

# Today's Lecture

- Admin stuff
- Concluding our study of Zen Buddhism

## Admin stuff: My availability during the examination period

- My official office hours come to an end next week.
- I will be available for appointment if you need to see me ... please contact me via email if you'd like an appointment (afenton2@uwo.ca). *Don't do this the night before you want an appointment.*

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- Where we left off (roughly):
- Let's take a breath here to make sure we're on the same page.
- It is Koller's contention that what Zen Buddhists (at least typically) mean by Buddha Nature is Reality as it is ... interdependently arising (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).
- Under this account, to realize one's Buddha Nature is to realize one's interdependent nature ... with a mind free of ignorance, attachment and aversion.
- There's (at least) a couple of questions that arise out of this account: (1) Why use the term 'Buddha Nature' to refer to That which interexists? (2) Why use 'No-mind', 'Mind' or 'Buddha Mind' as synonyms for 'Buddha Nature'?

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- *An answer to (1): This is arguably because of two reasons. (i) That which characterizes an Awakened One (or Buddha) is not substantially, or essentially, different from what ultimately characterizes anything else. (ii) The individual who awakens is not substantially, or essentially, different from their pre-enlightened self. Since this can be said of everyone, AND given (i), we can all be said to already possess Buddha Nature.*

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- Re (2): We need to split this question into at least two parts. (a) Why use terms that connote mind when talking of Buddha Nature? and (b) Why talk of 'no-mind' when talking of Buddha Nature.
- (b) *may* be easier to answer first. Think back to the *Heart Sutra* and its denial of permanent, separately existing individuals, objects or processes. This was articulated by denying the existence of individuals, objects or processes. The same can be said here when talking of That which exists as 'no-mind', understood to be the distinct, separately existing mind of a particular being, or group of beings (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.241, 243).

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- As for (a), we need to think back to our brief discussion of Yogacara and their talk of Store Consciousness.
- Store Consciousness is, for the Yogacara, BOTH (i) the ultimate underlying consciousness of all beings (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.221-23), AND (ii) That to which we refer when talking of That which inter-exists (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.220, 221, 222).
- Think back to some of the reasons for suggesting the existence of store consciousness.
- (1) There is no end to conscious experience when engaging in meditation. That is, no matter how ‘deep you go’, there is consciousness (*Asian Philosophies*, p.220).

## Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- (2) There are a number of distinguishable kinds of consciousness (or conscious awareness).
- Six of these regard the senses (be it sight, taste, touch, smell, sound or discursive thought).
- There is also a consciousness beyond this that nevertheless involves an ignorance of our nature as individuals ... this is the level where Hindus and Jains claim to encounter the Self.
- But there is a final kind of consciousness, beyond this, where ignorance (and the other poisons) is absent. This must be the case if the Buddhist view of enlightenment is correct. This eighth kind of consciousness is store consciousness (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.221-22).

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- (3) There *must be a continuity* between Siddhartha Gautama in his unenlightened state and in his enlightened state if we are to speak of him ‘waking up’ or becoming enlightened (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.219, 222-23).
- (4) There *must be a continuity* between one time slice and another, or one birth and another, in the life-cycles of an individual if we are to talk of personal identity, rebirth and continuing karmic debt (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.219, 222-23).
- (1) through (4) are among the reasons proffered in favor of the Yogacara view of store consciousness.
- They are relevant to the claim that ‘Store Consciousness is ... the ultimate underlying consciousness of all beings’ (or (i) in the relevant previous slide).



# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- (1) Is also relevant to the claim that “Store Consciousness is ... That to which we refer when talking of That which interexists” (or (ii) in the relevant previous slide).
- If, no matter ‘how deep we go’, there is consciousness, then even at the level of direct experience of, or insight into the nature of, reality, we encounter consciousness.
- In other words, consciousness is an integral element in our (direct) experience of reality as It Is ... otherwise it wouldn’t be an experience at all.

## Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- But it gets weirder. There is no duality at that level of awareness. (There is no me versus you, no me versus the world, no subject versus object. There is just All That There Is ... or interdependent arising) (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.220, 221-22).
- IF there is no duality at that level of awareness, BUT *there is* consciousness, THEN, it seems, we must say that consciousness is an integral element of reality as It Is or (ii).

