edited by Mathew W. White, Gavin R. Slep and A. Simon Murray. Singapore: Springer, pp. 203–208.
- Baer, Ruth. A. 2013. Measuring Mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism* 12: 241–61.
- Bakosh, Laura S., Renee M. Snow, Jutta M. Tobias, Janice L. Houlihan, and Celestina Barbosa-Leiker. 2016. Maximizing Mindful Learning: Mindful Awareness Intervention Improves Elementary School Students' Quarterly Grades. *Mindfulness* 7: 59–67.
- Beauchemin, James, Tiffani L. Hutchins, and Fiona Patterson. 2008. Mindfulness Meditation May Lessen Anxiety, Promote Social Skills, and Improve Academic Performance among Adolescents with Learning Disabilities. *Complementary Health Practice Review* 13: 34–45.
- Berger, Peter. 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Bishop, Scott R., Mark Lau, Shauna Shapiro, Linda Carlson, Nicole D. Anderson, James Carmody, Zindel V. Segal, Susan Abbey, Michael Speca, Drew Velting, and et al. 2004. Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 11: 230–41.
- Bodhi, Bhikku. 2011. What Does Mindfulness Really Mean? A Canonical Perspective. *Contemporary Buddhism* 12: 19–39. [CrossRef]
- Boeve, Lieven. 2007. *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*. New York: Continuum.
- Boeve, Lieven. 2012. Religious Education in a Post-secular and Post-Christian Context. *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion and Education* 33: 143–56.
- Boyce, Barry. 2011. *The Mindfulness Revolution: Leading Psychologists, Scientists, Artists, and Spiritual Teachers on the Power of Mindfulness in Daily Life*. Boston: Shambala.
- Brown, Candy Gunther. 2016. Can "Secular" Mindfulness Be Separated from Religion? In *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context and Social Engagement*. Edited by Adam Burke, David Forbes and Ronald E. Purser. Basel: Springer Publishing, pp. 75–94.
- Carroll, Thomas. 2022. Theology, Irish University Students and the Age of Experience. *Doctrine and Life* 72: 41–49.
- Carroll, Thomas. 2023. Mindfulness as Praeparatio Evangelica in the Irish Catholic Primary School. *Irish Theological Quarterly* 88. [CrossRef]
- Casey, Thomas G. 2018. *Wisdom at the Crossroads: The Life and Thought of Michael Paul Gallagher SJ*. Mahwah: Paulist Press.
- Central Statistics Office (CSO). 2023. *Census of Population 2022—Summary Results*. Available online: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/migrationanddiversity/> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Community National Schools. 2018. Goodness Me, Goodness You! Curriculum for Community National Schools. Available online: <https://cns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GMGY-Curriculum.pdf> (accessed on 6 September 2023).
- Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE). 1998. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE). 2013. *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilisation of Love 50 Years After Populorum Progressio*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20170416_educare-umanesimo-solidale_en.html (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). 1989. Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Conway, Eamonn. 2015. Vatican II on Christian Education: A Guide Through Today's 'Educational Emergency'? In *Ireland and Vatican II: Essays Theological, Pastoral and Educational*. Edited by Niall Coll. Dublin: Columba Press, pp. 258–64.
- Cook, Justin W. 2019. *Sustainability, Human Wellbeing and the Future of Education*. Cham: Palgrave.

- Cox, Harvey. 1999. The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of Secularization. In *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*. Edited by Gregory Baum and Harvey Cox. New York: Orbis, pp. 135–43.
- Davie, Grace. 2015. *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- DES (Department of Education and Skills). 2019. *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–23*. Dublin: Rialtas na hÉireann.
- DES (Department of Education and Skills). 2022. *Statistical Bulletin-July 2022*; Dublin: Department of Education and Skills. Available online: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/annual-statistical-reports/> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- D’Souza, Mario. 2016. *A Catholic Philosophy of Education: The Church and Two Philosophers*. Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Educate Together. 2019. *Learn Together: An Ethical Education Curriculum for Educate Together Schools*. Dublin: Educate Together. Available online: <https://www.educatetogether.ie/app/uploads/2019/02/Learn-Together.pdf> (accessed on 6 September 2023).
