

•Lecture Today

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- Zen Buddhism

Admin stuff

- If you haven't collected your third assignments, please do so.
- If you haven't submitted your assignments to Turnitin yet, there's no better time than the present to do that.
- Any questions about the possible exam questions?

Admin stuff

- On June 24th the feminist economist Marilyn Waring is speaking on 'Women and Power' in the Althouse College Auditorium, U.W.O.
- This is a talk sponsored by The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children and Women's Community House as part of the Anniversary Speaker Series.
- The lecture will be given between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m.
- Donations can be given at the door.

Admin stuff

- Women's Caucus Essay Award
- Award is \$200.00. Max. length is 3000 words. Due date is May 31st, 2004.
- Should be original work (term paper, seminar paper, etc.), have a topic involving research on women, and be scholarly (though accessible).
- Collaborative efforts are acceptable and the submission can come from any discipline (within, I presume, the academy).

Zen Buddhism: Some recommended books

- Some books that may be of interest:
- *The Diamond Sutra and The Sutra of Hui Neng*. Translated by A.F. Price and Wong Mou-Lam. Dated 1969, and published by Shambhala Publications.
- Shibayama, Zenkei. *The Gateless Barrier: Zen comments on the Mumonkan*. Translated by Sumiko Kudo. Dated 1974/2000, and published by Shambhala Publications.
- *The Lotus Sutra*. Translated by Burton Watson. Dated 1993, and published by Columbia University Press.
- *Ordinary Enlightenment: A Translation of the Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra*. Translated by Charles Luk. Dated 2002, and published by Shambhala Publications.
- Kapleau, Roshi Philip. *Zen: Dawn in the West*. Dated 1980, and published by Doubleday.

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- Zen Buddhism is the Japanese form of Ch'an Buddhism, which is itself a form of Chinese Buddhism.
- 'Zen' and 'ch'an' are the Japanese and Chinese terms for 'dhyana', or meditation (*Course Pack*, p.112). This highlights what is so central to Zen Buddhism: meditation practice (or, more accurately, the awakening that occurs through meditation [*Course Pack*, p.112; *Asian Philosophies*, pp.232-33]), rather than a particular metaphysical, epistemological or ethical outlook (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.232, 233).
- This particular feature of Zen Buddhism is difficult to overstate (though it **CAN** be overstated).

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- Zen Buddhists *tend* to distance themselves from various elements of historical Buddhism.
- (1) They *tend* to down play the importance or significance of the Buddhist scriptures (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.233, 234). Take care here. The scriptures of the *Prajnaparamita* Tradition are very important to Zen Buddhism (see *Asian Philosophies*, p.233).
- (2) They *tend* to avoid engaging in, or recommending the use of, devotion or ceremony *as a means to* a better rebirth ... or as a means to accumulate karmic merit (*Asian Philosophies*, p.234).
- Again, take care. There is *a great deal of ritual and ceremony* associated with practice in Zen Buddhist Temples.

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- (3) They *tend* to avoid *the pursuit of merit, or avoidance of demerit, as a means towards* a better rebirth or enlightenment (*Asian Philosophies*, p.234).
- (4) To *engage in authentic Zen practice* it is *not necessary* to adopt a set of particular teachings (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.233, 234).
- Again, this **CAN** be overstated. After all, Zen does proffer a *particular (Buddhist) view of human psychology, the Buddha Mind, and enlightenment* (see *Asian Philosophies*, p.243 or pp.112-13 or of your *Course Pack*).
- However, it is their *tendency to downplay* Buddhist teaching and the relevance of Buddhist scriptures in Zen practice that inclines Buddhist scholars like D.T. Suzuki to see Zen as compatible with the practice of other World Faith Traditions.

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- “When a Zen master was once asked what Zen was, he replied, ‘Your everyday thought.’ Is this not plain and most straightforward? It has nothing to do with any sectarian spirit. Christians as well as Buddhists can practice Zen just as big fish and small fish are both contentedly living in the same ocean. Zen is the ocean, Zen is the air, Zen is the mountain, Zen is thunder and lightning, the spring flower, summer heat, and winter snow; nay more than that Zen is man” (Suzuki, D.T. 1973. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. New York: Ballantine Books, p.45).
- Again, this is *probably* an overstatement (for the reasons already given).

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- *Contra* what you might think when reading the previous passage from Suzuki, there is more than one form of Zen Buddhism.
- Two dominant sects of contemporary Zen Buddhism are Rinzai and Soto Zen (*Asian Philosophies*, p.232).
- The fundamental distinction between these two sects can be made on the basis of their respective lineage (of teachers or masters) (*Asian Philosophies*, p.232).
- You will, however, find within each tradition polemical literature that criticizes the other's basic perspective or practice.

Zen Buddhism: Introductory comments

- On the issue of practice Rinzai Zen emphasizes sudden, while Soto Zen allows for a gradual, enlightenment.
- There appear to be two things contained in the Soto Zen Buddhist view of enlightenment not shared by a Buddhist of Rinzai Zen. (1) There are degrees of enlightenment. (2) There is an expectation that the Zen practitioner is on a *long* Path to enlightenment, certainly longer than what is expected in Rinzai Zen (see *Asian Philosophies*, pp.239, 240-41, 242).
- As a consequence of this emphasis and in contrast to Rinzai Zen, Soto Zen has *tended* to emphasize *dharma* study, and/or philosophical reflection, as means to enlightenment.
- It is important to note that Koller's treatment of Zen Buddhism is heavily informed by Soto Zen (*Asian Philosophies*, p.232).