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- So let's go back to (a): Why use terms that connote mind when talking of Buddha Nature?
- Well, if Buddha Nature is Reality interdependently arising, and Reality interdependently arising *is* store consciousness, and store consciousness *is* consciousness, and consciousness *is* (in some sense) mental, then Buddha Nature *is* Buddha Mind (*Asian Philosophies*, p.223).
- 'The' question arising out of this is: Is Buddha-nature another way of talking about an Absolute Ground of Being akin to the *Tao* or *Brahman*?
- Koller would say no (see *Asian Philosophies*, p.242).

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- But consider this quote:
- “The *Tathagata-garbha* ... represents the ‘Buddha-potential’ within all beings. In the *Tathagata-garbha Sutra* it is said to be equivalent to the ‘Buddha-nature’ ... and is affirmed by the Buddha to be ‘complete with virtues and not different from myself’ .... It is an emptiness which is itself full of possibilities; it is resplendent with the qualities of Buddhahood, beginningless, unchanging and permanent .... It is beyond duality, having the nature of thought and the intrinsic purity of a jewel, space or water .... Moreover, it is the *Tathagata-garbha* which responds to spiritual teachings and aspires for *Nirvana*” (Harvey, Peter. 1991. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p.114-15).

# Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- Or consider a quote from p. 114 of your *Course Pack*:
- “All beings have self-nature. This nature is intrinsically without arising or cessation; it constantly abides without change. Therefore, it is called the inherent self-nature. Both the buddhas of the three worlds ... and all beings have this nature as the dharma body of the original ground.”

## Zen Buddhism: Aims of Zen

- “As a way of life, Zen is not so much a matter of beliefs, but of doing. The core of practice consists in training in the experience of seeing directly into one’s complete self in the fullness of the experienced moment without the mediation of intellect. ... Learning to let go of all things we habitually grasp at, including self and objects, is the heart of Zen practice” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.236).
- Zen, then, is being awake (to the nature of ourselves and the world around us) in the moment ... or being awake in the now.
- This is to be distinguished from Zen understood as an institutionalized expression of Eastern Buddhism.

# Zen Buddhism: Aims of Zen

- “What the *tenzo* monk is saying is that Zen is life; it is cooking, cleaning, studying, or whatever one is doing at the time. *Zazen* and *koan* practice are important training, but the real practice of Zen is the daily living of life. Buying mushrooms is *zazen* and talking to Dogen is *koan* practice for the *tenzo* monk” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.238).
- Think back to D.T. Suzuki’s description of Zen.

# Zen Buddhism: Aims of Zen

- Discursive consciousness is at odds with the nature of reality (i.e. as interdependent arising).
- The dualities and distinctions contained within our conceptual schemes, and our use of these schemes to divide up our experience fall short of, or distort, reality ‘itself’ ... including our-selves.
- To know reality as ‘it is’ we need to move beyond our intellect, so described (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.236-37).



# Zen Buddhism: Practice

- Koller breaks Zen practice into two broad categories, (1) **zazen** and (2) **koan practice**.
- (1) **Zazen** - Zazen is sitting meditation, usually done on a cushion or bench, and facing a blank wall. In this form of mindfulness practice, the Zen practitioner must first control and regulate the body, breath and mind. Once the mind is ‘stilled’ the Zen practitioner cultivates “what is sometimes called a profound silence in the deepest recesses of one’s being, letting go of all dualistic thought and all graspings” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.239).
- In other words, it is the cultivation of no-mind (*Course Pack*, pp.113, 114-15).

# Zen Buddhism: Practice

- **3 aims of zazen:**
- (i) *Concentration*: In practicing zazen one first needs to still or quiet the mind and learn to focus on the moment (*Asian Philosophies*, p.239).
- (ii) *Satori*: Satori is “the awakening of enlightenment that sees directly into one’s own existence and the existence of others. This direct insight reveals the true nature of things in their dynamic interdependence” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.239).
- (iii) *Living enlightenment*: The third aim of zazen is to live the enlightenment experience in every moment. “It [i.e. enlightenment] is to be lived; every action and every moment should be an action and a moment lived in enlightenment” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.240).

# Zen Buddhism: Practice

- (2) **Koan practice** - Koans play a special role as a means to sudden enlightenment in Rinzai Zen. Koans are usually dialogues between a Zen master and a student, and involve what appear to be non-sensical responses to a question posed by a student. Koans are designed to push the student beyond dependence on dualistic thinking, or discursive consciousness (see *Asian Philosophies*, p.239, 241-42).
- In Soto Zen koans are also used to cultivate mindfulness and 'achieve' enlightenment, but Soto Zen practitioners place less of an emphasis on the truths contained in the koans themselves and relate them more to their own lived experience, which is itself treated as the koan (*Asian Philosophies*, p.241).