- Ergas, Oren, and Linor L. Hadar. 2019. Mindfulness in and as Education: A Map of a Developing Academic Discourse from 2002 to 2017. *Review of Education* 7: 757–97. [CrossRef]
- Ergas, Oren, and Sharon Todd. 2016. *Philosophy East/West: Exploring Intersections Between Educational and Contemplative Practices*. West Sussex: Blackwell Willey.
- Evans, David. 2013. Faith and Reason: The Route to Wisdom. In *Education in a Catholic Perspective*. Edited by Stephen McKinney and John Sullivan. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Gallagher, Michael Paul. 2003. *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Gallagher, Michael Paul. 2014. What are we doing when we do Theology? *Landas: Journal of Loyola School of Theology* 28: 1–12.
- Ganiell, Gladys. 2016. *Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland: Religious Practice in Late Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gawronski, Raymond. 2015. *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West*. Washington, DC: Angelico Press.
- Grace, Gerald. 2016. First and Foremost the Church Offers its Educational Service to the Poor: Class, Inequality and Catholic Schooling in Contemporary Contexts. In *Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education: The Selected Works of Gerald Grace*. Edited by Gerald Grace. New York: RoutledgeFarmer, pp. 65–84.
- Gravissimum Educationis. 1965. Vatican Council II. Declaration on Christian Education. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Halík, Tomáš. 2016. Embracing Atheism. In *Is God Absent? Faith, Atheism and Our Search for Meaning*. Edited by Anselm Grün, Tomáš Halík and Winfried Nonhoff. Mahwah: Paulist Press, pp. 12–32.
- Heinz, Manuela, Kevin Davison, and Elaine Keane. 2018. ‘I will do it but religion is a very personal thing’: Teacher Education Applicants’ Attitudes Towards Teaching Religion in Ireland. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 41: 232–45. [CrossRef]
- Hession, Anne, and Patricia Kieran. 2005. *Children, Catholicism and Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Himes, Michael J. 1995. Living Conversion. *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 8: 21–27.
- Hyland, Terry. 2016. The Limits of Mindfulness: Emerging Issues for Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 64: 99–117. [CrossRef]
- IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference). 1999. *Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students*. Dublin: Veritas.
- IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference). 2008. *Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland-Pastoral Letter*. Available online: https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/cco_publications/Education/vision08pastoralletter.pdf (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference). 2014. *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas.
- IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference). 2015. *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas.
- IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference). 2018. *A Reflection on Mindfulness: Rediscovering the Christian Tradition of Meditation and Contemplation*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon. 1990. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Keating, Noel. 2017. *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Keown, Damien. 2013. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kieran, Patricia, and Aiveen Mullaly. 2021. Beyond belief? Pre-service teachers’ perspectives on teaching RE in Ireland. *Journal of Religious Education* 69: 423–37. [CrossRef]
- Koči, Martin, and Pavel Roubík. 2015. Searching the Altar of an Unknown God: Tomáš Halík on Faith in a Secular Age. In *A Czech Perspective on Faith in a Secular Age*. Edited by Halík Tomáš and Pavel Hošek. Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, pp. 97–126.
- Konu, Anne, and Matti Rimpelä. 2002. Well-being in Schools: A Conceptual Model. *Health Promotion International* 17: 79–87. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Lambert, Yves. 2004. A Turning Point in Religious Evolution in Europe. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19: 29–45. [CrossRef]
- Lane, Dermot. 2008. *Challenges Facing Religious Education in Contemporary Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Langer, Ellen, and Alison I. Piper. 1987. The Prevention of Mindlessness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53: 280–87. [CrossRef]
- Lash, Nicholas. 1996. *The Beginning and End of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- McBride, Michelle. 2017. Breathing Bells and Mind Jars: Mindfulness Comes to School. *Irish Times*. Available online: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/breathing-bells-and-mind-jars-mindfulness-comes-to-school-1.2933176> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- McGraw, Sean, and Jonathan Tiernan. 2022. *The Politics of Irish Primary Education: Reform in an Era of Secularisation*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- McIntyre, Alastair. 2006. The End of Education: The Fragmentation of the American University. *Commonweal* 133: 10–14.
