

Today's Lecture

- Some preliminary comments
- Meditation

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- There are two basic meditation techniques common to all forms of Buddhism: *Shamatha* (or *Samatha*) and *Vipashyana* (or *Vipassana*) Meditation.
- *Shamatha* Meditation, or Calm and Tranquility Meditation, aids the practitioner in developing concentration. An object of meditation (something on which to concentrate) is used in this type of meditation. More often than not, it is your breath.
- *Vipashyana* Meditation, or Insight Meditation, aids in the development of insight into your own nature and nature of the objects of your experience.

Some preliminary comments

- Thinking about the Noble Eightfold Path, you may already be able to see where these techniques fit within a greater framework of Buddhist practice.
- Developing or cultivating **right effort** and **right concentration** connects nicely with *Shamatha* meditation.
- Cultivating **right effort**, **right understanding** and **right mindfulness** connects nicely with *Vipashyana* meditation.
- Moral conduct (e.g. **right action**, **right speech** and **right livelihood**) is, for Buddhists (and of course others), a *necessary prerequisite* of successful or fruitful meditation. (It is thought that immoral activity leads to mental agitation [i.e. undermines concentration] and habituates those vices [e.g. ignorance, attachment and aversion] lying at the root of immoral action [i.e. undermines understanding].)

Some preliminary comments

- Bottom line: The primary purpose of Buddhist meditation is, according to Buddhists, to gain insight into the nature of your-self and the objects of your experience, and through this insight to live a life free from *dukkha* (of course this requires you to apply the insight you gain in meditation).
- Note this is not to claim that acquiring insight is a fast process (though some Buddhists [e.g. some Zen Masters] think it can be), an all or nothing process (though, again, some Buddhists think that it is), or a cure-all for everything falling under the category of *dukkha* (no Buddhist I know would deny that the Buddha still felt pain when he stubbed a toe).

Meditation

- We'll do a bit of *Shamatha* Meditation today. It's a fairly basic practice, and aids in developing skills (e.g. skill in concentration) that will help in other areas of Buddhist practice.
- This technique of meditation is also found in both Hinduism and Taoism. So it is important in both Hindu and Taoist practice.
- Remember: (1) I am not implicitly claiming to be a meditation teacher in leading you in this meditation today (today we are co-meditators), (2) once is not enough (to either appreciate the significance of this practice or reap its benefits), and (3) if you wish to pursue this as a practice you should seek out a qualified or experienced teacher to help get you properly started.

Meditation

- Participation in this meditation is voluntary, you don't have to do it.
- Please be respectful during this meditation. Be aware of how your bodily movements can disturb your neighbor. Also, please don't talk, share notes or giggle during the sitting.
- I'll ring us into the meditation and ring us out (the bell will ring three times each time).
- As the bell rings give yourself permission to settle into the moment, into your breath.
- As you settle, do so with loving-kindness directed towards yourself.
- As the bell rings to end the meditation, slowly turn your attention back to the class environment.

Meditation

- Remember your posture: (1) Sit slightly forward in your seat so the seat-back is not touching your back, (2) keep your back straight and your head resting comfortably on top of your spine, (3) place your hands on your knees, (4) tilt your head slightly so that you're looking down to what is about three feet in front of you, (5) do not close your eyes, but rather maintain a soft 'stare'.

Meditation

- First settling yourself: (1) For the first few moments allow yourself to slowly mentally ‘scan’ your body, working from your feet to the tip of your head and, slowly, back down again, (2) as you move along your body be aware of the various bodily sensations, (3) if you encounter tension observe it until it dissipates, (4) and then, when you have done this twice or three times, slowly turn your attention towards your breath, either as it comes in and out through your nostrils or as your diaphragm rises and falls.

Meditation

- Dealing with distractions: (1) You will find that your mind will wander as you sit, and that's okay, just note, or be aware, that it has wandered and slowly bring your attention back to your breath (do not try to 'crush' the 'offending' thought, sensation, or emotion). (2) You may find that your body experiences some discomfort. Try not to react unreflectively to this discomfort, but rather observe it until it dissipates or, if it is too painful, slowly adjust your posture but without disturbing your attentiveness to either the pain or your breath.

Meditation

- According to Buddhist practitioners there is no bad session.
- Each session contains lessons about what Buddhists mean by impermanence, *dukkha* or insubstantiality.
- What's more, to practice is to commit to a long journey towards self-knowledge and insight into existence.

Meditation

- What do you think?