

Today's Lecture

- Seventh in-class quiz (it begins again)
- Admin stuff
- More basic Buddhist philosophy
 - Concluding Interdependent Arising
 - Rebirth without a soul

Admin stuff

- Are there any questions about the Third Assignment topics?
- Any questions or concerns about the Third Assignment?

Interdependent Arising: General account

- Where we left off:
- 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).
- This quickly yields a (by now familiar) distinction between conventional and ultimate truth.

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- This is the fundamental picture that is applied to each individual being trapped in *samsara*.
- It requires a causal picture of interdependent or **inter-existing** characteristics, events and processes which arise as a result of previous conditions (i.e. previously existing characteristics, events and processes), and which in their turn constitute the conditions of arising for those characteristics objects, events or processes which succeed them (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.174-75).
- This is, in part, the meaning of the claim at the beginning of the *Dhammapada*, translated by Byrom as “We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world” (see page 1 of your copy of the *Dhammapada*).

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- If you look at the Wheel of Life (p. 169 of your *Asian Philosophies*) you can notice a few important features of this view of conditioned (samsaric) existence.
- (1) As I've already said, three 'root evils' lie at the hub of the wheel. For the Buddhist, it is these three unwholesome states that (ultimately) drive the cycle of *samsara* (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.172-73, 174).

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- (2) We can divide the outer wheel into those stages that are the karmic effect/fruit of the relevant causal antecedents, and those stages that represent the relevant causal antecedents.
- So ignorance and volition are previously existing states *that give rise to* consciousness, and it is consciousness that marks the first stage in the *next* life-cycle *after the death of* the individual responsible for ‘cultivating’ said states.
- It is our thirst and grasping during, and at the end of, our lives that *sow the seeds for the arising of* future states (i.e. becoming).

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- *From* these states of becoming we have another life-cycle begin (birth).
- It is *because* we are born *that* we grow old and die.
- At death, some of the states that have to yet generate karmic fruit, states arising from ignorance, grasping and aversion, *give rise to* the next life-cycle, and so on (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.170-72; see also your *Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 187).
- The Wheel of Becoming, or the Wheel of Life, is traditionally taken to contain, or follow, three life cycles through *samsara*.

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- It is important to note that, as Koller notes, these stages can be applied to our daily experience.
- In our day to day experience it is, according to the Buddhist, our ignorance of our true nature and the cause(s) of *duhkha* that gives rise to our grasping and aversion (in response to the feelings arising from our experience of the world), which in turn gives rise to yet further states that reinforce old patterns of behavior, old attachments, old aversions and, ultimately, our rebirth (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.168-70).

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- (3) The life-cycles on the outer rim can be realized on the next (inner) wheel in the six (basic) realms of samsaric existence. Note several things here. (i) Deities are ultimately mortal (they just live a long time). (ii) Hellish beings *can escape* the hell realms. (iii) Each realm of existence is characterized by a certain ratio of pleasure to pain, happiness to unhappiness, non-suffering to suffering. (iv) It is in the human realm that we find a ratio of non-suffering and suffering that is conducive to *moksha*. This is why human birth is precious for Buddhists (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.173-74 or your *Course Pack*, p.127).

Interdependent Arising: Applied to samsaric existence

- It is important to note that these realms of existence can be ‘psychologized’ to represent the kinds of on-going, or self-perpetuating, states that we can all get into. So we can, in our life-time, ‘become’ deities, hellish beings or (hungry) ghosts (*Asian Philosophies*, p.174).
- Deities, Koller writes, “symbolize the tendency to get so absorbed in one’s own happiness that the sufferings of others are shut out” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.173).
- “[S]ome are so demonic that they constantly try to get their way through force and violence (the demons) ... some are so driven by selfishness that they are bloated by their own consumption (the ghosts) ... some people use their capacity for knowledge and compassion to end suffering (the humans)” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.174).

Rebirth without a soul

- If there is no soul, then how is transmigration possible? Isn't 'transmigration' a misnomer?
- Before answering this question ask the following:
- Without a soul how is it possible to have a personal identity through time (in this birth)? (The answer to this question will take you at least part way to answering the first question.)
- In seeking an answer this second question ask a third:
- Without an essence how is it possible to talk of a tree being the same tree through time, or a table being the same table through time, or a sun being the same sun through time? (The answer to this question will take you at least part way to answering the second question.)
- Thoughts?