- McIntyre, Alister McIntyre. 2011. *After Virtue After a Quarter of a Century*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- McKinney, Stephen. 2011. A Rationale for Catholic Schools. In *A Companion to Catholic Education*. Edited by Leonardo Franchi Franchi and Stephen McKinney. Herefordshire: Gracewing, pp. 147–61.
- McKinney, Stephen. 2020. COVID-19, Child Poverty, Catholic Schools and the Insights of Gustavo Gutiérrez. In *Irish and British Reflections on Catholic Education*. Edited by Sean Whittle. Singapore: Springer, pp. 29–40.
- McKinney, Stephen, and John Sullivan. 2013. *Education in a Catholic Perspective*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- McMahan, David L. 2008. *The Making of Modern Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meehan, Amalee. 2018. The Sickness of Long Thinking: Religious Education and the New Junior Cycle. In *Contemporary Perspectives on Catholic Education*. Edited by John Lydon. Herefordshire: Gracewing, pp. 59–67.
- Murray, Donal. 1991. A Special Concern. In *The Philosophy of Education: A Christian Perspective*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Murray, Donal. 2009. Catholic Primary Education in Contemporary Ireland: Facing New Horizons. Catherine McCauley Conference Series, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Available online: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2009/05/22/address-by-bishop-donal-murray-bishop-of-limerick-and-chair-of-the-bishops-department-of-catholic-education-and-formation-at-the-mccauley-conference-series-catholic-primary-education-in-cont/> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Naughton, Celine. 2016. How Mindfulness is Teaching Children to Cope in School. *Irish Independent*. Available online: <https://www.independent.ie/life/health-wellbeing/how-mindfulness-is-teaching-children-to-cope-in-school-34618690.html> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). 2017. *Guidelines for Well-being in Junior Cycle*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). 2023. *Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service). 2019. *Wellbeing in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion*. Dublin: Rialtas na hÉireann.
- O'Donnell, Aislinn. 2016. Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindfulness. In *Philosophy East/West: Exploring Intersections Between Educational and Contemplative Practices*. Edited by Oren Ergas and Sharon Todd. West Sussex: Blackwell Willey, pp. 29–46.
- Phan, Mary L., Tyler L. Renshaw, Julie Caramanico, Jeffrey M. Greeson, Elizabeth MacKenzie, Atkinson-Diaz Zabryna, Natalie Doppelt, Hungtzu Tai, David S. Mandell, and Heather J. Nuske. 2022. Mindfulness Based School Interventions: A Systematic Review of Outcome Evidence Quality by Study Design. *Mindfulness* 13: 1591–613. [CrossRef]
- Pickerell, Lynn E., Kyla Pennington, Charlotte Cartledge, Kirsty A. Miller, and Cuetis Ffion. 2023. The Effectiveness of School-Based Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioural Programmes to Improve Emotional Regulation in 7–12-Year-Olds: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Mindfulness* 14: 1068–87. [CrossRef]
- Pseftogianni, Foteini, Maria Panagioti, Kelly Birtwell, and Ioannis Angelakis. 2023. Mindfulness interventions for obsessive-compulsive and related disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 30: 233–43. [CrossRef]
- Purser, Ronald Purser. 2014. The Militarization of Mindfulness Inquiring Mind. Available online: https://inquiringmind.com/article/3002_17_purser-the-militarization-of-mindfulness/ (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Purser, Ronald. 2019. *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*. London: Repeater.
- Reynolds, Stefan Gillow. 2019. Mindfulness, Yoga and Schools: An Opportunity or a Problem? *The Furrow* 70: 678–73.
- Robinson, Marilynne. 2004. *Gilead*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.