Zen Buddhism: Indian and Chinese foundations

- There are at least two ways of drawing out the Indian or Chinese influences on Zen Buddhism.
- (1) We can do it using their (sacred) history. The legendary Indian Buddhist Bodhidharma brought his version of *Buddhadharma*, which emphasizes meditation and the wordless transmission of *dharma*, to China sometime in the Fifth Century C.E.
- The lineage of all extant forms of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism trace their transmission of the *dharma* to Bodhidharma (*Asian Philosophies*, p.233).
- Bodhidharma's own lineage is traced back, of course, to Gautama himself (*Asian Philosophies*, p.233).

Zen Buddhism: Indian and Chinese foundations

- (2) The emphasis on (direct) insight into the nature of the self and of reality as the end of Zen practice, and its disavowal of the study of sacred teaching as a requisite for walking the Path or following the Way, nicely connects Zen to the perspective contained in the *Prajnaparamita* Tradition (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.234-35).
- Like the Buddhists of the *Prajnaparamita* Tradition, Zen practitioners see our conceptual schema and discursive consciousness as obstructing our knowledge of the true nature of reality. We must move beyond (our attachment to) discursive consciousness in order to achieve enlightenment (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.234-35).

Zen Buddhism: Taoist ‘influences’

- Taoism, remember, emphasizes (1) the indescribability of the Ultimate ground of being (i.e. the *Tao*), (2) the undivided ‘nature’ of the *Tao*, (3) that *Tao* gives rise to, but lies beyond, the objects, processes, or events of our experience, (4) that we should pursue a life in accord with the *Tao*, (5) that such a life would have us “reunite with the Source. But words do not reach the Source; here, at the source of life, is vast and profound stillness” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.235), and (6) meditation as a means to calm the mind and unite with the *Tao* (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.235-36).
- *Similar* emphases can be found in Zen Buddhism, where they *tend to* talk of Buddha Nature instead of the *Tao* (*Asian Philosophies*, p.235).

Zen Buddhism: Taoist 'influences'

- As Koller suggests, the interchange of ideas or meditative technique between these traditions is difficult to discount ... particularly with Chinese Buddhists adopting some of the philosophical vocabulary of their contemporaries (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.235-36).

Zen Buddhism: Taoist 'influences'

- Consider:
- “Joshu once asked Nansen, ‘What is Tao?’ Nansen answered, ‘Ordinary mind is Tao.’ ‘Then should we direct ourselves toward it or not?’ asked Joshu. ‘If you try to direct yourself toward it, you go away from it,’ answered Nansen. Joshu continued, ‘If we do not try, how can we know that it is Tao?’ Nansen replied, ‘Tao does not belong to knowing or to not-knowing. Knowing is illusion; not-knowing is blankness. If you really attain to Tao of no-doubt, it is like the great void, so vast and boundless. How, then, can there be right and wrong in the Tao?’ At these words, Joshu was suddenly enlightened” (Case 19, ‘Ordinary Mind is Tao’, from *The Gateless Barrier: Zen comments on the Mumonkan*, p.140).

Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- “Seeing true reality as Buddha-nature, or as pure mind, underlies the Mahayana aim of becoming one with the all-illuminating Buddha-consciousness. Mahayana emphasizes that to achieve enlightenment is to go beyond seeing everything merely in terms of mental phenomenon, or of the nature of consciousness, to seeing reality as a whole, undivided and totally interconnected” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).
- At this point in the chapter Koller cautions us to see two senses of mind at work in Zen teaching.
- One sense of mind is the one we share, “the ordinary view of mind as consciousness engaged in differentiating things” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).

Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- The other sense of mind is “called variously Buddha-nature, the enlightened mind, emptiness, no-mind, mind-only, and suchness. These expressions all refer to the same reality, which is the true reality of interdependent arising experienced by the enlightened person” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).
- Two things of importance to note about Buddha Nature as described here: (1) “What is ordinarily meant by Buddha-nature is that the nature of everything is such that it can become enlightened” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.242), and (2) as we *really, or fundamentally*, are, we are already in some important sense a Buddha (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).

Zen Buddhism: On Buddha Nature

- 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 (independent of our conceptual schemas or discursive thought) ... interdependently arising (*Asian Philosophies*, p.243).
- Under this account, to realize one's Buddha Nature (i.e. achieve *satori*) is to realize one's interdependent nature ... with a mind free of ignorance, attachment and aversion (*Asian Philosophies*, pp.239, 243).
- 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

- Let me suggest some answers to (1) and (2).
- Re (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 any-thing else (indeed there are no fundamental characteristics, there is no essence, that distinguish(s) you and I, or you and the other individuals in your environment). In the case of a Buddha, there is a set of interexisting processes, inter-related to every-‘thing’ else, albeit lacking *duhkha*, ignorance, attachments and aversions. (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.