

Today's Lecture

- Admin stuff
- More basic Buddhist philosophy
 - The three characteristics of samsaric existence,
 - The three root evils,
 - Interdependent Arising (or Dependent Origination).

Admin stuff

- Are there any questions about the Third Assignment topics?
- Any questions or concerns about the Third Assignment?
- Remember to come and see me if you have any questions or concerns about previous assignments.

Right Understanding

- Under 'Right Understanding' in the Eightfold Path we find teachings concerning (1) the Four Noble Truths, (2) the three characteristics of samsaric existence, (3) Interdependent Arising, (4) the three root evils, and (5) moral conduct (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.161-62).
- I have already mentioned some of these.

Three characteristics of samsaric existence

- Samsaric existence is marked by (1) *dukkha*, (2) impermanence, and (3) no-self (i.e. insubstantiality).
- “‘Everything arises and passes away.’ ... ‘Existence is sorrow.’ ... ‘Existence is illusion.’ Understand, go beyond. This is the way of clarity” (page 74 of your copy of the *Dhammapada*).
- “‘When through wisdom one perceives, ‘All *samkharas* are transient,’ When through wisdom one perceives, ‘All *samkharas* are suffering,’ When through wisdom one perceives, ‘All dhammas are without self,’ then one is detached as to misery. This is the path of purity” (*Dhammapada* 277-79 from John Ross Carter’s translation).
- We have already discussed *dukkha*.

Three characteristics of samsaric existence

- **Impermanence** characterizes all of the events, processes or characteristics that constitute the *individual/empirical self AND his/her experience*.
- **ALL** the objects, processes and events within our ordinary experience, **AND** that constitute our-selves, are undergoing change (from moment to moment) (*Asian Philosophies*, p.157).

Three characteristics of samsaric existence

- *All* of the ‘elements’ that constitute the empirical self *lack* an essence, fundamental static nature, or underlying, unchanging substance.
- *All* of the objects of our experiences, indeed all of our experiences, lack substantiality.
- *Arguably*, this teaching contradicts *commonly held approaches to, and metaphysics involving*, our physical and social world (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.153, 158).
- To lack substantiality is to (1) lack a defining essence or nature which we might say is ‘really’ x (where x is a particular referent of a term in our linguistic framework, or of a concept in our conceptual framework) or (2) lack an underlying, unchanging, (physical or non-physical) substrate in which various properties inhere.

The Three Root Evils, or Three Root Poisons

- Okay for the record: The Three Root Evils or Poisons are (1) ignorance, (2) greed and (3) hatred. You may find them enumerated as (1) ignorance, (2) grasping and (3) aversion (*Asian Philosophies*, p.169).
- These are known as the three root evils or poisons because they lie at the ‘hub’ of the Wheel of Becoming or the Wheel of Life.
- The Wheel of Becoming (see page 169 of your *Asian Philosophies*) represents the cycle of becoming for beings trapped in *samsara*, and the realms of existence through which they may travel.

The Three Root Evils, or Three Root Poisons

- To escape *samsara* we must break the relevant causal cycle (this should sound very familiar at this point).
- For Buddhists, this ultimately consists of cultivating (1) wisdom, (2) generosity and (3) love or compassion (*Asian Philosophies*, p.174).
- This can be achieved, according to Buddhists, by implementing the Eightfold Path in your life (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.160-61).

Interdependent Arising

- This is a *view of causality* already implicit in the Buddhist claims about *duhkha*, impermanence and no-self mentioned before (*Asian Philosophies*, p.167).
- Indeed, it is the traditional view that Gautama Buddha's enlightenment consisted of directly perceiving the truth of Interdependent Arising, and how it affects becoming and suffering (or dissatisfaction), and then applying that knowledge or insight in his own life (see pages 153-54 of your *Asian Philosophies*).

Interdependent Arising: General account

- We can distinguish between this view as a *general* account of causality and this view as a *particular* account (of the arising of *dukkha*, and samsaric existence) (see *Asian Philosophies*, pp.167-68).
- The Wheel of Becoming (*Asian Philosophies*, p.169) is a representation of the more particular account.

Interdependent Arising: General account

- Concerning Interdependent Arising as a more *general account*, Koller provides the following quote from the *Samyutta Nikaya*:
- “(1) ‘When this is, that is; (2) this arising, that arises; (3) when this is not, that is not; (4) this ceasing, that ceases’” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.167).
- It is important to see that in both (1) and (2), and then (3) and (4), the author must be suggesting that for each *conditioned event* there is a *set of necessary and sufficient conditions* that bring it about. (If *A* is a necessary condition of *x*, then *x cannot* occur without *A* occurring. If *B* is a sufficient condition of *x*, then when *B* occurs, *x* occurs.)
- Of course if there are events that do not have causes, then this causal view is false.

Interdependent Arising: General account

- Note Koller's claim about this general account of causality:
- “Interdependent arising means that everything is constantly changing, that *nothing is permanent*. It also means that all existence is selfless, *that nothing exists separately, by itself*. And beyond the impermanence and selflessness of existence, interdependent arising means that *whatever arises or ceases does so dependent upon conditions*” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.167, emphasis mine).

Interdependent Arising: General account

- From such a general account it follows that for any given (conditioned) event (broadly construed), (1) not only does it arise from multivarious antecedent conditions, (2) it *contributes to* the arising of subsequent events. Also, (3) as an ‘object’, it is never in a state of no-change.
- *This proffers, then, a picture of Reality that is in a constant state of change, in which there exists no-(independently existing) things/events (Asian Philosophies, p.167).*

Interdependent Arising: General account

- It is important to note that, according to this view of Reality, our talk of things or events, which implies that they are entities that can be distinguished (in some significant way) from other things or events, is ultimately illusory. Though such talk *can* work in our daily experience, it will not yield an accurate metaphysics (or an accurate picture of mind-independent Reality) (see *Asian Philosophies*, pp.174-75).