- Ronnie Convery, Ronnie, Leonardo Franchi, and Raymond McCluskey. 2017. *Reclaiming the Piazza II: Catholic Education and the New Evangelisation*. Hertfordshire: Gracewing.
- Roth, Harold D. 2008. Against Cognitive Imperialism. *Religion East and West* 8: 1–26.
- Rymarz, Richard. 2021. Utilizing Authenticity: Options for Catholic Education in a Particular Detraditionalized Cultural Context. *Religions* 12: 807. [CrossRef]
- Scally, Derek. 2021. *The Best Catholics in the World: The Irish, the Church and the End of a Special Relationship*. Sandycove: Penguin.
- Scharf, Robert. 2014. Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (and Why it Matters). *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52: 470–84.
- Scharf, Robert. 2016. Epilogue. In *What's Wrong with Mindfulness (And What Isn't): Zen Perspectives*. Edited by Robert Meikyo Rosenbaum and Barry Magid. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, pp. 139–52.
- Schonert-Reichl, Kimberley A., and Robert W. Roeser. 2016. *Handbook of Mindfulness in Education: Integrating Theory and Research into Practice*. New York: Springer.
- Schumer, Maya C., Emily K. Lindsay, and John David Creswell. 2018. Brief mindfulness training for negative affectivity: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 86: 569–83. [CrossRef]
- Sheridan, John-Paul. 2022. Catholic Teacher Formation in the Republic of Ireland. In *Formation of Teachers for Catholic Schools: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Era*. Edited by Leonardo Franchi and Richard Rymarz. Singapore: Springer, pp. 55–66.

- Skelton, Darren. 2019. Bishop of Waterford Warns Against Yoga and Mindfulness in Schools. *The Journal*. Available online: <https://www.thejournal.ie/waterford-bishop-alphonsus-cullinan-yoga-mindfulness-4857160-Oct2019/> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Smith, James. 2007. *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Starkey, Caroline. 2023. British Buddhism, Secular Mindfulness, and the Politics of Sustainability. *Religion* 1–24. [CrossRef]
- Sullivan, John. 2008. Philosophy of Catholic Education. In *Exploring Religious Education: Catholic Religious Education in an Intercultural Europe*. Edited by Anne Hession and Patricia Kieran. Dublin: Veritas, pp. 27–34.
- Tan, Charlene. 2021. *Mindful Education: Insights from Confucian and Christian Traditions*. Singapore: Springer.
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tran, Ulrich S., Layla Birnbaum, Matthias A. Burzler, Ulrich J. C. Hegewisch, Dariga Ramazanov, and Martin Voracek. 2022. Self-reported mindfulness accounts for the effects of mindfulness interventions and nonmindfulness controls on self-reported mental health: A preregistered systematic review and three-level meta-analysis of 146 randomized controlled trials. *Psychological Bulletin* 148: 86–106. [CrossRef]
- Turpin, Hugh. 2022. *Unholy Catholic Ireland: Religious Hypocrisy, Secular Morality, and Irish Irreligion*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tyler, Peter. 2018. *Christian Mindfulness: Theology and Practice*. London: SCM Press.
- Van Cappellen, Patty, Maria Toth-Gauthier, Vassilis Saroglou, and Barbara L. Fredrikson. 2016. Religion and Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Positive Emotions. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 17: 485–505.
- Van Dam, Nicholas, Mitch Earleywine, and Sharon Danoff-Burg. 2009. Differential Item Function Across Meditators and Non-Meditators on the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences* 47: 516–21.
- VanderWeele, Tyler J. 2017. Religious Communities and Human Flourishing. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26: 476–81. [PubMed]
- Vörös, Sebastjan. 2016. Mindfulness De- or Recontextualized? Traditional Buddhist and Contemporary Perspectives. *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 13: 1–34.
- Wallace, B. Alan. 2008. A Mindful Balance. *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. Available online: <https://tricycle.org/magazine/mindfulness-alan-wallace/> (accessed on 4 September 2023).
- Weare, Katherine. 2023. Where have we been and where are we going with Mindfulness in Schools? *Mindfulness* 14: 293–99. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.